



INTERNATIONAL
STANDARD
SERIAL
NUMBER
INDIA

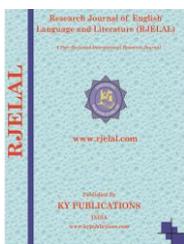
2395-2636 (Print);2321-3108 (online)

A LACANIAN READING OF SELECTED POEMS BY D.H. LAWRENCE: LOVE AND DESIRE

GOLNAZ GHASEMI. M.A.

Islamic Azad University, Science & Research Branch

golnazghasemi.literature@gmail.com



ABSTRACT

The following research studies the concepts of love and desire in D.H. Lawrence poetry. The research counts primary the poems "kisses on the Train" and "Bei Hennef". D. H. Lawrence's first poetry book, *The Love Poems and Others*, creates a very well noted chance for the study of Desire and Love for its bold and frank language. Both poems, "Kisses on the Train" and "Bei Hennef", portray the love of the poet for his beloved and the desire for oneness and union. An analysis is done in order to study the advances and nature of desire and its connection to symbolic order according to Lacan's theory.

Key words: Desire, Love, Lacan, Kisses on the Train, Bei Hennef, D. H. Lawrence

1. Introduction

David Herbert Richard Lawrence is one of the most influential figures in modern literature. He wrote not only novels but also essays, plays, and poetry. His writing had been greatly influenced by the World War I (WWI) which reflected the sense of alienation, isolation, and fragmentation of the man. He wrote in free verse which was inspired by Walt Whitman whose writings mostly includes revolutionary ideas surrounding love and man relations. Such subjects and arguments had pushed Lawrence into many problematic situations which was enhanced by the mood of the period of his life time. His first collection of poems, *The Love Poems and Others*, was written in 1913 which was marked as the untouched and unique craft of man's modern life projecting the fear, isolation and emptiness of man. The two selected poems from this book, "Kisses on the Train" and "Bei Hennef", picture two different looks of love known to the modern readers. Kisses on the train, pictures the sexual desire. The poem is purely descriptive and tries to picture the poet's sexual interaction. The second poem however, pictures to some points a more

mature. It portrays poet's need of oneness and perfection with the beloved.

This research aims on uncovering the similarities and connection between two by the look into connection between Desire and Love which brought to the surface by the linguistic reflection of it in the symbolic order of the poet. According to Lacan the concept of desire and demand co-exist in presence of one another, in other words if demand does not feel the lack it does not desire the lack which is the object of the desire which maybe a desire to love and find a beloved.

In the dialectic of need/demand/desire, desire is born precisely from the unsatisfied part of Demand, which is the demand for love. Lacan's own discourse on love is thus often complicated by the same substitution of 'desire' for 'love' which he himself highlights in the text of Plato's Symposium. (Evans 106)

The desire always reflects itself in the symbolic order no matter how hard the individual aims to suppress it. According to Lacan desire does not reflect itself fully in the linguistic manner but the

part which appears in unconscious and the speaker in unable to control this flow.

However, there is a limit to how far desire can be articulated in speech because of a fundamental 'incompatibility between desire and speech'; it is this incompatibility which explains the irreducibility of the unconscious (i.e. the fact that the unconscious is not that which *is not known*, but that which *cannot be known*). Although the truth about desire is present to some degree in all speech, speech can never articulate the *whole* truth about desire; whenever speech attempts to articulate desire, there is always a leftover, a surplus, which exceeds speech. (Evans 37)

The reason behind such inevitability is the impossibility of total suppression of the unconscious which is somehow always reflected in the symbolic order though by different degrees. An analysis is done in order to find the linking points between the two selected poems which may prove the connection between the symbolic order of the poet and the demand and his desire and love and a the fusion with the beloved which appears in a descriptive narrative manner according to Lacan's theories.

2. Theoretical Framework

Jacques Marie Émile Lacan is one of the most influential figures in literature psychoanalysis since the presence of Freud. His major themes include the Three Orders, the other/Other, Desire and Drive. After his rejection in army due to his weak physical condition Lacan started his career in a hospital where he studied in the field of psychoanalysis where he received his first honorary diploma though he did not publish his work till some years later. Lacan's first appearance was at a conference in Paris in 1936 at International Psychoanalytical Association presenting mirror phase which latter was advanced into mirror stage.

