



RESEARCH PAPER

Man-Animal relationship in D. H. Lawrence's twin novels, *The Rainbow* and *Women in Love*: A Zoocritical Perspective

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ABSTRACT

This study has attempted to explore human treatment of animals in Lawrence's novels. Ecocriticism provides the macro framework for this study. Animals are integral agents of our ecosystem. Human treatment of animals reflects their treatment of nature as animals represent nature and violence against animals can be regarded as violence against nature itself. Ecocriticism explores the relationship between human and the non-human world in literary and cultural representations. Zoocriticism, as an emerging trend in eco-criticism, focuses on the representation of animals and man-animal relationship in literary texts. This study is qualitative in nature. Textual analysis technique has been utilized for the collection, analysis, and interpretation of data. Zoocriticism, as a subfield of Ecocriticism, is employed as a lens to analyze the relationship between humans and animals in Lawrence's selected novels. Lawrence in his fiction reflects upon concerns beyond the human world. He explores various kinds of relationships such as man to man, man to nature and man to animal relationships. Human beings, in his novels, demonstrate ambiguous relationship with animals. This study will be quite significant as it would make us realize the importance of more than human world in our ecosystem and will enable us to reconsider our relationship with the non-human world for the overall benefit of the ecosphere. Future researchers can take clue from this research to conduct similar research on Lawrence's other works as well as on other writer's texts.

KEYWORDS Animals, Anthropocentrism, Ecocriticism, Ecosystem, Environmental Degradation, Nature, Zoocriticism

Introduction

The terms Biocentrism, Ecocentrism and Zoocriticism are frequently used in the field of ecocritical studies. Biocentrism is a belief and approach that looks at the rights of human beings, animals, and other living beings with the same eyes. It holds that all living organisms make part of a greater biotic community or web. The term is sometimes used as synonymous for ecocentrism and as an antonym of anthropocentrism. However, the most self-acknowledged proponents of biocentrism regard these ethical paradigms as just the ideals which we can struggle for, rather than realities likely to be executed in practice.

Ecocentrism represents the view in ecological ethics that the concern for the whole ecosphere must override the interest of individual species. The term is used as a semi-synonym for biocentrism and antonym of anthropocentrism. But whereas biocentrists are concerned with the world of organisms, ecocentrists are interested to explore the interlinkages of the animate and the inanimate aspects of the ecosystem. Ecocentrists view the world as "an intrinsically dynamic, interconnected web of relations" showing "no

absolute dividing lines between the living and the non-living" (Eckersley, 1992, p. 49). The origin of modern ecocentric ethics can be traced to the 'land ethics' of Aldo Leopold (1949), which in Leopold's opinion "enlarges the boundaries of the community to include soils, waters, plants and animals" (p. 204).

Both biocentrism and ecocentrism condemn anthropocentric attitude and pay attention to the natural world and human beings are regarded as an integrated part of this natural world or sometimes as rogues destroying nature. The trope biocentrism is often used to designate views in which emphasis, and value are placed on the living agents of the ecosystem such as animals and plants. Ecocentric views, on the other hand, tend to consider abiotic features of the ecosystem such as rivers, mountains, and watersheds. Biocentric scholars often give value to the individual organisms, while ecocentric philosophers prefer to adopt a more holistic stance, acknowledging the value of species, ecosystems, and the planet earth as a whole.

Animals, just like the 'pastoral' and the 'wild', also have important functions in the ecosystem and violence against animals suggests violence against nature. Ecocritics' concern for animals especially wildlife preservation is because some of the species are becoming extinct, and humans are considered responsible for such extinction. There are plenty of examples in various literary texts representing animals in varied ways; however, these depictions often lack an animal perspective. Most of the textual representations of animals in various texts do not consider them as equal companions to man and give them a secondary role and importance as compared to human beings. In such representations animals are seen as either trustworthy companions to humans or in some way as helpful tools to human beings, and often abused and exploited.

