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Women in Love as a Polyphonic Novel

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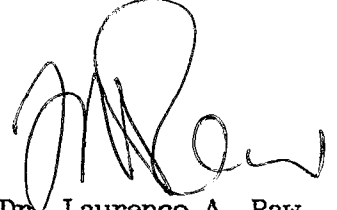
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by

Özlem Uzundemir

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We certify that we have read this thesis and that in our combined opinion it is fully adequate, in scope and in quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Arts.



Dr. Laurence A. Raw

(Advisor)



Prof. Bülent R. Bozkurt

(Committee Member)

Asst. Prof. Dr. Hamit Çalışkan

(Committee Member)



Approved for the
Institute of Economics and Social Sciences



Director

Abstract

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Özlem Uzundemir
M.A. In English Literature
Advisor: Dr. Laurence A. Raw
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Lawrence's critics have tended to analyse his novel Women in Love by explaining what the novel "means", and treating the author as an omniscient presence, who organises the plot and the characterisation. This type of approach can appear dogmatic; and fails to demonstrate the unique qualities of this novel. The purpose of this thesis is to show how Women in Love dispenses with the convention of the omniscient narrator; for this purpose, I shall use the theories of language and novel advanced by the Russian formalist Mikhail Bakhtin. In Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics and The Dialogic Imagination Bakhtin outlines the characteristics of what he calls a "polyphonic" novel in which the protagonists reveal information pertaining to their history, personality, environment, etc. through dialogue, without the intervention of the author. This foregrounding of dialogue is what renders the novel polyphonic; as in everyday language the words of a character are directed to the words of another character. Although Bakhtin does not deal directly with Women in Love, his theories form an ideal basis for demonstrating its polyphonic qualities. This thesis will concentrate on the plot, setting and characterisation in relation to Lawrence's narrative technique, and will show how the absence of authorial intervention forces the reader to take an active part in the process of interpreting the novel.

Consequently, this thesis will also focus on the dialogic aspects of Women in Love, with specific reference to the language and speech-patterns of the characters.



Özet

Çoksesli Roman Olarak Aşık Kadınlar

Özlem Uzundemir

İngiliz Edebiyatı Yüksek lisans
Tez Yöneticisi: Dr. Laurence A.Raw
Eylül, 1991

Edebiyat eleştirmenleri D.H.Lawrence'ın romanı Aşık Kadınlar'ı incelerken romanın konusunu açıklamaya çalışmışlar ve yazarı olay örgüsü ve karakterleri kontrolü altında bulunduran üstün bir güç olarak görmüşlerdir. Bu tür bir yaklaşım oldukça katı olup romanın yeni bir yazım tekniği ile yazılmış değişik yapısını açıklamakta yetersiz kalır. Bu tezin amacı, Aşık Kadınlar romanında karakterleri yargılayan bir yazarın olmadığını Rus Biçimci Mikhail Bakhtin'in dil ve roman teorisini uygulayarak açıklamaktır. Eleştirmenin Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics ve Dialogic Imagination'da ortaya koyduğu gibi "çoksesli roman" karakterleri geçmişlerine, kişiliklerine ve çevrelerine ilişkin bilgileri yazarın müdahalesi olmaksızın dialoglar yoluyla anlatırlar. Dialoglara verilen önem romanı çoksesli kılar; günlük dilde olduğu gibi bir karakterin sözleri bir diğerkininine yöneliktir. Her ne kadar Bakhtin Aşık Kadınlar romanına değinmese de, teorisi bu romanın çoksesli olma özelliklerini göstermede temel oluşturur. Bu tez olay örgüsü, yer ve karakter incelemesini Lawrence'ın anlatım tekniği ışığında incelemeyi ve yargılayan yazar tipinin bu romanda olmayışının okuyucuyu romanın yorumunda nasıl aktif kıldığını göstermeyi amaçlıyor. Son olarak, bu romanın çoksesli özelliklerini karakterlerin kullandıkları dil bağlamında ele alıyor.

