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**The Quest for Wholeness in the Fiction of D. H. Lawrence: An Analytical Study of Selected Novels and Short Stories**

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**Abstract**

This study explores the recurring theme of wholeness in the fiction of D. H. Lawrence, focusing on selected novels and short stories. It argues that Lawrence's characters often navigate internal fragmentation emotional, sexual, and spiritual caused by modernity, repression, and alienation. Through psychoanalytic, symbolic, and existential frameworks, the research analyzes Lawrence's narrative strategies, symbolic use of nature and the body, and his portrayal of erotic and instinctual experiences as potential paths to psychic integration. Comparative insights highlight Lawrence's divergence from contemporaries such as Woolf, Joyce, and Hardy, emphasizing his unique contribution to modernist discourse. The paper concludes by affirming the contemporary relevance of Lawrence's vision of embodied authenticity and emotional wholeness in a fragmented world.

**Keywords;** D. H. Lawrence, wholeness, fragmentation, modernism, psychoanalysis**1. INTRODUCTION****1.1 Contextual Background on D. H. Lawrence's Literary Contribution**

D. H. Lawrence (1885–1930) remains one of the most influential and controversial voices in twentieth-century English literature. His fiction is notable for its intense psychological depth, symbolic richness, and philosophical engagement with the individual's inner life and social surroundings. Writing during the upheavals of industrialization, war, and modernity, Lawrence's work explores human consciousness, sexuality, alienation, and the struggle for personal fulfillment. His major novels *Sons and Lovers* (1913), *The Rainbow* (1915), *Women in Love* (1920), and *Lady Chatterley's Lover* (1928) are often regarded as literary experiments in understanding the human condition beyond societal conventions (Worthen, 2005). His writings demonstrate a persistent preoccupation with the disintegration

of modern man and a yearning for a deeper, holistic connection between mind, body, and spirit.

### ***1.2 Conceptual Framework: Defining "Wholeness"***

The concept of "wholeness" in Lawrence's work can be traced to a synthesis of philosophical, psychological, and literary discourses. Philosophically, wholeness signifies a state of harmony and unity between self and other, nature and culture, emotion and reason. Psychologically, it aligns with Carl Jung's theory of individuation, the process through which an individual integrates conscious and unconscious parts of the psyche (Jung, 1953). For Lawrence, wholeness is also erotic and spiritual: an embodied experience where love, passion, and self-awareness converge to resist fragmentation. In literary terms, his characters often navigate fragmented identities, seeking completeness through relationships, connection with nature, or rebellion against mechanistic societal norms (Spilka, 1963).

### ***1.3 Statement of the Problem***

Modern man, according to Lawrence, suffers from a deep spiritual malaise. This alienation fueled by industrialism, rationalism, and sexual repression fractures the individual's sense of self. Throughout his fiction, Lawrence repeatedly dramatizes the theme of inner fragmentation and the longing for integration. The central problem addressed in this study is how Lawrence uses characters, symbolism, and narrative to depict this crisis of fragmentation and the complex quest for wholeness in the modern world.<sup>1</sup>

### ***1.4 Research Questions***

- How does D. H. Lawrence depict the fragmentation of self and the pursuit of wholeness in his fiction?
- What philosophical or psychological underpinnings inform this thematic concern?
- In what ways do his characters seek, achieve, or fail to achieve a state of inner harmony?
- What symbolic and stylistic techniques does Lawrence employ to reflect this existential journey?

### ***1.5 Scope and Significance of the Study***

The scope of this research includes a close reading of four major novels (*Sons and Lovers*, *The Rainbow*, *Women in Love*, *Lady Chatterley's Lover*) and selected short stories (*The Horse Dealer's Daughter*, *The Rocking-Horse Winner*, *Odour of Chrysanthemums*, *The Prussian Officer*). The study holds significance in the realm of Lawrence studies and modernist literature by foregrounding the seldom-synthesized concept of "wholeness" as a

<sup>1</sup> Jung, C. G. (1953). *Psychology and Alchemy*. Princeton University Press.