Zoocriticism is an emerging area in eco-criticism focusing on the relationship between humans and animals with reference to literary texts. The term 'Zoocriticism', was first used by Graham Huggan along with Helen Tiffin in introduction to the famous book, *Postcolonial ecocriticism: Literature, animals and environment* (2010). Zoocriticism analyzes narratives from the perspective of animals as agents and their emotional and behavioural repertoire. Its roots can be traced to such disciplines as animal studies, zoology and religion. It is also related to Speciesism, which criticizes the exploitation of other living entities by humans. Zoo-critical perspectives introduce narratives about animals termed as 'zoo-narratives' which are different from other types of texts as they imply that animal texts cannot be analyzed and understood without seeing the animals as necessary agents. Zoocriticism tries to bring awareness about the role of the animals in world's ecosystem and condemns anthropocentric attitudes and environmental crises as threats to animal life on the planet.

Animals are integral part of nature just like human beings. Lawrence, in his fiction, shows concerns with more than a human world. He explores interconnections and interrelations among various entities of the ecosystem. He examines the relationship between human and the animal world. He has also reflected upon how man-animal relationship is determined by the eco-environmental conditions and the physical surroundings. Foul and polluted environment of the industrial world results in perversity in human behaviour which not only affects mutual human relations but also man-animal relationship. This study will explore these elements in Lawrence's twin novels namely *The Rainbow* and *Women in Love* through a Zoocritical perspective.

Literature Review

Zoocriticism is an evolving area of ecocriticism. Various ecocritics have identified this term as an important sub-category of ecocriticism. Glotfelty (1996) believes that ecocriticism deals with a variety of topics including “animals, cities, specific geographical regions” (p. xxiii) and so on. Similarly, Sumathy (2010) holds that environmental literature explores the issues like environmental justice, bioregionalism, the lives of animals” (p. 3) and so on. Thus, ecocritics are concerned with more than human world. They adopt a multidisciplinary approach to literary analyses. Concern for the animals is an important topic in ecocritical discourse. According to Huggan and Tiffin (2010), Zoocriticism is a method of literary research, which not only discusses the representation of animals in a piece of literature but also examines the issues of animal rights. I did not find any research regarding the portrayal of animals in Lawrence’s fiction.

Numerous critics and researchers have referred to Lawrence’s love for nature. The writers have usually compared Lawrence with other artists showing interest in nature and have also tried to show the difference in the attitude of these writers. But they have not related Lawrence’s love for nature with his deep ecological vision of interconnectivity of all entities of the ecosystem. They have not explored Lawrence’s view of nature as having an active role in human life with its power of affecting human relationship with other entities of nature especially the animals.

Some critics and researchers have attempted to analyze Lawrence’s texts from an eco-critical perspective. Ting Bo, in his article, “An Ecofeminist Interpretation of Sons and Lovers” (2011) presents an ecofeminist analysis of Lawrence’s novel *Sons and Lovers*. Nozar Niazi, Amir Ashrafian, and Ehsan Honarjou in their article, “An Ecocritical Reading of D.H. Lawrence’s *The Rainbow*” (2013) have focused on Lawrence’s portrayal of the natural world and its relationship with human life and temperament. Dr. S. Janaki and Dr. S. Sumathi, in their paper, “An Ecocritical Reading of D. H. Lawrence’s *Women in Love*” (2017) have traced Lawrence’s fascination for nature and his criticism and hatred for modernity, materialism and industrialism which have destroyed nature and contaminated the individuals’ lives by analyzing his portrayal of the two main characters, Birkin and Ursula, their relationship with nature and their disgust for the modern industrialized society. Wang Zhimei (2007), in his thesis has conducted an ecocritical analysis of Lawrence’s twin novels namely, *The Rainbow* and *Women in Love*. The researcher has attempted to explore Lawrence’s ecological thoughts, his doubts, and the ecological significance of the selected novels. Wang Yaoyao (2016), in a paper written about Lawrence’s ecological vision in his novel *Lady Chatterley’s Lover*, analyses Lawrence’s ecological philosophy in the selected novel. Wang Xue Liang in his thesis, “An Eco-Critical Reading of D.H. Lawrence’s *Lady Chatterley’s Lover*” (2011) focuses on Lawrence’s portrayal of industrialization which has resulted in human alienation in society. Similarly, X. L. Wang (2012), in his thesis, “An Eco-Critical Reading of D.H. Lawrence’s *Lady Chatterley’s Lover*” analyses Lawrence’s critique of industrial society. Ambika Raja, in her article “Ecology, Space and Time in the works of D. H. Lawrence” (2021) points out the relevance of Lawrence’s vision of life to contemporary ecological and environmental issues. Matea Mlakić, in her article, “Environmental consciousness in D. H. Lawrence’s novels” (2019) traces environmental consciousness in some of Lawrence’s novels. Anne Odenbring Ehlert, (2001) in her Doctoral thesis, “There’s a bad time coming”: Ecological Vision in the Fiction of D. H. Lawrence” has attempted to trace ecological elements in Lawrence’s selected novels and short stories. Dolores LaChapelle (1996), in her book *D. H. Lawrence: Future Primitive*, makes an ecocritical analysis of Lawrence’s writings.

