



**“The Metaphysics of a Mystical Man-Man Love Relationship in D. H. Lawrence’s
Women in Love with Reference to Rumi’s poetry, a Persian Sufi Master”**

Cyrine Kortas

Abstract:

This paper compares D. H. Lawrence’s *Women in Love* to a selection of poems by the Persian mystic poet Jalal-Eddine-Rumi. Lawrence and Rumi belong to two different, divergent ages and cultural backgrounds, yet the religious sensibilities in their poetic imagination prove comparable and challenge the fathoming of the theme of love as a sacred bond. Hence, the main purpose of the following comparative study is to examine the dynamics of love and power as both authors seek love through means other than the ones prescribed by their societies. Such an approach is to use the writings of an established mystic poet, the founder of the order of the whirling dervishes, to understand Lawrence’s exploration of the theme of love as a mystical religious experience, and to sabotage the conflicting theories about male love relationship when analyzing the wrestling scene in the novel in relation to the Sama dance. Unlike other research interested in the mystical and religious in man-woman love relationship as explored by both writers, the paper in hand strives for an understanding of man-man love relationship. It aims at emphasizing the dynamics of the transcendental qualities in Birkin-Gerald’s relationship used to be associated with homosexuality and accounting for its operation beyond an established homoerotic genre or tradition when comparing it with Rumi’s relation with his friend Shams of Tabriz. The paper seeks an adjustment of the examination and understanding of masculinity and male relationship as elaborated by Lawrence and Rumi as advocate of new fathoming of gender.

Key Words: Metaphysics, Metaphysics, Man-Man Love, Gender, Masculinity, Lawrence, Rumi,

I. Introduction:

Women in Love is a war novel that introspectively assesses the modern era and the leading forces that bring calamity and destruction upon Man through parallel love struggles that mark its narrative world, dwelling and floundering in chaos. It is amid such confusion that Birkin seeks redemption by exploring different love relationships, asserting that man needs “a union with a man too: another kind of love” (*Women* 421). This need for a man-man love relationship raises the concern of homosexuality and questions the novel’s challenge to social and gender norms. Lawrence’s accentuation on the healing and redeeming powers of love brings to mind a Persian image of the Sufi poet Rumi and his intriguing relationship with his friend Shams. Hence, the main purpose of the following comparative study is to examine the dynamics of love and power as both authors seek love through means other than the ones prescribed by their societies. Such an approach is to use the writings of an established mystic poet, the founder of the order of the whirling dervishes, to understand Lawrence’s exploration of the theme of love as a mystical religious experience, and to sabotage the conflicting theories about male love relationship when analyzing the wrestling scene in the novel in relation to the Samaa dance.

II. *Women in Love*: A War Text.

In a state of war, the English man intensely suffered from the wretchedness of the fight and the stiffness of mechanization that left him disillusioned and lacking hope. As a reaction, Lawrence wrote extensively to redeem the modern man’s soul and restore his faith and hope. He used this pain in a Christian tradition in which the pain “revealed the believer’s love of Christ, fostered unity with Christ and the world, and began to draw the believer beyond the physical Jesus who suffered on the Cross to understand the immensity of love that motivated Christ in the world to suffer on humanity’s behalf” (Rose 58). In other words, Lawrence intended to experience intensive pain so as to reveal his love for life and for Man. Seeing himself as a new Christ, he developed characters that go beyond time and space and gain an aura of mythical dimension that allows them to experience this suffering “on humanity’s behalf” (Rose 58). Each of the male characters in the novel, Birkin and Gerald, manifest an involvement with their changing world and harbor unrealistic dreams at a time of drastic change. Birkin, on the one hand, asserts that his generation is not engaged in a cycle of creation at a time of sweeping destruction. His overwhelming pessimism drives to Ursula to scream “You only want death”(Women). Gerald, on the other hand, seeks to escape death; yet he fails measurably when dying frozen in the Alps. The sweeping atmosphere of death

recalls the stiffening mood of the Great War that torn England apart. In his notes on the novel, Lawrence writes:

[*Women in Love*] took its final shape in the mindset
of the period of war, though it does not concern the
war itself. I wish the time to remain unfixed so that the
bitterness of the war may be taken for granted in the
characters. They say that love is the greatest thing. They
persist in saying this, the foul liars, and just look at what
they did. . . . (viii-ix)

The narrative does not directly treat the theme of war, yet it touches upon it by treating its very counterpart theme, that of love. Lawrence, as any true Sufi master, believed in the prowess of love to heal and redeem the evil in Man's world. And so he wrote about these four people who fought for love, companionship and friendship. Lawrence met the Christian tradition in associating the mystic experience with pain in the love not of a divinity but in the love of Man. for Lawrence, the war is the absence of love and for that he wanted to make up for it with his experimentation with various loves including that of a man-man love.