<sup>2</sup>Spilka, M. (1963). *The Love Ethic of D. H. Lawrence*. Indiana University Press.

<sup>3</sup>Worthen, J. (2005). *D. H. Lawrence: The Life of an Outsider*. Penguin Books.

key to understanding his literary philosophy. By analyzing Lawrence's attempt to reconcile human instincts, consciousness, and society, this study seeks to offer fresh insights into modern psychological realism and symbolic narrative technique.

### **1.6 Methodology and Theoretical Framework**

This research adopts a qualitative, analytical approach grounded in psychoanalytic, humanistic, and existential literary criticism. Drawing from Freudian and Jungian psychoanalysis, the study investigates the inner conflicts and psychic structures of Lawrence's protagonists. Humanistic criticism particularly the theories of Maslow and Rogers support the exploration of authenticity and self-actualization. Existential motifs such as alienation, freedom, and angst are examined in light of thinkers like Kierkegaard and Sartre, contextualized through Lawrence's distinctive literary vision. Textual analysis will include thematic exploration, close reading, and symbolic interpretation.

## **2. THEMATIC ANALYSIS OF MAJOR NOVELS**

### **2.1 Sons and Lovers (1913)**

#### **Mother Fixation and Emotional Fragmentation**

In *Sons and Lovers*, Lawrence draws directly from his own Oedipal relationship with his mother to portray Paul Morel's emotional entrapment. The protagonist's emotional energy is largely consumed by his possessive attachment to Mrs. Morel, which leaves him psychologically fragmented and incapable of sustaining romantic love. As Lawrence writes: "*She could not bear it when he was with Miriam; she wanted to be everything to him, and he was so much bound up with her*" (*Sons and Lovers*, Ch. 9).

This fixation results in Paul's inability to emotionally or sexually commit to Miriam or Clara, symbolizing his fractured identity. As Mark Kinkead-Weekes notes, Paul is caught in a "triangular tension of mother, Miriam, and Clara—none of whom can satisfy his total self" (Kinkead-Weekes, 1981).

#### **The Struggle for Personal and Sexual Identity**

Paul's journey is marked by his oscillation between emotional dependence and a desire for autonomy. His relationship with Miriam is spiritual and cerebral, while that with Clara is physical yet disconnected from emotional intimacy. This split reveals Lawrence's idea that modern individuals are often divided, seeking integration of love, body, and soul.

#### **Partial Resolution through Art and Memory**

Lawrence offers **artistic creation as a form of sublimation**, a partial but not complete solution to Paul's inner discord. The novel ends with Paul walking into the darkness alone, suggesting an unresolved quest:

*"But he walked towards the faintly humming, glowing town, quickly."* (*Sons and Lovers*, Final Chapter).

**2.2 Women in Love (1920)****Intellect Versus Instinct: Dualism in Relationships**

In *Women in Love*, Lawrence explores the psychological and philosophical conflicts between mind and body, reason and passion. The sisters Ursula and Gudrun represent differing approaches to love, and their relationships with Rupert Birkin and Gerald Crich embody the struggle for wholeness through romantic and erotic union. Birkin, Lawrence's mouthpiece, articulates the desire for a spiritual and instinctual connection:

*"I want us to be together without bothering about marriage. I want us to be together—just as we are."* (*Women in Love*, Ch. 15).

**The Crisis of Modern Masculinity and Femininity**

Gerald's mechanistic worldview, inherited from industrial capitalism, reflects a fragmented masculinity devoid of emotional depth. His eventual suicide—falling into the snow—is symbolic of a soul frozen by repression and control:

*"There was a terrible silence, and the great, white, snow-filled world was motionless."* (*Women in Love*, Ch. 30).