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Women in Love as a Polyphonic Novel

The purpose of this thesis is to show that D. H. Lawrence's novel Women in Love is unique among his earlier novels; he adopts a new technique of narration that dispenses with the omniscient narrator - so common in the nineteenth century English novel - who dictates the organisation of the plot and characterisation. This intention, I believe, can be better understood if we see Women in Love in the light of the theories of language and the novel advanced by the Russian formalist Mikhail Bakhtin, whose main intention in works such as Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics was to show how the characters in what he termed a 'polyphonic novel', reveal information about their background, history, environment, motivation, etc., without intervention from an omniscient narrator. A narrator may still exist in this kind of novel, but s/he does not assume a privileged position over the characters; we are not allowed to rely on his/her judgement. Consequently the reader is involved in an active process of interpretation; s/he has to evaluate the different kinds of information presented, and form his/her judgement thereby. This approach is particularly fruitful when considering Women in Love; it rejects the tradition of modern criticism of this novel, which has endeavoured to show that Women in Love follows the pattern of D.H.Lawrence's earlier work by adopting the convention of an omniscient narrator. For instance, F.R.Leavis emphasized in 1955 that Lawrence's "penetration is incomparably deep and his perception of significance keeps everything duly functional to the development of his themes."(1) Although Leavis thinks that Loerke is not one of the

major characters in the novel, he believes that Lawrence has given him the function of preparing the ground for Gerald's suicide.(2)

Leavis' language is dogmatic, informing the reader how s/he should read and evaluate D.H. Lawrence. Also, he suggests that there is some quasi-religious power, "the author's personality", which organises the novel. Leavis says, "it is impossible to study the work and the art without forming a vivid sense of the man, and touching on the facts of his history."(3) Leavis' approach also implies that the theme, character and structure of the novel are unchanging elements; he thinks that Lawrence's major concern in Women in Love is modern civilisation - and thus the character analysis should be related to this grand, generalised theme. Leavis presupposes that the novel has to be about a subject of major significance (modern civilisation) and it is his duty to explain it; thus the reader comes to understand the novel by reading his criticism. There are two dominant forces dictating the ways in which Women in Love should be read - the omniscient narrator and the literary critic. Whilst Leavis' work should be recognised as a major influence in restoring Lawrence's reputation as one of the greatest creative writers of the twentieth century, his criticism is too dogmatic and does not leave the reader free to form his/her own judgement about the novel.

Like Leavis, Allan Ingram's approach to Women in Love (1990) is based on certain presuppositions. He thinks that the author is omniscient, and that there is some kind of a scale of reality/unreality by which the reader can evaluate the characters, and the success of the author's technique. Through various strategies, such as authorial commentary, Lawrence tries to make the novel

"realistic", and the critic's duty is to judge the author's success or failure in his technique. For example, Ingram believes that authorial commentary defines the mood of irritation permeating the conversation between Ursula and Gudrun at the beginning of the novel:

There is insufficient scope in what is expected to be a reasonably life-like conversation for the kind of introduction to character that is necessary on the first page of a novel. For this reason, Lawrence is obliged to amplify the dialogue through the voice of the narrator, in order to have said what neither Ursula nor Gudrun is able realistically to say for herself. (4)

There are certain presuppositions in this quotation. First, Ingram assumes that the author is omniscient. As the characters do not define the situation themselves, the author interferes and comments on their dialogue. Ingram also assumes that, through this technique the author makes the novel realistic, or "reasonably life-like": Lawrence's intervention is a way of overcoming "the limitations of dialogue ... [and] giving access to character and motivation." (5)

Both Leavis and Ingram emphasise that the author dictates the characters, the plot, the language, etc., of his work, while the reader assumes a passive role; s/he does not need to form any judgements about the characters, the plot, or the language. By contrast, the critical strategies first advanced by Mikhail Bakhtin during the 1920s in Russia suggest not only that the reader is actually involved in the process of interpreting a novel, but that the novel itself should be considered as a unique, and extremely complex literary form.

In The Dialogic Imagination Mikhail Bakhtin first compares the novel to other genres known as "high literature" (6). One of the characteristics of these genres is their being about the past. The world of the epic heroes, for instance, is inaccessible, because it is too far removed from contemporary life. Since these genres are detached from all present action, they can be considered finite. However, the novel is generally concerned with the present, and when the present moment assumes importance, such concepts as finality and completeness disappear. In short, the novel as a genre continues to develop, whereas other genres such as the epic have completed their development. For this reason it is hard to formulate a definite theory of the novel.