Apart from the research articles and theses mentioned above, casual references to ecological elements in Lawrence's works are also found in various books written on ecology and ecocriticism. But all these research studies refer to only Lawrence's ecological vision. Lawrence shows interest in animals and explores the human treatment of animals in his fictional works. From the review of literature given above it can be observed that the earlier ecocritical studies have focused only on such ecological concerns in Lawrence's works as the portrayal of nature, his criticism of industrial civilization, the contrast between rural and city life and its effect on the characters' temperament etc. None of these studies attempt to touch or explore Lawrence's portrayal of man-animal relationship and its link with Eco-environmental conditions. My research has filled this gap. I have attempted to analyse man-animal relationship in Lawrence's twin novels, i.e. *The Rainbow* and its sequel *Women in Love* and have tried to determine how this relationship is linked with eco-environmental conditions.

Material and Methods

This research is qualitative in nature. The qualitative research method best suits such a type of research. This type of research involves a systematic investigation to discover facts and draw conclusions. It is a form of research where inquiry is aimed to answer questions by employing systematic procedures. Qualitative research allows the researcher to interpret the text with sufficient flexibility. In this research, I have used all the available facts, information, and characteristics for the evaluation of data and material to answer the proposed research questions. The investigation has been carried out to answer the questions by systematically using a set of procedures involving the collection of evidence and presentation of findings in proper order and format.

Textual analysis technique has been utilized for the collection, analysis, and interpretation of data. Catherine Belsey (2003) believes that textual analysis is the most relevant technique for research in such areas as English, cultural history, and cultural studies. It takes into consideration the social, cultural, and historical background of the selected text. In this research textual analysis technique has been adopted to analyze Lawrence's novels, *The Rainbow* and *Women in Love* by applying the Zoocritical perspective and keeping in mind the perceptions and judgements of critics, reviewers, and readers who play a crucial role in explicating a text by digging out various implied meanings in it.

Ecocriticism provides Theoretical framework for this study. Ecocritics believe that Eco-environmental conditions affect human attitude to nature. An important aim of ecocriticism is to evaluate man's attitude to nature. Wang Nuo (2003) believes that an eco-text "demonstrates the human' relationship with nature" (p.11). Environmental conditions affect the man-nature relationship. Foul environmental condition results in perversity, and violence in peoples' behaviour towards animals, women, and other entities of nature. It engenders a desire to kill, subdue, conquer, and crush the pulse of life in nature. It makes people incapable of enjoying a harmonious and healthy relationship with nature and other entities of the cosmos. This concern of ecocriticism is employed as a descriptive code to analyse Lawrence's selected novel from Zoocritical perspective. Lawrence, in his fiction, shows concern to examine the relationship between physical environmental conditions and human attitude to nature including animals. He also focusses on man-animal relationship and links it to eco-environmental conditions.