Very likely Rumi lived during turbulent times during the thirteenth century, times that tried not only Rumi's heart and mind but also other philosophers and thinkers who grew aware of the corruption and decay the Muslim was living. He hoped for a way out. The answer lied in his very verse: What can I do, Muslims? I do not know myself

I am drunk from the cup of love, the two worlds have escaped me

I have no concern but carouse and rapture.

To flee the wretchedness of his time, Rumi runs to love to heal his soul and restore his humanity at a time when surrounding people lost their spirits to materialism and greed. It becomes clear that these two authors transcend time and space to share a common interest in saving humanity, considering it a sacred mission and a lifetime fight.

III. The Mystic

3.1 The Mystic in Sufi Tradition

Mysticism is a system of belief that deals with human endeavour to grasp, understand, or reach the essence of reality, presupposing a faith in an unknown realm beyond the phenomenal, physical world. Mysticism has been described as the great spiritual system of all religions, “since ancient times it was the custom of ascetics, the poor, and the pious . . .” (Nurbakhsh 11). In the mystical path, words are to relate to the ineffable, using images of various natures to convey the reclaimed reality. The mystic becomes a *raison d’être* for the Sufi poet who is a mystic first, then a poet with the act of writing is not an end in itself but it is the outcome of an experience in which the poet passionately immersed body and soul in the love of God and the answering of his call, inspired by an outpouring of his strongest emotions. Different definitions of mysticism are provided. Ninian Smart defines mysticism as “primarily consisting in an interior or introvertive (sic) quest, culminating interior experiences which are not described in terms of sense-experience or mental images” (75). He emphasizes on the fact that Sufism is a unique, interior experience that cannot be expressed in terms of physical, sacral images. Another definition is provided by Llyod Ridgeon when pointing out to the fact that Sufis describe their mystical experiences using sensual images. Both definitions heighten the uniqueness of the mystical experience and its need for new images whether sensual, physical, or spiritual to explore it. This need brings the sensual and spiritual to an equal footing.

Triggered by powerful emotions, the mystical experience for the Sufis highlights divine love as one of the pillars of Sufi philosophy and path to Reality. Love is therefore a gift that man in his weakness cannot attract nor reject, accounting therefore for the mystic poet’s use of intimate, sensual love images that assert that God’s love cannot be fathomed in terms of spiritual but also sensual, earthly love, a sacred bond that brings along our two authors Jalel-eddine-Rumi and D. H. Lawrence. The paper in hand attempts to analyze and prove the possibility of a comparison of mystical poetry of the Eastern tradition with its Western counterpart. The analysis does not merely seek to prove the mystical quality of Lawrence’s writing that matches his understanding of the body as a religious cult, but to argue for the author’s idea of Man-Man love, when compared with Rumi’s love for Shams, cannot be a call for a homosexual counterpart to the heterosexual love that Lawrence theorized about and called for. Both authors understand love as a prowess that transcends the constraints of the now and material so as to embrace the true and beautiful, the universe. Rumi believed that Man is the incarnation of God, always longing for unity with the divine to reach wholeness and perfection. Though Lawrence did not preach for a union with God per se, the comparison stands well as he believed in Man to reach his togetherness and overcome limitations. My

paper considers and asserts the healing power of love to the destructive war calamities that negatively affected the modern man.

3.2 The Mystic in Lawrence's Work.

Though Lawrence is not known as a mystic poet in the Christian tradition, a study of the meaning of love in a novel such as *Women in Love* touches upon a mystical religious sensibility as it celebrates sensual love as a holy sacrament. The novel with its unique and unconventional structure becomes an epic poem of sensual love that reflects the author's vision of himself as a prophetic, spiritual writer and a restless critic of his mechanical age. In the image of Byronic poet, he preaches on "ecstasy, mystic conjunction and annihilation" in relation to love, concepts developed by Sufi mystic poets. Not being a Sufi himself, it becomes urgent to consider the source that enlightened Lawrence on such understanding of love. In here comes as an answer Lawrence the late Romantic.