Bakhtin talks about the origins of the novel, especially in terms of parody. The novel parodies the conventions of older literary forms, such as the epic or lyric, both linguistically and structurally, and in this way demonstrates the completeness/finiteness of such genres: "the novel inserts into these other genres an indeterminacy, a certain semantic openedness, a living contact with unfinished, still-evolving contemporary reality (the opened present)." (7) Once the novel makes use of the conventions of these genres, they become the object of representation, the object of parody which "rips the word away from its object, disunifies the two, [and] shows that a given straightforward generic word - epic or tragic - is one-sided, bounded, incapable of exhausting the object." (8) Consequently, in parody two languages and styles - the object of the parody and the parodic language itself - interact with one other. The object of parody is there in its own right, while the parodic language

prepares the ground for revealing the finality and one-sidedness of the object of the parody. The novelistic discourse parodies the discourse of the other genres; it is not a unitary language but rather a system of languages illuminating one other, giving the author the chance to participate "in the novel ... with almost no direct language of his own"(9) - "almost", because the author exists alongside the characters s/he has created. While the author uses a particular form of language to create the characters, the plot, etc., this is combined in his work with other types of languages - the characters' dialogue, for instance. The author is intimately involved in the discourse of the novel, but is certainly not omniscient.

Another aspect of literary creation - the novel included - is the chronotope - the space and time element - which determines the context of a work. There is the chronotope of a literary text which organizes the narrative events; the chronotope of the author's world and that of the reader. The author's chronotope differs from that of his/her work, in that s/he can represent the events from the point of view of the hero, or that of a narrator or that of an assumed author, the "I" of an autobiographical novel, for instance: "But even in the last instance he can represent the temporal-spatial world and its events only as if he had seen and observed them himself, only as if he were an omnipresent witness to them."(10) The fictional world can never be spatio-temporally identical with the real world. Consequently those readers who perceive a novel as realistic, (in that it reflects certain aspects and details of the author's life) are in error.

In the section "Discourse in the Novel" Bakhtin explains that linguistics and stylistics are incapable of dealing with novelistic discourse, because they treat language as a unitary system; a system of linguistic norms which tries to engage with the heteroglossia - the social, historical and physiological conditions which dictate the meaning of an utterance. This task ultimately proves fruitless, since any word uttered in a specific place and at a specific time will have a different meaning from what it would assume under other conditions. Bakhtin calls the linguistic norms which try to govern the heteroglossia of language centripetal forces. However, Bakhtin also identifies centrifugal forces which try to decentralize utterances by allowing other possible meanings to be attached to a word and its object. As far as stylistics is concerned, the word is only related to its object; it does not have any relationship with other words or to the specific context in which it is uttered. According to Bakhtin, the relationship between a word and its object is not fixed. There are other words relating to the same object and any given word can form a dialogic relationship with other words; it interacts with other words, depending on the context. The meaning of the word is determined by such a relationship.

According to Bakhtin, poetic genres such as the lyric or the epic are influenced by the unifying forces associated with stylistics and linguistics; the word is only related to its object, but not to other words. The poet is totally immersed in the language s/he uses, therefore, poetic discourse cannot be combined with other types of languages. However, the novelist allows different types of language - the languages of the characters, as well as the narrator - to exist

alongside one another. The novel is composed of centrifugal forces: the meaning of a specific utterance is determined by its relationship to other utterances. In other words, novelistic discourse is dialogic, and therefore important, because like the utterances in everyday language, the language in the novel is directed towards a listener and to his/her expected answer.

Bakhtin dwells extensively on the novel genre in Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics, where he talks about the polyphonic novel with specific reference to Dostoevsky. This is characterized by a sense of contemporaneity: everything takes place in the present and directed to the future, to development. For this reason, the characters have no history: "They remember from their past only those things which have not ceased to be current for them and which continue to be experienced in the present." (11). The reader knows nothing about the characters' past history except for the information disclosed by the the characters themselves; it is as if the reader is meeting them for the first time. In a monologic novel (the type of novel where the author is the dominant force) the characters act in a way which is proper to the image created for them by the author and enables critics such as Leavis to talk in terms of the major themes of a work. However, in a polyphonic novel the character's consciousness gains importance. The reader does not know more about the characters than the characters know themselves. Since the author does not judge his/her characters, but makes them reveal their own personalities to the reader, they assume an independent life of their own. They are not the object of the author's artistic vision; they are capable of expressing themselves. The author is in what Bakhtin terms a dialogic

relationship with the characters; s/he engages with them but refrains from judging them. The author creates the illusion that the character is someone who might hear the author and reply if requested.

Bakhtin subsequently talks about the substance of a polyphonic novel. The author does not take up any social, moral or ideological positions and no ideas are given importance over others. Each character may discuss an idea, but their ideas interact with those of other characters and the author.