Results and Discussion

Eco-environmental imbalance and degradation have affected the human relationship with nature, the physical world and other species of nature. It has led to the

elements of destructiveness, perversity, sadism, and violence in peoples' behaviour towards animals, women, and different entities of nature. It has engendered a desire to kill, possess, dominate, subdue, conquer, and control. This sadistic desire is reflected in humans' attempts to crush the pulse of life in nature. It has rendered people incapable of establishing a harmonious and healthy relationship with nature and other entities of the cosmos. It has filled people with death wish and suicidal instincts which are manifested in their behaviour towards nature.

The unchecked growth of industry and degradation of the ecology and environment lead to social and ecological collapse and affects the mutual relationship between man and nature. Lawrence explores the man-nature relationship in all his novels. He highlights the dreadful effects of industrialization on the environment and the natural world. He shows the abuses of nature under the damaging hand of modern man. Lawrence explores the interrelationships between human beings and other entities of nature and shows how the former destroys the latter. He analyzes how the physical environment is related to our psychology, behaviour and attitude towards other humans, animals, and nature itself. He believes that the physical environment has a significant impact on our relationship with nature. In his novels, he traces the impact of industrialization, urbanization, and physical conditions of our environment on the man-nature relationship. The characters associated with the mechanical and social world are violent in nature. They show sadistic impulses and try to conquer the non-human world and nature. They show violence against animals, women, and nature itself. Such elements can be seen in many of Lawrence's stories.

Lawrence's fictional works demonstrate that the ruptures in the man-nature relationship chiefly stem from the eco-environmental imbalance. The characters who are in harmony with nature develop a harmonious relationship with nature, but the ones associated with the industrial world show violence against nature. They show a desire to crush nature. Thus, the industrial revolution and the resulting eco-environmental imbalance have been a major impetus for human exploitation of nature. Humans, in their lust for money, not only started ruling nature but other species and humans as well. The human desire to kill, subdue, conquer and subjugate animals and other humans is the desire to kill nature itself and thus our own selves because we are also part of nature. In *The Rainbow* images of wind, roots, and flowers recur in the description of the relationship between Tom and Lydia. This natural imagery reveals the attitude and psychological and emotional states of the characters in their simple mode of living. Thus, Lawrence points out the interrelationship between human and the physical world and traces the effect of physical environmental conditions on human attitude to nature.

Ecocriticism examines the problem of the unstable boundaries between humans and other creatures. Zoocriticism is an emerging trend in eco-criticism focusing on the relationship between humans and animals, an approach to studying the man-animal relationship with reference to literary texts. This approach adopts a view of nature with a special emphasis on animals, and their relationship with human beings. It also tries to bring awareness about the role of animals in the world's ecosystem making a critique of anthropocentrism and environmental crisis as threats to animal life. Feminist, indigenous and animal-rights philosophers have a common agenda. All these philosophers give voice to the silenced and oppressed others. Animal studies, like environmental studies, emerged in the 21st century with an aim to highlight that animal, just like the 'pastoral' and 'wilderness', have important functions in the ecosystem and violence against animals reflects violence against nature.