Mystical speculations prove to be no different from other spiritual experiences such as the Romantic speculations on the metaphysics of the universe. In the Romantic tradition, a powerful emotional and rational explanation of being is sought when placing man at the heart of the universe. A mystic aspiration of the direct experience of the divine matches the Romantic desire to be totally one with nature, which can be interpreted as "unity" and "annihilation" in the mystical tradition of Sufi. Many of the love scenes in the novel are performed at the heart of the English countryside, away from the city and its smothering atmosphere. An image recurrent in Lawrence's writing as love, this natural and sweeping feeling, is in need of a natural setting to flourish.

Additionally, Lawrence's attitude towards sexual love and eroticism is shrouded in mystical language and religious symbolism that seeks to grasp the mystery of creation, a fascination with the hidden cosmic, veiled by dogma and tradition in a late Victorian society that brought man far away from his reality. Through a fascination with the erotic body, chained by custom, morality, and culture, Lawrence departed from the puritan teachings of the church that annihilated the body to journey through the sacredly vital source of life in which the natural body is the key. Lawrence uses "love" and "sexuality" as granters of the mystical experience of being, by developing a fascination with the theme of love as a sacred bond that meets Rumi's belief in love as a means to reach the higher state of transcendental, Godhead consciousness. Hence, in conjunction with the mystical speculations of Rumi as an established mystic, I will explore Lawrence's mystic portrayal of human love as a redeeming force as well as a quest for self-consciousness.

IV. Shams and Rumi: A Mystic Friendship that Birkin and Gerald Fail to Meet.

Throughout history, many were the examples of intense and intellectual intimacy between men framed in a chaste, nonsexual but highly affectionate bond. These “bromances” have resulted in creations that would shape our understanding of the relationship between Gerald and Birkin. One of them is that of Shams of Tabriz and Jalel-eddine-Rumi. Due to their refusal to follow conventions and fit into the stereotypical norms of time, society, and relations, these friendships achieve a metaphysical level. Being mystical or philosophical speculation that unites these people, a transcendental exploration is sought, permitting the sabotage of conflicting theories about men’s relationships associated with homosexuality, and accounting for their operation beyond an established homoerotic genre or tradition. Spilka recognizes that male friendship has always been a problem which society seeks to deny. “Apparently,” he writes “we see a kind of no man’s land between the casual and homosexual liaison” (67). Lawrence as well as Rumi sought a “friendship [that is] always peripheral and expendable through paradoxically vital,” (68) constituting an “absolute mystic” freedom.

Rumi was a traditional preacher until he met Shams of Tabriz. The latter’s meeting with Rumi was a non-precedent event in the Sufi world. By the time they came to know each other, Rumi was aged 37, an accomplished theologian and a devoted lover of the beautiful and good, an incarnation of God’s beauty and bountiness, while Shams was a wandering dervish who mingled with the low and unorthodox, such as laborers, harlots and camel drivers. Their meeting announced the refurbishing of the teaching of Islam, Shariaa, with love.

As Rumi was riding through the public place of Konya, a stranger challenged him, “Who is greater Mohammed or Bestani¹. Rumi’s reply “Mohammed” was not a calling for a debate as much as a realization of the mystery itself. It is a realization that the prophet himself started the Sufi way of annihilation and unity and he was constantly in search of God, the lover. It is this very answer that would trigger Rumi’s journey into mystical annihilation and completion where fire meets fire, ocean meets ocean and Rumi finds his true being, Insan-e-Kamil, the perfect Man Lawrence was searching for in his novels to get England out of her misery and surrender to modernity wretchedness.

Recalling their encounter, Rumi writes “what I thought of before as God, I met today in a human being” three years later Shams was murdered by one of Rumi’s jealous followers. The latter was devastated by the loss of his soul mate and poured out his sorrow and longing in love poems, meeting Lawrence’s belief that art should emerge from a “religious impulse which must be felt in the blood and bones” not merely thought visually. “A picture,” he

¹ Bestani is a legendary Sufi known for his claims for merging with God, that is to say reaching God.

writes, “lives with the life you put into it” (Phoenix 560). Rumi’s poetry is passionate, spiritual, sensual, often written about the mysteries and ecstasy of love that are manifested in the Samaa dance: as they dance, they move their jacks, symbolize the grave, showing that they shed earthly ties. As they whirl, they raise their hands in a prayer. The whirling symbolizes the rotation of the universe in the presence of God, glorifying love as a religion.