The plot structure of a polyphonic novel is similar to that of carnivalesque literature (the works of Rabelais for instance) in the sense that it is episodic. Carnival is a time of liberation from all social norms which impose an order on human life; individuals are in free contact with each other; and there are no such things as "reasonable" explanations or ideas of cause and effect. Everything is relative, nothing can be categorised. This is also true for the polyphonic novel. Since the novel is about the present, cause and effect cease to exist, so the plot structure of a polyphonic novel cannot be organic, but loose and episodic. The character's language and action cannot be linked to the plot development, because "the usual material or psychological bonds necessary for the pragmatic development of the plot are insufficient ... they presuppose the heroes' objectivization and materialization as integral to the author's plan."(12)

Finally, Bakhtin talks about the discourse in a polyphonic novel. The discourse is dialogic - it is as if the speakers are conducting an independent conversation. There are three types of artistic discourse that appear in a polyphonic novel, according to Bakhtin:

stylization, parody, and skaz. Skaz is defined as "a narrative told by a fictitious narrator in the language typical to him, containing the distinctive peculiarities of his own (as opposed to the author's) speech." (13) In stylization the style of an already existing discourse is adopted for the same purpose. In parody the writer adopts the language of another person, but for a completely different purpose from the original. In the third type the word of a character is always directed to the word of another character (or the author) and his/her word is shaped by the word of another person about him/her. It is as if the author is talking to his/her characters and addressing them as "you" - not reporting anything about them.

According to Bakhtin, polyphony cannot be restricted to the novel genre, but extends to all artistic thinking. In reality an individual consciousness is in a dialogic relationship with other human consciousnesses, and this can be best represented in the polyphonic novel.

Though Bakhtin exclusively deals with the novels of Dostoevsky and calls him the creator of the polyphonic novel, his theory of the novel can be applied to D. H. Lawrence's Women in Love. This novel is about the present; the actions in the novel take place at the present moment; therefore, the characters have no history. Only those events which are still important for the characters are told by the characters themselves or by other characters in the novel. For instance, the information about Gudrun's education is revealed by Birkin in his dialogue with Gerald (p.150). The chapter "The Industrial Magnate", which Leavis dwells on in detail in his analysis of the novel, is the only chapter which considers the characters'

past, being the history of the Crich family. But again the past events mentioned in this chapter are related to the present action of the characters. Gerald's mechanical outlook on life derives from the experience of his childhood. He is the son of a mine-owner who treated his miners as his equals and devoted his life to charity, to helping poor people; consequently, he was loved by his workers. Shortly afterwards the mine was affected by economic crisis and father Crich had to cut down his expenses, whilst the miners started rioting. The working conditions immediately changed; the mines became more and more disorderly and chaotic. Gerald, living through these years, could not avoid thinking and acting in mechanical terms. He started subordinating the miners to his will, after he became director of the mine:

When Gerald grew up in the ways of the world, he shifted the position. He did not care about the equality. The whole Christian attitude of love and self-sacrifice was old hat. He knew that position and authority were the right thing in the world.... It was like being part of a machine. He himself happened to be a controlling, central part, the masses of men were the parts variously controlled. (p.300)

The sheer frequency with which the characters discuss such matters, as love, marriage or the purpose of living gives the sense of the present moment, because what the characters talk about are subjects in general; in a sense "timeless" subjects, which are not related to people or events in the past or future. In the third chapter, Birkin and Hermione discuss in Ursula's biology class whether students should be taught too much. Hermione, seeing Birkin teach the

students the sexual organs of flowers, asks "do you really think the children are better, richer, happier, for all this knowledge; do you really think they are? Or is it better to leave them untouched, spontaneous."(p.90) She thinks that knowledge makes people self-conscious and therefore inhuman by destroying instinct and spontaneity. This discussion about generalised subjects in the present tense is what gives the sense that the characters are talking now; if they were to talk about a particular matter, then a specific period of time in history could be emphasized.

The novel's sense of the present moment is also reflected in its plot structure. Since every action is in the present, there can be no causality, and therefore, the plot structure is episodic. The chapters do not follow one another sequentially; each has a different setting and the action does not progress from one chapter to another. The novel starts in Beldover with the two sisters going to a wedding ceremony, then comes the wedding party at the Criches' home in Shortlands. The third chapter has no connection with the preceding two chapters; it takes place in Ursula's biology class with Birkin and Hermione arguing about the morality of knowledge acquisition.