Animals represent nature and man's treatment of animals reflects his treatment of nature. Lawrence shows interest in animals and explores the human treatment of animals. He does not accept Descartes' anthropocentric philosophy which considers animals just as bodies devoid of reason and feelings and machines for the service of man. Lawrence is disgusted by humans' arrogance and sense of superiority. He wants to abandon humanity and gives preference to the company of birds and animals. His idea of the Rananim, as expressed in his fictional works and letters, bears witness to his preference for animals. In his stories, the characters who live in harmony with nature show wholesome and harmonious relationships with the animals as well. They feel the pulse of life in the company of nature and animals. We can trace this element in his novel *The Rainbow* where at the very beginning, Lawrence describes the life pattern of the Brangwens on a farm. Brangwen men are portrayed as having blood consciousness and close contact with nature, land, and animals. Lawrence says about men of the first generation of the Brangwens that it is enough for them "that the earth heaved and opened its furrows to them", that they "helped the cow in labour" and "ferreted the rats from under the barn". (p. 8). They thrive in such a natural and pure environment enjoying close affinity with the natural world around them. Lawrence's description of different aspects of farm life such as birds, trees, seeds, etc., makes us feel the pulse of life in nature. Later in the story, Ursula is enthralled by the sight of small lambs sucking their mothers. The sight represents her desire for such a warm and blissful life. Towards the end of the novel, she is attracted by the vision of the horses, symbolizing potency and vitality in contrast to the dead human world. The novel represents the animals in a positive way. Here potency and fertility is associated with the animals as the symbol of the horses signifies. And the individuals being part of nature are able to enjoy close affinity with all beings of nature including animals. Here idealizes wildness in animals. He highlights the role of animals and the physical world in maintaining harmony in nature. But in his later novels such as *Women in Love* Lawrence condemns human civilization which is responsible for human detachment from nature which results in estrangement in human relationships as well as man-nature relationship.

In *Women in Love*, Lawrence considers animals as integral entities of natural life. Birken is hopeless about the human world. He dreams of a world away from humans inhabited only by animals and uninterrupted grass. Ursula is also attracted to the idea of such a human-less world. Similarly, in *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, Mellors dreads human company. He prefers isolation and the company of animals such as hens and dogs. Being a gamekeeper, he is associated more with nature and wilderness. He spends most of his time in the lap of nature, surrounded by animals. In his collection of poems *Birds, Beasts and Flowers* (1923), Lawrence presents a more than a human world. In these poems, the writer attempts to show the consciousness of non-human beings such as birds and trees. In his poem "Almond Blossom" he writes: "Trees suffer, like races, down the long ages / They wander, and are exiled, they live in exile through long ages" (p. 52). In the collection, non-human organisms are endowed with consciousness like humans. Plants and animals are not regarded as food, resource, or waste. Lawrence celebrates nature by using anthropomorphism in these poems about animals, and plants. He shows respect for these creatures and even gives them superiority over humans. Thus, Lawrence has a deep ecological and bio-centric vision. The characters in his fictional works, who live close to nature and are not entangled in environmentally degraded socio-commercial world, are successful in developing healthy relationship with nature and animals as well.

In Lawrence's fiction, the characters who are incapable of living a harmonious life with nature and are victims of the social and industrial world, feel sadistic and malicious pleasure in dominating nature. They desire to subdue nature and the natural world. They also show violence and cruelty against animals. In *Women in Love*, Gerald's merciless nature is manifested by his cruel and callous treatment of an Arab Mare. The Mare, terrified

by the train, wanted to shrink back from the railway line but Gerald forcibly made it to stay there. He was "pleased with the delicate quivering of the creature between his knees" (p. 110). The Mare jumped back again, but again "a glistening, half-smiling look came into Gerald's face. He brought her back again inevitably" and "forced the wheeling mare, which spun and swerved like a wind and yet could not get out of the grasp of his will" (p. 111). The poor animal made another rebounding movement, but again he managed to tame her. He was leaning forward, and his face was shining with malicious pleasure and at the end he was successful in bringing her down. He brought her down, almost as if she were part of his own physique" (p. 112).