V. *Women in Love*: A Mystic Poem-Like Novel

What Rumi explored in his poetic verses is the search for an example of Insan-e-Kamil, the perfect man, the perfected or completed human being that reaches perfection when being in love. To reach perfection, Rumi considers music, dance, and poetry mingled harmoniously in the samaa, the whirling practice that the dervishes developed into a ritual. In the samaa, the seeker symbolically turns towards the truth, grows through love, and abandons the ego to find the true beloved and reach perfection. The seeker-lover arises from this spiritual journey mature and whole. Rumi sings:

Love’s nationality is separate from all other religions,

The lover’s religion and nationality is the Beloved God

The lover’s cause is separate from all other causes

Love is the astrolabe of God’s mysteries.

It is love that redeems the soul when ascending through the perfect being of the beloved. It is in this vein that Lawrence wrote *Women in Love* a journey into love. Evolving a theory of love, the novel is a quest for the perfect love, arguing against “the ubiquitous disintegrating ethos and values in order [for the characters] to carry out their fulfillment in the individual as well as social relationship” (Wadhawan 125). Characters engage in real, life-like experiences, confronting the barriers of class, education, culture, and gender differences that come in the way of attaining a perfect relationship. Being the main concern, the novel is built on the premise of love “. . . the core of life and human experience in its totality and that a perfect union . . . could help rescuing a man from the world of crumbling ideal” (Wadhawan 129). Such an exploration necessitates a particular narrative structure that would heighten the experience of love.

Lawrence was quite impatient with the conventional demands of a rigid and coherent plot construction made by a novelist, perfecting a form that bears his distinct mark, by combining myths, allegories and symbols. Lawrence’s novels, in general, have been accused of being formless; but, Lawrence was quite impatient of the conventional demands of a rigid and

coherent plot construction. His was a study in “patterns of psychic relationships” (Huxley, 23). He is not satisfied with portraying “the old stable ego of the character” (24), for he knows that there is an ego according to whose actions the individual is unrecognizable; and this unrecognizable individual cannot be fully and convincingly portrayed in the conventional modes of writing, nor can this kind of writing help him in depicting “the changing rainbow of our living relationships” (24). It is true that the narrative structure of *Women in Love* is complicated.

On the one hand, it has lucid narration technique to draw the outline of its theme; on the other hand, it has the psychological description which is unique and has profound symbolism. It is the complex structure and unique creative writing style that aroused the interests of the critics and readers to study and further explore the exquisite literary charm of Lawrence (Zheng, 2010). *Women in Love* was attacked by critics for its alleged lack of a coherent structure and want of a unity in its plot construction and design. But certain other critics favorably commented on its structure and gave convincing analysis of its design. Leavis (1955), for instance, found the organization of this novel to be “rich and close” (11) from the moment, the Brangwen girls begin their conversation about marriage; the novel unfolds or builds up with an astonishing fertility of life, continues Leavis. This life is all significant life, he says. Not a scene, episode, image or touch but forwards the organized development of the themes. Daleski (1965) speaks of the “compact tightness” (77) of the novel’s organization. The structural principle of *Women in Love*, says Daleski, is “locative” (77).

Women in Love is a work that bears witness of Lawrence as a writer who experimented with structure, perfecting the form that bears his distinct mark. The form, which he has evolved by combining myths, allegories and symbols, has been perfected in his second phase of writing. The novel discussed in this paper bears enough evidence to justify the hypothesis that although themes were what Lawrence was interested in, form and structure were his important concerns. *Women in Love* developed as he progressed as a writer, epitomizing the Lawrentian cult of being a poem with its insistence on symbolism that is heightened in important scene being: the wrestling scene.

4.1 The Samaa Dance.

Rumi encouraged the Samaa dance, a tradition based on listening to music and turning or whirling in a sacred dance. The dance is evoked in one of Rumi’s poems as in:

Dance, when you’re broken open

Dance, if you’ve torn the bandage off.

Dance in the middle of fighting

Dance in your blood.

Dance, when you're perfectly free.

The word dance is repeated 5 times, which gives a rhythmic fluidity not only to the poem that transcends the limitations of the poem structure, but also to the dancer who liberates himself from the constraints of the body and the earthly. Dancing becomes a state that elevates the Sufi beyond the broken and the torn to reach the wholly and divine.