In a polyphonic novel such as Women in Love no ideas are foregrounded over others. The characters express their views and discuss them; they may agree or disagree with one another, but there is no authorial intervention to influence or prejudice our judgement. At the party in Breadalby Birkin and Hermione debate the problem of the equality of mankind. While Hermione believes in the equality of man, Birkin thinks that people can only be equal physically but not spritually:

We're all the same in point of number. But spiritually, there is pure difference and neither equality nor inequality counts. It is upon these two bits of knowledge that you must found a state. Your democracy is an absolute lie - your brotherhood of man is a pure falsity, if you apply it further than the mathematical abstraction.(p.161)

The interaction of ideas through dialogue renders the discourse dialogic. Though the novel is written in the third person, it appears as if the narrator is one of the characters, observing the action and the character's behaviour. The description of Gerald, for example, is given through Gudrun's observation, and though the narrator tells of Birkin's shooting the moon, the reader is reminded that Ursula is watching:

He stood staring at the water. Then he stooped and picked up a stone, which he threw sharply at the pond. Ursula was aware of the bright moon leaping and swaying, all distorted, in her eyes. It seemed to shoot out arms of fire like a cuttle-fish, like a luminous polyp, palpitating strongly before her.(p.323)

This novel is polyphonic, because it is composed of different types of language - not only that of the narrator, but also the language of aristocracy represented by Hermione, the language of the educated middle-class sisters and the language of the miners.

It is clear that Bakhtin's ideas can be brought to bear upon Women in Love through illustrating its polyphonic characteristics, especially in relation to plot, setting, characterisation, and language.

The process of reading a polyphonic novel is different from that of reading a monologic one. In a monologic novel, like Sons and Lovers, the reader is guided by the author, who comments on the theme, characters and setting. We do not need to discover what kind of a place Hell Row is, because the narrator gives historical information about the colliery town and describes it in detail in the first chapter (15):

Hell Row was a block of thatched, bulging cottages that stood by the brookside on Green Lane. There lived the colliers who worked in the little gin-pits two field away....

Then, some sixty years ago, a sudden change took place. The gin-pits were elbowed aside by the large mines of the financiers.... Carston, Waite and Co. appeared.

The polyphonic novel, by contrast, is concerned with the present. It is as if the reader is meeting the characters for the first time; therefore, s/he has to be involved in an active process of understanding and interpreting their situation and environment. Women in Love begins with a brief description of the sisters:

Ursula and Gudrun Brangwen sat one morning in the window-bay of their father's house in Beldover, working and talking. Ursula was stitching a piece of brightly coloured embroidery, and Gudrun was drawing upon a board which she held on her knee. They were mostly silent, talking as their thoughts strayed through their minds.(p.53)

The reader is not told who the sisters are, or what kind of a place they inhabit. Though this opening scene resembles Sons and Lovers (it

sets the scene for the ensuing narrative) here the description seems rather insignificant; we do not know whether what we read will be important or not, nor does the narrator provide us with any clues. The novel continues with the sisters' discussion of marriage:

"Ursula," said Gudrun, "don't you really want to get married?"....

"I don't know," she replied. "It depends how you mean."....

"You don't think one needs the experience of having been married?" she asked.

"Do you think it need be an experience?" replied Ursula.

"Possibly undesirable, but bound to be an experience of some sort."

"Not really," said Ursula. "More likely to be the end of experience."(p.53)

The narrator interrupts the dialogue to indicate who is speaking at any one time, and describe the characters' actions and method of speech ("she said ironically", "Gudrun paused, slightly irritated"(p.53)). These interventions tell us something about the characters, but as David Lodge asserts, "the narrator never delivers a finalising judgemental word on the debate or its protagonists"(16). The reader has to evaluate the characters and guess their motives.

The ending of this novel lacks a final judgement: we do not know what is going to happen to Gudrun, Ursula and Birkin after Gerald's death. Birkin explains his love for Gerald to Ursula, and the novel ends with this exchange:

"Did you need Gerald?" she asked one morning.

"Yes," he said.

"Aren't I enough for you?" she asked.

"No," he said. "You are enough for me, as far as woman is concerned. You are all women to me. But I wanted a man friend, as eternal as you and I are eternal." ...

"Having you, I can live all my life without anybody else, any other sheer intimacy. But to make it complete, really happy, I wanted eternal union with a man too: another kind of love," he said.(p.583)

The narrator only indicates the speakers and refrains from making any predictions: as the novel is about the present the reader is left to work out what is going to happen next. Therefore, any interpretation may be permissible.