Lacan constantly introduced and labeled himself as a materialist which reflected of how Marx had affected his studies rejecting the moral values.

Lacan periodically identifies himself as a materialist, hinting that he's inclined in the direction of Marxist-inspired historical and dialectical materialisms in particular. Moreover, he indicates that one of the

remaining crucial tasks bequeathed to contemporary materialists is the surprisingly incomplete and difficult struggle exhaustively to secularize materialism, to purge it of camouflaged residues of religiosity hiding within its ostensibly godless confines. (Chiesa 66)

Lacan also had a great focus on the linguistic aspect of psyche which was mostly adapted from Saussure which cleared the path for Lacan's symbolic order which was used latter by most French feminist critics who focused linguistic aspect of feminism critics.

2.1. Concept of Desire/Demand

The concept of Desire/Demand is taken from the Lacanina theories which explains demand as need in an individual which had been shaped in the phase where the infant was unable to satisfy his needs and that had created the concept of demand.

The human subject, being born in a state of helplessness, is unable to satisfy its own needs, and hence depends on the Other to help it satisfy them. In order to get the Other's help, the infant must express its needs vocally; need must be articulated in demand. The primitive demands of the infant may only be inarticulate screams, but they serve to bring the Other to minister to the infant's needs. However, the presence of the Other soon acquires an importance in itself, an importance that goes beyond the satisfaction of need, since this presence symbolises the Other's love. (Evans 38)

These demands are divided into three categories including oral which represent the stage where:

"The oral demand calls for an inverse response, such that the other's answer to the imperative 'feed me' is 'let yourself be fed.' This inversion becomes a source of discord or even of destructive urges" which is the stage at which the demand is separated from desire by the fact that the child refers to the individual satisfying his needs not as the mother but as the Other. The next demand is anal which is the case where "need reigns supreme; but while demand sets out to restrain need, desire wants to expel it. The one is entrusted with satisfying it, while the other is determined to control it. In the end, this control is

legitimated only by turning need into a gift expected by another, who is always primordially the mother" (Mijolla 388)

This relation is based on the fact of who may expect this relation for the receiver as long as the giver is suffering which does not mean that the concept of the pain is present which may be the cause of the unlimited time for this relation. The final demand is genital which requires a real partner for the sexuality within its nature.

At the genital stage, demand seeks out a real partner. A repressed demand returns in the field of sexuality, and it will be satisfied only by a real engagement—one the subject wants to wait for, since he or she intends to bring it about. Thus the demand is based on the primacy of a sexual desire that is certainly sustained by a need, but that emphasizes a real lack in the other. (Mijolla 388)

The desire for the other is what is reflected in the symbolic order of the poet since the desire being a concept of unconscious may have the appearance in the speech whether the speaker is aware of the ongoing progress or not.

2.2. Concept of love

The research focuses on uncovering the development made in poet's mind to show how the absence of his beloved in any case may appear as the concept of love in any of the poems. The main concern of the study how the Imaginary Order need for attention from the Other or in other words the sexual relation leads to its appearance in symbolic order of the poet which appears as love since the lack of sexual relations is what creates the illusion of love or oneness with the beloved.

Love involves an imaginary reciprocity, since 'to love is, essentially, to wish to beloved'. It is this reciprocity between 'loving' and 'being loved' that constitutes the illusion of love, and this is what distinguishes it from the order of the drives, in which there is no reciprocity, only pure activity. Love is an illusory fantasy of fusion with the beloved which makes up for the absence of any sexual relationship this is especially clear in the asexual concept of courtly love. (Evans 105-106)

The concept of love stands in opposition with the concept of desire since desire is associated with the presence of the beloved while love the absence of the sexual relation and an illusion of oneness with the beloved. The concept of love first was argued in Lacan's 8th seminar. It explains how love on its one level is located in the Imaginary Order as a form of required attention from the Other. As a result what is reflected when love is presence in the symbolic order is the feeling of absence and sadness which the lover experiences from being in love but not as a demand for love.