This episode indicates sadistic and malicious aspects of Gerald's nature. He is the representative of the industrial world. He is just like a machine devoid of warmth and feeling. He is obstinate and wants to assert his mechanical will over the innocent animal. His violence against the mare is aggression against the vitality of nature. His attempt to tame the horse is an effort to crush the impulse of life in nature. He wants nature to be in his mechanical control. This violence against nature and life is an unconscious desire for self-destruction. The Mare, an animal represents nature, and Gerald's attempt to crush life in the Mare represents modern man's attempt to squeeze the vital life of nature itself. It reflects human violence against animals and nature. Ursula, who along with Birken desires to remain away from the commercial world and live close to nature, hates Gerald for such brutal and callous treatment of the horse and calls him "a fool and a bully" (p. 113) but this demonstration of Gerald's powerful will excites Gudrun because she, like Gerald, also represent social self, ignoring her inner natural self. It establishes the kinship between them. She also conceals cruelty and malice in her soul. Therefore, she is thrilled by Gerald's reckless behaviour: she "saw the trickles of blood on the sides of the mare, and she turned white. And then on the very wound the bright spurs came down" (p. 112). Thus, inherent violence in her soul is exposed and it unites her with Gerald. She was fascinated by Gerald's power of will and she felt numbed by the feeling of the unconquerable power of Gerlad sitting on the back of the mare. She was fascinated by the strength and power of the strong and powerful legs of Gerlad "clenching the palpitating body of the mare into pure control; a sort of soft white magnetic domination from the loins and thighs and calves, enclosing and encompassing the mare heavily into unutterable subordination" (p. 113).

This scene illustrates the sadistic streak in Gudrun's nature. Like Gerald, she also expresses hatred towards the natural world and a latent desire to control and subdue others. In another scene in chapter thirteen, she teases and terrifies the cattle by making faces at them. She gets sadistic pleasure in inflicting pain on others. Chapter Eighteen, 'The Rabbit' exposes underlying cruelty in Gerald and Gudrun towards the natural world. Gudrun wants to capture the rabbit and draw it but the animal is terrified and it jumps and makes scratches on her arm. She is filled with rage. Gerald comes and subdues the innocent creature. The imagery of prey and predators is employed when he tries to subdue the rabbit. Such imagery shows his predatory nature. The writer describes in detail how he attacked the rabbit by putting his free hand on the neck of the terrified animal just like a merciless hawk and his "face was gleaming with a smile. The scream of the rabbit, after the violent tussle, seemed to have torn the veil of her (Gudrun's) consciousness" (p. 241)

The scene shows violence and cruelty in Gudrun's nature and her treatment of the rabbit. Gudrun and Gerald are sadists, and they get malicious gratification from tormenting animals and crushing the life impulse of nature. Both of them reveal a will for chaos and destruction: They feel a "subterranean desire to let go, to fling away everything and lapse into a sheer unrestraint, brutal and licentious." (p. 287). Hermione, another character in the novels representing the social world, also gets pleasure in torturing animals. In Birkin's house at a tea party, she puts some cream on the table for a cat and

does not allow the poor creature to lick it. She holds the head of the helpless animal with her “white fingers, not letting him drink, holding him in her power” (p. 300). She gets sadistic pleasure in controlling the cat, in asserting her mechanical will on the life of an innocent animal. This act shows human desire to control nature and domesticate it for their sadistic pleasure.

Thus, we can see that Lawrence shows interest in animals and explores the human treatment of animals in some of his novels. The individuals who are in harmony with the natural world, enjoy satisfactory relationship with animals. The characters who, on the other hand, are incapable to live a harmonious life with nature and are victims of the social world, feel sadistic and malicious pleasure in dominating nature. They show violence against animals and other aspect of nature.

Conclusion

This research aimed to explore man-animal relationship as portrayed in Lawrence’s twin novels, i.e *The Rainbow* and its sequel *Women in Love*. The researcher also attempted to determine the link between man-animal relationship and the physical eco-environmental conditions. The analysis has shown that the characters in Lawrence’s novels enjoying close affinity with nature and living in healthy environments develop mutual relationships with the nature and other entities of the natural world including animals. While the individuals, who on the other hand represent social self and are perplexed in polluted atmosphere of the socio-industrial world show perverse and sadistic behaviour which is reflected in their attitude to nature and the animals. Thus, animals suffer due to foul eco-environmental conditions.

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