**Symbolism and Metaphysical Yearning for Integration**

Nature, water, and elemental forces function as symbols of unconscious drives and the search for fusion. Gudrun's psychological disintegration in the Alps highlights the limits of intellectualism and aesthetic detachment in achieving wholeness.

**2.3 The Rainbow (1915)****Generational Quest for Fulfillment**

Lawrence traces three generations of the Brangwen family to reflect shifting attitudes toward selfhood, sexuality, and social freedom. The Rainbow serves as a symbol of longing for a unified, transcendent existence.

Tom Brangwen yearns for emotional union with Lydia, but their union is marked by spiritual dissonance. The younger generations especially Ursul struggle more consciously for wholeness:

*"She wanted to be herself. She could not bear to be called a woman and to have her whole life bounded by that"* (*The Rainbow*, Ch. 15).

**Growth, Repression, and Liberation of Self**

Ursula's rejection of conventional roles, her bisexuality, and educational aspirations make her a prototype of the modern woman in search of autonomy and authenticity. However, her journey is complex, marked by spiritual crises and emotional defeats.

**The Role of Spiritual and Erotic Consciousness**

Ursula's relationship with Anton Skrebensky is an attempt at integration, but ultimately fails due to his conventional worldview. Lawrence suggests that true wholeness requires surrender to both instinct and spirit.

**2.4 Lady Chatterley's Lover (1928)****Physical Love as a Medium of Healing and Wholeness**

This novel most directly affirms erotic love as a redemptive, spiritual force. Constance (Connie) Chatterley's relationship with Mellors, the gamekeeper, becomes the vehicle through which she escapes emotional numbness and social confinement:

*"The world is a riddle...I want to feel something real. I want to be real myself"* (*Lady Chatterley's Lover*, Ch. 11).

**Nature and Sensuality as Agents of Restoration**

The novel is set in pastoral England, and nature plays an integral role in the characters' transformation. The forest becomes a symbol of uncorrupted instinct and primal truth:

*"The streaming sunshine, the quivering leaves, the gay flicker of the birches, the waving grass...this was life"* (*Lady Chatterley's Lover*, Ch. 12).

**Class, Alienation, and Authentic Living**

Connie's escape from the sterile, aristocratic world of her husband Clifford Chatterley paralyzed and emotionally distant symbolizes Lawrence's rejection of industrialized, mechanistic modernity. Mellors, the working-class lover, embodies the sensual and instinctual life, not yet alienated from nature.

*As critic Kate Millett (1970) notes, "Lawrence viewed love as a ritual of regeneration, the sole hope of salvation in a fractured world."*<sup>2</sup>

**3. EXPLORATION OF SELECTED SHORT STORIES**

Lawrence's short stories often distill his major themes in concentrated form, presenting characters undergoing psychological rupture and yearning for integration. These tales serve as intense, symbolic meditations on emotional estrangement, repressed desire, and the elusive journey toward wholeness.

**3.1 The Horse Dealer's Daughter (1922)**

This story portrays the silent transformation of Mabel Pervin, a woman driven to despair by familial and economic collapse. Her attempted suicide in a pond leads to an unexpected emotional awakening when Dr. Fergusson rescues her. The underwater setting symbolizes unconscious forces and the passage from death to renewal. The moment of realization between the two characters is sudden, almost mystical:

<sup>4</sup> Kinkead-Weekes, M. (1981). *D. H. Lawrence: Triumph to Exile 1912-1922*. Cambridge University Press.

<sup>5</sup> Millett, K. (1970). *Sexual Politics*. Doubleday.

<sup>6</sup> Lawrence, D. H. (1913). *Sons and Lovers*. Penguin Classics.

<sup>7</sup> Lawrence, D. H. (1915). *The Rainbow*. Penguin Modern Classics.

<sup>8</sup> Lawrence, D. H. (1920). *Women in Love*. Oxford World's Classics.