Love is clearly opposed to desire, which is inscribed in the symbolic order, the field of the Other. Love is a metaphor, whereas desire is metonymy. It can even be said that love kills desire, since love is based on a fantasy of oneness with the beloved and this abolishes the difference which gives rise to desire. (Evans 106)

The presence of love means the absence of desire for love requires distance and lack of sexual relation where desire stands in opposition to this statement. The chosen case studies will each be analyzed in order to clarify whether each one of the concepts including love and desire is present or absent.

3. Analysis

3.1. Analysis of Kisses on the Train

In the poem, the poet opens with symbolic similes describing his beloved in his imaginary order, "Love is located by Lacan as a purely imaginary phenomenon, although it has effects in the symbolic order" (Evans 105) so she appears as a symbolic description:

I SAW the midlands
Revolve through her hair;
The field of autumn
Stretching bare,
And sheep on the pasture
Tossed back in a scare.
And still as ever. (Lawrence 3)

The concept of love is associated with the absence of the beloved which means the absence of sexual relations which creates the illusion of love which is

reflected in the symbolic order of the poet. Ongoing as the nature of love is explained it takes its place in the ego and results in the desire of oneness with the chosen one for ego chooses what it in itself lacks and falls in love with that factor.

The poet continues the same pattern by describing the sexual relation which now has destroyed his illusion of love for the presence his beloved allows him to satisfy his desire and is the same need and desire for giving what the beloved lacks:

My mouth on her pulsing,
Neck was found,
And my breast to her beating
Breast was bound
But my heart at the center. (Lawrence3)

These quotations portray the poet's flow of mind. It works on same levels as Lacan has described love to advance the absence of the beloved is the illusion of love but with the presence of the beloved the sexual relation is purely based on the desirer as an irrational aspect of the man's psyche

And the world all whirling
Around in joy
Like the dance of a dervish
Did destroy
My sense--and my reason
Spun like a toy. (Lawrence 3)

The irrational sense of the desire is described as the dance of the dervish which symbolizes the purity and tension of the fusion which he faces with his beloved that is as he addresses it destructive. The main focus of the poem is mostly the concept of desire rather than love which may be addressed as a desire or demand for love but not as the state of being in love since the two cannot co-exist.

3.2. Analysis of Bei Hennef

This poem also aims at the beloved and the dream of oneness or in other words the melancholious illusion of love. The same exact pattern is taken in this poem first the beloved is absent for most of the poem which is the cause of the sad dark setting in the poem To the irrational object of desire at last it ends the love which is the aim of love. The opening line shows the similes used to give way to the beloved as the object of desire.

The poet uses poetic devices picturing his object of love:

And at last I know my love for you is here,
I can see it all, it is whole like the twilight.
It is large, so large, I could not see it before
Because of the little lights and flicker and interruptions,
Troubles, anxieties and pains. (Lawrence18)

In these lines poet explains that how this love has answered his need for attention and affection and awaits the meeting with the beloved since the love which the poet mentions in the latter lines is not the result of any other cause but the lack and absence of sexual relation with his beloved.

On the next stanza as the need for attention and affection is answered poet's love moves on to the next level which is the need for oneness or the satisfaction his desire seeks since the desire is present since according to Lacan genital stage of demand requires oneness and sexual relation with the beloved which in itself seeks to create perfection which is directly mentioned in the following lines:

You are the call and I am the answer.
You are the wish, and I the fulfilment.
You are the night, and I the day.
What else— it is perfect enough,
It is perfectly complete, (Lawrence 18)

In these lines the poet directly points that the oneness and the complicity needed and wanted by the beloved and loved are in question of this union for as the poet points whatever she lacks, he is the missing piece. This union and desire for oneness is to give the beloved what she lacks. As a result the concept of phallic is taken as the beloved lacks for her complicity. "In the Strange, how we suffer in spite of this!" (Lawrence 18)

4. Discussion

Both poems discuss the notion of love and lack of desired its progress which repents the fact that neither can exist with the presence of the other. According to Lacan love and desire, though they cannot co-exist as two concepts with irrational origins, yet one gives way to the other in other words the lack and absence of the desired results in a feeling of lack and longing of the desired which is

addressed as love when the desire is satisfied there exists no love so though they give way to one another they may not co-exist. The start of love is addressed as love not for the beloved but love for what lover lacks or desires within him. The very first appearance of Love is also the need of attention caused in imaginary order as a result of the alienation caused in mirror stage. The same pattern is obvious in the poems.