It is this very symbolic dance that marks the movements of the two friends in *Women in Love* in one of the novel's most controversial scenes: the wrestling scene. The wrestling scene, long studied as a scene of homosexual experimentation, proves to be a mystic ritual that Lawrence sought to reenact a male ritual so as to give birth to the Perfect Man he longed for. Hence, this paper attempts to trace the mystical in the wrestling scene where the male body is celebrated and the love of it is worshiped.

4.2 The Wrestling Scene.

Actually, the desire to relinquish everything at the altar of love is Lawrence's metaphysical philosophy, an idea he shared with Sufi masters and poets. The English author tried to project through his male characters, Birkin and Gerald, his notion of love that arises from the ashes a destroyed society to bring it back order, announcing as such the birth of the New, Modern and Whole Man. In the narrative in hand, Birkin is the symbol of this sacred order while Gerald is the prophet of its doom. Both men are depicted naked, fighting each other in an almost obscure room as the only light comes from the chimney. Both realize their destiny through personal encounter with the flames of forging and becoming are roaring to give birth to the whole noble being Lawrence was searching for, in one of the novel's most symbolic and metaphysical scene.

Before focusing on the wrestling scene and delve into its mystical dimension, a rereading of the novel is needed in the light of a Sufi understanding of the power of love as a feeling that gets man closer to the divine. The novel acts as a thesis on man-woman relationship. Yet, it offers a relative counterpart a man-man love. While the union between man and woman is the essence of Lawrence's idea of a perfect world, the man- man love is thought to be a means to perfect the first. Birkin, though managed a satisfying relationship with Ursula, felt the necessity of having a union with a man too to render him whole and complete as well as socially useful. It is in this vein that we can understand Birkin's relationship with Gerald.

However, the latter remains at the threshold of the experience, caught by his complicated desire to control. Gerald's inability to embrace life –enhancing experiences is largely due to his desire for power, manifested in his monomaniac nature. Lawrence writes “Gerald could neither belong to her, nor love her, nor tear himself away from her. He was possessed by a deadly und uncontrolled desire to kill her” (*Women* 135). It is his desire to control Gudrun that prevents him from enjoying the love he feels for her as she refuses to melt in his character. Seeking to render his partner a broken- fragment that melts in him, Gerald contradicts Lawrence's idea of a man-woman relationship where both partners are two stars dancing in a parallel way in the orbit of each, a creative union that brings not only fulfillment “where man had being and woman had being: two pure beings each constituting the freedom of the other, balancing each other like two poles of one force, like two angels or two demons” (*Women* 199). To say that Lawrence was for partners discovering “individual freedom” is no contrast to his call for them to seek “freedom together.” It is this freedom that Gerald fails to find and remains at the threshold of the metaphysical experience of love.

Gerald fails to realize a fruitful union with a woman, he therefore runs to Birkin seeking solace and comfort. After making love with Gudrun, he remains cold and unyielding, self-centered and full of misconception regarding his various relationships that are fraught with tension and imbalance: “could neither belong to her, nor have her” (*Women* 135). His restlessness is derived from Lawrence's belief that the dilemma of the modern men is that they “are all bullies, all being bullied” (*Letters* 64). On the other hand, Birkin expresses a strong urge to love a man fully and completely. He tells Gerald about the German knights' “Blutbruderschaft”, a ritual where knights wound themselves and rub each other's blood into that. At first, Gerald doubts such a male ritual as it entails surrender.

Birkin's need to connect with Gerald echoes Sedgwick's argument that men's desire for each other is mediated through this system of compulsory and self-regulating bonds that enforce the subordination of the individual. Boys move from the heterosexuality of childhood where their father holds the power, to the homosexuality of same-sex bonding where power achieves a balance, symmetry between equals; to finally the heterosexuality of young adulthood, where patriarchal powers are transmitted to them, as exemplified in her work *Between Men*. Lawrence was apprehensive of the loss of male freedom as a consequence of forced gender structure. In *Fantasia of the Unconscious*, he argued that sex unites two people on a positive level, but it gives them a pre-dominance, it tends to disintegrate society. He therefore considers another sacred bond, a man-man relationship where friendship and camaraderie restore order in a man's life. It is this very thought that Birkin echoes when asking Gerald to rub each other's blood and unite, a unity that is supposed to restore balance and equilibrium.