<sup>9</sup> Lawrence, D. H. (1928). *Lady Chatterley's Lover*. Penguin Modern Classics.

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*“She looked at him, still with that strangeness in her face, like a new blossomed flower.” (The Horse Dealer’s Daughter, in The Prussian Officer and Other Stories, 1914).*

Lawrence presents love not as sentiment, but as a moment of instinctual recognition, an unspoken psychological and spiritual bond. The transformation is wordless but deeply affective suggesting the possibility of psychic integration through profound emotional contact.

### **3.2 The Rocking-Horse Winner (1926)**

This story explores psychic fragmentation resulting from materialism and parental neglect. The young boy Paul rides his toy horse obsessively, believing he can determine the winners of horse races and earn money to satisfy his emotionally distant mother’s unspoken desire for wealth:

*“There must be more money! There must be more money!” (The Rocking-Horse Winner, in Collected Stories, 1955).*

Lawrence critiques the substitution of emotional fulfilment with consumer desire, illustrating how the child internalizes his mother’s anxiety and transforms it into a pathological pursuit. The rocking horse symbolizes futile repetition and the illusion of control, leading to Paul’s death symbolizing the fatal cost of emotional voids in domestic life.

### **3.3 Odour of Chrysanthemums (1911)**

In this early but powerful story, Elizabeth Bates experiences a profound moment of clarity upon the death of her estranged husband. The odour of chrysanthemums—a recurring motif—symbolizes both beauty and decay, love and loss. After laying out the body, Elizabeth realizes:

*“She had never seen him, never known him. He had been a shadow, a presence, always at the edge of her consciousness.” (Odour of Chrysanthemums, in The Prussian Officer, 1914).*

This is a story of emotional estrangement revealed only through the stillness of death. The characters live within routine and convention, separated by unspoken disappointments. Lawrence shows that wholeness requires emotional honesty, which remains tragically absent in Elizabeth’s marriage.

### **3.4 The Prussian Officer (1914)**

This story dramatizes repressed homosexuality, rigid authority, and emotional repression. The unnamed officer’s cruel obsession with his young orderly culminates in violence and murder. His sadistic control and conflicted emotions point toward suppressed sexuality and internal fragmentation:

*“He looked at the sleeping figure with an envy that was almost ferocious.” (The Prussian Officer, in The Prussian Officer and Other Stories, 1914).*

The story reveals the psychic destruction wrought by societal militarism and emotional denial. Lawrence critiques the loss of erotic and spiritual integration in hyper-masculine, authoritarian cultures. The eventual deaths of both characters represent the dead-end of repression without self-awareness.

#### **4. NARRATIVE STRATEGIES AND SYMBOLISM**

Lawrence's fiction is as much about form and technique as it is about theme. His narrative strategies serve to externalize inner conflict, while his rich symbolic vocabulary bridges the physical and the metaphysical, the erotic and the spiritual.

##### **4.1 Symbolism of Nature, Body, and Landscape**

Lawrence's landscapes often mirror internal states and symbolize the natural forces of instinct, passion, and renewal. Forests, rivers, and flowers serve not merely as backdrops<sup>3</sup> but as living presences. In *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, the forest represents both physical and emotional liberation:

*"The leaves of the hazel bushes were a lucent green, translucent, very young and fresh."*  
(Ch. 10)

The body itself is treated symbolically as a site of repression or liberation. Lawrence opposes the mechanistic body (associated with modern industry and abstraction) with the sensual body (grounded in feeling and instinct), believing that the path to wholeness must pass through bodily experience (see Millett, 1970).