In the "Kisses on the Train" the lover works from his imaginary order to symbolic description of the beloved as she is described as "the fields of autumn" and "the midlands" portraying the symbolic order of the poet's mind, the object wanted by Ego, as the desire for oneness due to the Castration and the Phallic appears in the following stanzas since the "Desire is essentially 'desire of the Other's desire', which means both desire to be the object of another's desire, and desire for recognition by another." (Evans38). This love and feeling of longing or love last till the moment that the desire is satisfied.

In "Bei Hennef" the same pattern follows we see how the poet's mind starts in the symbolic order and then reflecting the desire. First the descriptive phrases appear then ongoing is the poet's need of oneness with the beloved or the object of desire which is defined as the concept of love. The connection between the two, the symbolic order and the desire other than both being placed in ego is:

The presence of the Other soon acquires an importance in itself, an importance that goes beyond the satisfaction of need, since this presence symbolizes the Other's love. Hence demand soon takes on a double function, serving both as an articulation of need and as a demand for love. However, whereas the Other can provide the objects which the subject requires to satisfy his needs, the Other cannot provide that unconditional love which the subject craves. Hence even after the needs which were articulated in demand have been satisfied, the other aspect of demand, the craving for love, remains unsatisfied, and this leftover is desire. 'Desire is neither the appetite for satisfaction, nor the demand for love, but the difference that results from

the subtraction of the first from the second'. (Evans 38)

As stated the relations between love and desire is a linear line which is the presence or the absence of the beloved. Desire may exist on its own but love is rooted in the absence of desired. The same pattern is present in the poems which presents poet's mental development in the state of love but the desire is left unsatisfied since in this poem no sexual satisfactions occurs so the state of love is not disturbed.

5. Conclusion

This research studied the concept of Love and Desire according to Lacanian theories. Its aim is to unveil the relations hidden between Love and Desire. The poems chosen as primary sources, "kisses on the train" and "Bei Hennef", are analyzed and the pattern hidden between the two was discussed by key terms. Since D. H. Lawrence poetry mostly picture modern life and modern man, a bold frankness is felt in the poems which make the fine ground for the chosen subject.

The concept of the Desire according to Lacan is explained in three stages of demand or need including oral, anal, and genital which leads to the concept of Desire. The concept of desire is rooted in the demand of genital which in this case is erotic and contains a masochistic characteristic within its nature which no matter how well the individual tries to cover it the desire reflects itself in the symbolic order of the individual. The concept of Love is the absence of the desired or the lack the individual experiences when he is unable to satisfy the desire. In cases the concept of love does not co-exist with the erotic aspect of genital root of demand or desire which is the concept of courtly love.

By the usage of extracts from the text and quotations from Lacanian sources, the existing link between Love as a symbolic phenomenon and Desire, both seeking the attention of the Other were made obvious. The poet in both of the poems seeks the desired and the concept of oneness though the period of presence for this love differs in the chosen poems yet they both share the element of love yet only "The Kisses on the Train" reaches the satisfaction and the desired one since by the

presence of the beloved the lack or longing of love is impossible which means the presence of desire and oneness with the beloved. In the other poem, "Bei Hennef" the poet only experiences the state of Love since no sexual interaction occur and the symbolic order projects the absence of the desired and explains the unity the poet desires.

Work Cited

- Chiesa, Lorenzo. *Lacan and philosophy: The new generation*. Melbourne: re.press. 2014.
- Demandante, Darlene. "Lacanian Perspectives on Love". *Kritike*, Vol8, No:1, 102-118. 2014.
- Evans, Dylan. *An introductory of Lacanian psychoanalysis*. London and New York: Routledge. 2006.
- Johnston, Adrian. "Nothing is not always no-one: (a) voiding love". *Filozofski vestnik*, Vol:26 No:2, 67-82. 2005.
- Lacan, Jacques. *The ethics of psychoanalysis 1959-1960: The seminar of Jacques Lacan*. Routledge. 2013.
- Lacan, Jacques. Mitchell, J., & Jacquelin rose. *Feminine sexuality: Jacques Lacan and the 'cole freudienne'*. New York, NY: W. W. Norton & Company. 1985.
- Lawrence, D. H. *Love poems and others*. London: Duckworth and Co. 1913.