The setting of Women in Love can be analysed in relation to the narrative technique of a polyphonic novel. Unlike Sons and Lovers, where the narrator gives a detailed description of Hell Row, the places in Women in Love are not described in detail - the emphasis is on the characters' reactions to them. As the polyphonic novel dispenses with an omniscient narrator, the reader receives information through the characters' observations - especially from those who are encountering something for the first time, or who have become alienated from a particular place. When the sisters return to their house at Beldover, everything they once cherished now appears futile and sordid:

They looked in the big dining room. It was a good-sized room, but now a cell would have been lovelier. The large bay windows were naked, the floor was stripped, and a border of dark polish went round the tract of pale boarding. In the

faded wall-paper were dark patches where furniture has stood, where pictures had hung. The sense of walls, dry, thin, flimsy-seeming walls, and a flimsy flooring, pale with its artificial black edges, was neutralising to the mind.(p.462)

Gudrun draws attention to the "amorphous" and "ghostly" streets of Beldover; she now has a different view of the town, as a result of her education in London. She can never accept that she belongs to this place: "If this were human life, if these were human beings, living in a complete world, then what was her own world, outside?" (p.58). These observations are not objective - consequently, it is necessary for the reader to evaluate them for him/herself. Characters refer to what seems interesting from their point of view. Gerald (who does not know the world of the artists) observes the cafe society in London with astonishment:

Gerald moved in his slow, observant, glistening-attentive motion down between the tables and the people whose shadowy faces looked up as he passed. He seemed to be entering into some strange element, passing into an illuminated new region, among a host of licentious souls.... He looked over all the dim, evanescent, strangely illuminated faces that bent across the tables.(p.114)

Gudrun, an artist, on the other hand, hates "its atmosphere of petty vice and petty jealousy and petty art." (p.471)

Characterisation is inextricably related to narrative in Women in Love. In Sons and Lovers, the narrator gives biographical information about the characters and comments on their personality: "Mrs. Morel

came of a good old burgher family ... who remained stout Congregationalists her temper, proud and unyielding, she had from the Coppards."(17) As Graham Holderness points out, Women in Love does not have "the conventional 'division of labour' between narrator and characters, where the two occupy discrete spaces and speak different languages."(18) What we know about the characters is either disclosed by the characters themselves, or by other characters through dialogue and observation. Hermione knows that she is an ambitious person and that people consider her "a Kulturtrager, a medium for the culture of ideas."(p.63) The first impression we are given about Gerald is from Gudrun:

Gudrun lighted on him at once. There was something northern about him that magnetized her. In his clear northern flesh and his fair hair was a glisten like cold sunshine refracted through crystals of ice. And he looked so new, unbroached, pure as an arctic thing. Perhaps he was thirty years old, perhaps more. His gleaming beauty, maleness, like a young, good-humoured, smiling wolf, did not blind her to the significant, sinister stillness in his bearing, the lurking danger of his unsubdued temper. 'His totem is the wolf,' she repeated to herself.(p.61)

The word "perhaps" suggests that this is the observation of another character; an omniscient narrator would be more certain about the age of the character s/he is describing. Gerald's act of killing his brother when he was a child is first disclosed by Birkin and then by Ursula in a conversation with Gudrun. Although it may have seemed like an accident, Ursula thinks that "there was an unconscious will behind

it" (p.99).

The characters' personalities are likewise revealed through dialogue. Gerald, the mine-owner who has a cold, stiff outlook, thinks that the purpose of living is to work and be productive. He tells Birkin that he would not want "to be in a world of people who acted individually and spontaneously." (p.82) In the end, he commits suicide, because he cannot bear to be with liberated people, such as Gudrun and Loeke. Characters may also comment on each other's personalities - Ursula, for instance, never approves of Gerald because of his ambition of "applying the latest appliances!" (p.99). She believes that "He is several generations of youngness at one go.... He'll have to die soon, when he's made every possible improvement, and there will be nothing more to improve." (p.99) By contrast, Birkin is a liberated man; he is described by Ursula as having "a sense of richness and of strong, free liberty." (p.94) and his advice to Gerald (" - Instead of chopping yourself down to fit the world, chop the world down to fit yourself." (p.276)) reveals his preference for individuality and self-expression. He despises the restrictions placed on human life by his society. His refusal of marriage and sex (he thinks that both of them may impose limitations on his existence) is given from the narrator's point of view, but we are reminded that "Birkin meditated [on these matters] whilst he was ill." (p.271)

Such techniques of characterisation enable the reader to form his/her own judgement. The narrator refrains from commenting on any aspect of the characters' behaviour, as Holderness suggests: "The narrator is not a reliable acquaintance communicating necessary information, staking out the moral perimeters and guiding the reader's

judgement."(19)