##### **4.2 Use of Narrative Perspective to Depict Inner Conflict and Resolution**

Lawrence frequently uses free indirect discourse to enter the inner lives of his characters, revealing their psychological states without overt judgment. For example, in *The Rainbow*, Ursula's thoughts and doubts are revealed in rhythmic, introspective prose, conveying her existential search:

*"She stood still in the street, her heart lifted. She was going away. She was going to be free."*  
(*The Rainbow*, Ch. 16)

##### **4.3 Myth, Archetypes, and Spiritual Metaphors**

Lawrence draws upon mythical and archetypal structures the journey, death and rebirth, lovers' union, the sacred grove to shape his characters' quests. For instance, Paul's descent into emotional darkness (*Sons and Lovers*) and Ursula's rainbow vision (*The Rainbow*) resonate with Jungian archetypes of individuation and transformation.

<sup>10</sup>Lawrence, D. H. (1911–1928). *Collected Short Stories*. Penguin Modern Classics.

<sup>11</sup>Lawrence, D. H. (1914). *The Prussian Officer and Other Stories*. Cambridge University Press.

<sup>12</sup>Lodge, D. (1961). *Language of Fiction: Essays in Criticism and Verbal Analysis of the English Novel*. Routledge.

<sup>13</sup>Sagar, K. (1982). *The Art of D. H. Lawrence*. Cambridge University Press.

<sup>14</sup>Jung, C. G. (1969). *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*. Princeton University Press.

Erotic union is often spiritualized, as seen in *Women in Love*, where Birkin yearns for a love “beyond personality, beyond emotion, beyond the soul.” The quest for wholeness thus becomes mythic in scope, symbolizing a union of opposites—masculine and feminine, mind and body, self and other.

#### **4.4 Language of Passion and Emotional Intensity**

Lawrence’s prose is charged with lyricism, intensity, and rhythmic cadence. His diction often blends the physical with the metaphysical, expressing passion through natural metaphors. His style is:

*Visceral:* “His flesh was strong and alive; his heart leapt with passion.” (*Lady Chatterley’s Lover*, Ch. 14)

*Symbolic:* “The rainbow stood on the earth. She knew it was a promise.” (*The Rainbow*, Final Chapter)

## **5. CRITICAL RECEPTION AND COMPARATIVE INSIGHT**

### **Critical Responses to Lawrence’s Idea of Wholeness Over Time**

D. H. Lawrence’s conception of wholeness rooted in the integration of the physical, emotional, spiritual, and instinctual dimensions of human existence has elicited both admiration and critique over the decades. Early criticism in the mid-20th century often focused on Lawrence’s sexual themes, with critics such as **F. R. Leavis** praising his “moral seriousness” and “life-affirming vision,” particularly in *The Rainbow* and *Women in Love* (Leavis, 1955). Leavis argued that Lawrence was one of the “great tradition” novelists concerned with human vitality and emotional truth.

Conversely, feminist critics such as Kate Millett, in *Sexual Politics* (1970), critiqued Lawrence for perpetuating patriarchal and essentialist notions of gender, accusing him of glorifying male dominance under the guise of erotic integration. However, later feminist scholars like Carol Siegel and Sandra Gilbert have offered more nuanced readings, suggesting that Lawrence’s works contain ambivalent and even subversive portrayals of gender roles.

In recent decades, psychoanalytic, eco-critical, and existential interpretations have reclaimed Lawrence’s vision of wholeness as a resistance to fragmentation and mechanization in modern society (Kear, 2001; Maddox, 2015).

### **Comparison with Contemporaries: Woolf, Joyce, and Hardy**

While Lawrence shares many modernist concerns alienation, consciousness, fragmentation his approach to unity and integration contrasts sharply with those of his contemporaries.

- Virginia Woolf, for instance, explores consciousness through stream-of-consciousness techniques, emphasizing fluidity and inner temporality. While

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Woolf's characters often dwell in aesthetic or existential ephemerality, Lawrence's characters seek visceral, embodied union, grounded in erotic and natural experience.