Gerald considers any relationship in terms of control and subordination. He represents a society where men stand as the epitome of power and control. Actually, similar scenes assert that “gender is intrinsic even to the most ostensibly non-gendered of situations in [the novel]” (Williams 23). Gerald answers his society’s expectation of being in control, when attempting to find love; yet his tragedy stems from being “a stupendous assertion of not being”(“The Crown” 446). This tragedy is the result of a growing desire to establish authority thwarted by the father, the lover, and Birkin. The juxtaposition of violence and sexual imagery in the lovemaking scene with Gudrun followed by the wrestling scene with Birkin combines the two instinctual elements that Gerald believes in to prove his manhood. Hence, the violence of the wrestling scene is described using sexual imagery and becomes a contest of consummation of masculine power.

This sexual imagery associated with the wrestling scene entails a battle of ideologies rather than a struggle of sexual desire and want. The scene answers a Lawrentian concern with a superior instinctual knowledge set in binary opposition with the idea of intellect and will. Gerald, in both battle and novel, represents this civilization in which man’s attained subjectivity is assured by his submission to culture’s dominant ideology where interaction and competition in a male dominant society is what provides the individual with a meaning of the self. Yet, one wonders as to the nature of such meaning. In fact, Gerald’s role is to be understood in terms of a representative of a collective destructiveness that marked modern society at the eve of the Great War. While Birkin takes off the chains of society, expressing a desire to lead modern civilization away from what he perceives as inevitable destruction, Gerald, though takes off his clothes during the fight, remains attached to the denials and destructive instincts, determining the role he plays in society as the inheritor of Victorian concepts of masculinity.

The fight between Gerald’s physical strength and Birkin’s instinct symbolizes a mystic journey for truth that ends with destruction due to Gerald’s devastating nature. It is another example of Birkin’s endless attempts to influence the physically mighty Gerald (*Women* 54). The Lawrentian narrator hopes that through the melting of the two men, one complete being will arise with the best combined qualities. The two naked men are surrounded by the heating blazes of the fire, manifested in the BBC adaptation of the novel, recalls one of Rumi’s verses:

Should lover’s heart rejoice unless I burn?

For my heart is lover’s dwelling

If you will burn your house, burn it, Love!

The burning fire that consumes the lovers is also associated with elements of nudity and the forging of a new being. The feverish dance is thought to bring Rumi into an ecstatic state that would drive him to tear off his clothes; but, as public nudity in Islam is forbidden, it is done symbolically when the shaykh turns into the centre while holding the cloak as if just “ripped” from the collar to the lower chest. The liberation of the soul and melting with the lover redefine Birkin and Gerald’s nudity understood as freeing their souls from the manacles of society and immerse into the spiritual journey of the mystic. When Gerald fails Birkin, the latter considers him “doomed, limited” (*Women* 207). His resistance stands for a fear to surrender to a new, unknown reality. Gerald has always blindly adhered to the legacy of his father “God of the Machine, Deus ex Machina,” (*Women* 228) that hastens his inevitable downfall.

VI. Conclusion

Rumi did employ the symbolism of homoerotic, or what is known as androgynous love in his poem when addressing his mystical journey and so did Lawrence. While Rumi followed a 300 year-old convention of poetry in Persian literature, (Lewis, 324) Lawrence was developing his own theory of art that accentuated the importance of the physical and natural in fathoming the human experience and in order to restore its vitality that had been lost to machines and technologies. As Rumi looked for a superior *Insane-e-Kamal*, Lawrence was looking for man as perfect as he could be.

The paper began with an interest in the power of love healing the calamities of war; it branched on an interest in the limitations in defining gender roles, mainly the masculine category that seemed to thrive on the paradigm of control and dominance, exhibiting essentially cultural and economic traits. Examining gender through the lens of the mystic helps understand Lawrence’s vision of naturalness. In Lawrence’s *Women in Love*, four people who are struggling with maintaining their identities within romantic relationships, in which Birkin and Gerald, assert their masculine identities performing violence to assert the self. While Gerald is consumed by this violence, Birkin aims at bridging the gap between his self and other, attempting at altering a fixed and rigid society. Through these two examples, Lawrence positions masculinity as being endangered by excessive desire for control, driven by a mechanical thrill to tame the natural. This destabilization of gender concerned Lawrence and encouraged him to explore varied visions of gender relations that granted men an alternative to the one determined by the modern, industrial society that proved to be futile with Gerald’s death.

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