It is clear that D. H. Lawrence's approach to Women in Love is directly related to Bakhtin's notion of the dialogic principle: the listener (or the reader) is as active as the speaker in the act of communication, as s/he reinterprets and assimilates the utterance s/he has heard or read. It is this dialogism, the interaction of the interlocutors, that assumes paramount importance. A monologic novel, like Tom Jones, does not display the dialogic aspect of language, for "the primary knower, understander and seer is the author alone" (20); s/he dictates the language of the characters. On the contrary, the discourse of a polyphonic novel is dialogic; the characters converse with each other and the reader is given freedom of interpretation without the apparent interference of the author.

Whereas critics such as Leavis and Ingram have suggested that Women in Love differs from the earlier novels of Lawrence, they nonetheless perceive the author as omniscient, controlling the language of the characters. However, it is clear that the characters can discuss matters without the interference of Lawrence in their dialogue. Though Leavis identifies Birkin with Lawrence,(21) there is no textual justification for the author apparently seeking to favour Birkin's ideas which (like all other ideas in this novel) are revealed in conversation with other characters. Birkin discloses his hatred of humanity to Ursula:

... there would be no absolute loss, if every human being perished tomorrow.... The real tree of life would then be rid of the most ghastly, heavy crop of Dead Sea fruit, the intolerable burden of myriad simulacra of people, an

infinite weight of mortal lies. (p.187)

He thinks that "- Man is a mistake, he must go." (p.188) Ursula disagrees with Birkin; she believes that his notion of humanity perishing one day is nothing more than a pleasant fancy. At no point does the narrator suggest that Birkin's ideas are to be accepted by the reader.

Bakhtin's theory of polyphony can be summarised thus:(22)

The novel orchestrates all its themes, the totality of the world of objects and ideas depicted and expressed in it, by means of the social diversity of speech types and by the differing individual voices.

This is reflected in the discourse of the novel in the interaction of various types of languages - like the language of the aristocracy, the intelligentsia and the miners. The aristocrats gathered at Hermione's party talk "like a rattle of small artillery, always slightly sententious" (p.139). They think "it is the greatest thing in life - to know. It is really to be happy, to be free"(p.141), and speak French or quote passages from literary works. Birkin's argument that knowledge can only be of the past is interrupted by the Italian woman's quotation from Fathers and Sons. Gerald, a well-trained person, responds by defining education in terms of production: "[I]sn't education really like gymnastics, isn't the end of education the production of a well-trained, vigorous, energetic mind?"(p.141) The sheer variety of utterances suggest the dialogue is not predetermined by the author, it takes place at the present moment.

The world of the artists and the major characters' response to it is likewise revealed through dialogue. Gudrun's observation of the

Bohemian life in the Pompadour Cafe disturbs her; she cannot tolerate the artists' making fun of Birkin's sermon-like letter about "a return along the Flux of Corruption, to the original rudimentary conditions of being - !" (p.474) Halliday reads the letter and the others interrupt him to comment on the passage:

"And in the great retrogression, the reducing back of the created body of life, we get knowledge, and beyond knowledge, the phosphorescent ecstasy of acute sensation." Oh, I do think those phrases are too absurdly wonderful....

"And if, Julius, you want this ecstasy of reduction with the Pussum, you must go on till it is fulfilled...."

"I think it's awful cheek to write like that," said the Pussum.

"Yes - yes, so do I," said the Russian. "He is a megalomaniac ... He thinks he is the Saviour of man." (p.475)

This passage shows that the ideas of a character, (in this case Birkin's), are disclosed and discussed by the other characters without intervention from the narrator.

Another example of this occurs when the German sculptor and painter, Loerke, expounds his ideas about art. After Gudrun and Ursula draw attention to his frieze on the wall of a factory, he says that "Art should interpret industry" (p.518), for he believes that unless the ugly working places are decorated with art works, no one would continue to work. When Loerke shows the sisters his photogravure reproduction of a statuette, Ursula considers that the horse in the gravure is improper; it must be a picture of the artist. Loerke

rejects the mimetic theory of art, saying that a work of art is not a picture of anything:

It is a work of art, it is a picture of nothing, of absolutely nothing ... it has no relation with the everyday world of this and other, there is no connection between them ... they are two different and distinct planes of existence, and to translate one into the other is worse than foolish.(p.525)

Since Loerke's ideas of art are discussed in detail, it may be assumed that Loerke in a sense represents the author's point of view as well, but such identifications are unfounded, because Lawrence does not identify with his characters in the novel.