- James Joyce, particularly in *Ulysses*, also delves into psychological fragmentation, but with a strong emphasis on language, irony, and mythic structure. Joyce tends to play with fragmentation, whereas Lawrence mourns it and offers healing through emotional and physical integration.
- Thomas Hardy, a precursor rather than a direct contemporary, shares Lawrence's tragic sense of life and social critique. However, Hardy's vision is often fatalistic, rooted in deterministic naturalism. Lawrence departs from this by offering transcendence through erotic and spiritual awakening, particularly in *Lady Chatterley's Lover*.<sup>4</sup>

### **Lawrence's Place in Modernist and Postmodernist Discourse**

Lawrence occupies a liminal space between modernism and postmodernism. As a modernist, he experiments with narrative voice, internal monologue, and symbolic structure. His rejection of Victorian morality and exploration of the unconscious align with modernist innovations.

Yet, Lawrence also anticipates postmodern themes: his texts often problematize language, question authority (especially religious and industrial), and reveal multiple layers of identity. His distrust of rationality and embrace of embodied subjectivity resonate with postmodern existentialism and eco-critical thought (Becket, 2002).<sup>5</sup>

## **Conclusion**

### **Summary of Key Findings**

This study has demonstrated that the quest for wholeness is central to D. H. Lawrence's literary vision. Through an in-depth analysis of selected novels and short stories, we have observed that Lawrence repeatedly confronts the condition of modern fragmentation whether emotional, sexual, spiritual, or societal and proposes a path of reintegration rooted in instinct, passion, and authentic relationships.

In works like *Sons and Lovers* and *The Rainbow*, Lawrence presents characters paralyzed by emotional repression and familial entanglements. In *Women in Love* and *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, he offers erotic love and natural communion as counterforces to

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<sup>15</sup>Becket, F. (2002). *The Modernist Self in Twentieth-Century Literature*. Routledge.

<sup>16</sup>Gilbert, S. M., & Gubar, S. (1979). *The Madwoman in the Attic*. Yale University Press.

<sup>17</sup>Kear, A. (2001). *Lawrence and Masculinity*. Palgrave Macmillan.

<sup>18</sup>Leavis, F. R. (1955). *D. H. Lawrence: Novelist*. Chatto & Windus.

<sup>19</sup>Maddox, J. (2015). *Understanding D. H. Lawrence*. University of South Carolina Press.

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mechanistic alienation. His short fiction condenses these ideas into symbolic narratives of transformation, psychic dislocation, and momentary insight.

### **Interpretation of Lawrence's Vision of Wholeness**

Lawrence envisions wholeness not as perfection, but as psychic and spiritual completeness the reconciliation of body and soul, self and other, instinct and intellect. He positions erotic love and nature not as indulgences but as sacred mediums for self-realization and existential healing. This vision emerges as a resistance to the modern condition, advocating for a return to what he calls "the dark gods of the blood" (*Women in Love*, Ch. 5) a metaphor for vital instinct.

### **Contribution to Literary Criticism and Contemporary Relevance**

This research contributes to Lawrence studies by synthesizing psychological, philosophical, and literary perspectives to argue that wholeness is the central axis of his fiction. In an era increasingly characterized by digital fragmentation, environmental estrangement, and identity crises, Lawrence's insistence on emotional and sensual authenticity regains critical urgency.

Moreover, Lawrence's symbolic language, narrative strategies, and thematic scope invite re-readings within posthumanist, eco-critical, and feminist frameworks. His corpus offers fertile ground for interdisciplinary inquiry, resisting reductive interpretations.

### **Suggestions for Further Research**

While this study has focused on Lawrence's fiction, future research might explore:

- His poetry and letters, which articulate his philosophy of life and embodiment in more direct, lyrical terms.
- Comparative studies with continental thinkers like Nietzsche, Rilke, or Kierkegaard.
- Eco-critical readings of his lesser-known works like *The Plumed Serpent* (1926), examining the intersection of landscape, myth, and wholeness.
- Gender-fluid readings that explore Lawrence's treatment of bisexuality, androgyny, and erotic ambivalence.