The chapter "A Chair" demonstrates that social differences are revealed not through narrative but through dialogue. While looking for furniture, Birkin buys a chair at the market - something much resented by Ursula. The chair reminds Birkin of the past and he compares it with those of the age of mechanism. Ursula disagrees with him, saying that every age is materialistic. Finally, they decide to sell the chair to a young couple and not to buy any furniture, for Birkin rejects having a definite living place: "It is a horrible tyranny of a fixed milieu, where each piece of furniture is a commandment-stone."(p.444) The young couple (described by Birkin as "the children of men ... [who] like market-places and street-corners best." (p.450)) cannot understand why Birkin and Ursula want to sell the newly-bought chair. Unlike Ursula and Birkin, whose education permits them to reflect more deeply on events, they are not aware of its connection with the past, and its importance in determining whether one should

have a fixed living place.

Lawrence does not comment on the characters' speculations upon generalised matters, like sexuality, love and death (which give the sense that the novel concentrates on the present moment). After having met Loerke, Gudrun becomes aware of Gerald's dominating personality, his tendency to possess her. Sitting up in bed and thinking about her relationship with Gerald she says to herself: "He bores me, you know. His maleness bores me." She thinks that all men are the same: "Look at Birkin. Built out of the limitation of conceit they are, and nothing else." (p.563) The expressions "you know" and "look at Birkin" gives the impression that she is talking to someone.

In this novel the absence of an omniscient narrator, commenting on the plot, setting and characters, creates the effect of polyphony: the information about a place or a character is disclosed by the characters through dialogue. It is likely that Lawrence developed this technique, because he was dissatisfied with conventional novelistic forms. In a letter written to Edward Garnett after having finished The Sisters, (the original form of The Rainbow and Women in Love) he says: "I shan't write in the same manner as Sons and Lovers again, I think - in that hard, violent style full of sensation and presentation." (23) Though critics such as Leavis consider him a preacher who is mainly concerned with philosophical matters in his novels, he does not attempt to preach in Women in Love, but rather makes his characters reveal their own ideas. This reflects his own scepticism with regard to philosophy and religion: in his article "Morality and the Novel" he emphasises that they tend to deal in absolutes. However, in real life things tend to change according to

the context in which they occur ("Everything is true in its own time, place, circumstance"); and this should be reflected in the novelistic form:(24)

Morality in the novel is the trembling instability of the balance. When the novelist puts his thumb in the scale, to pull down the balance to his own predilection, that is immorality.

It is clear that Women in Love represents an attempt to put such ideas in practice.



Notes

1. F.R.Leavis, D.H.Lawrence: Novelist, (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books Ltd., 1968), 181 (orig. edn. 1955).
2. Ibid., 179.
3. Ibid., 15.
4. Allan Ingram, The Language of D.H.Lawrence, (London: Macmillan Education Ltd., 1990), 111.
5. Ibid., 111.
6. Mikhail Bakhtin, The Dialogic Imagination, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist, ed. Michael Holquist, (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1982), 4.
7. Ibid., 7.
8. Ibid., 55.
9. Ibid., 47.
10. Ibid., 256.
11. Mikhail Bakhtin, Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics, trans. R.W. Rotsel, (Ann Arbor: Ardis, 1973), 24.
12. Ibid., 5.
13. Ibid., 239.
14. All references to the text of Women in Love from the Penguin edn., ed. Charles L. Ross, (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books Ltd., 1986).
15. D.H.Lawrence, Sons and Lovers, ed. Keith Sagar, (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books Ltd., 1985), 35.
16. David Lodge, After Bakhtin: Essays on Fiction and Criticism (London: Routledge, 1990), 64.

17. D.H. Lawrence, Sons and Lovers, 42.
18. Graham Holderness, Women in Love (Philadelphia: Open University Press, 1986), 9.
19. Ibid., 9.
20. Bakhtin, Problems, 66.
21. Leavis, D.H.Lawrence: Novelist, 159.
22. Bakhtin, Dialogic Imagination, 263.
23. D.H.Lawrence, Selected Literary Criticism, ed. Antony Beal, (London: Heinemann, 1973), 15.
24. Phoenix: The Posthumous Papers of D.H.Lawrence, ed. Edward D. McDonald (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books Ltd.,1985), 528.

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T. C.

Yükseköğretim Kurulu
Dokümantasyon Merkezi