

The Futility of Modern Life in the novel *The White Peacock*

by D. H. Lawrence

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Abstract

This research explores the strains of modernity and its effects on human life, portrayed by D. H. Lawrence in his novel, The White Peacock. The futility of modern life that is evident in the writer's outlook of this novel and the influence of modernization has been outlined in this paper, which is depicted through the lives of different characters that are struggling at various rungs of life and society. This research explores how industrialization and materialism have manipulated the thinking and decision making of human beings. It also determines that the moving away of human beings from nature and making the wrong choices to attain social-gratification is a consequence of materialized thinking. This leads to the conflict between self-fulfillment and social-gratification which makes life so futile that it eventually leads to death. Even after such a long time all the concerns that Lawrence explored in his works seem to be the problems of the present age. The conflict between self-fulfillment and social-gratification leads to the failure of man to realize his responsibilities that results in making the wrong choices and ends in disastrous relationships that ultimately leave one lost and vulnerable. It is manifested through this research report that if human beings become aware of their responsibilities rather than following their desires blindly, the effort can be made to change the futility of life into a meaningful one.

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Introduction

This research deals with the dehumanizing effects of modernity in D. H. Lawrence's *The White Peacock*. It also evaluates his representation of western civilization; especially belonging to the working class caught in the dichotomy of rationality and unconscious instincts that

creates so much chaos in their lives that life becomes worthless and loses its meaning.

D. H. Lawrence, from his first novel, *The White Peacock* (1911), to *Lady Chatterley's Lover* (1928) was constantly prosecuted for obscenity. According to the critics, Lawrence

attempted to interpret human emotions on a more profound level of human consciousness. He probed the inner recesses of human mind with all its irrationality, emotionality, nastiness and the vibrant realities. With Lawrence's novel, one is drawn towards the characterization; the connection is not at the mere a physical level. The struggle of the characters becomes the struggle of the readers. His works represented a reflection upon the dehumanizing effects of modernity and industrialization and this influence of the industrialization made the thinking of man materialistic. This materialized thinking of his characters has a deep impact on their lives as it affects their decision making. The desire for monetary gains and security creates conflicts throughout his novels. He advocated that it is because of this industrialization and modernity that man is no more a super being and has been reduced to the level of id and is even worse than animals.

The focus of this paper is the futility of modern life in the novel, *The White Peacock*. The division of the discussion is done in three fractions. In the first part, the relation of man with nature is discussed that is followed by the dichotomy between self-fulfillment and social-gratification which is reflected in society's encroachment upon nature and the third part details the plight of all the characters due to their failure to assume their responsibilities and making wrong choices under social pressures.

This research establishes that if people try limiting themselves according to the social molds and the role that society assigns them, life tends to become abnormal and chaotic. When a Human being fails to gratify his instinctive consequently, he fails to confront the demands of the society as well. It also documents that man's first duty was not to win social admiration, to find economic security or even to achieve the class of his likeness, but to fulfill the potentialities of his self. Lawrence depicted the characters of *The White Peacock* as the representatives of the modern civilization; each of these characters is struggling to uncover new ways of survival in this world of economic development and fading nature both socially and economically. This is followed by the relationship of man to nature, where man often fails to grow naturally from his roots, accepting his nature and fulfilling it in the place he belongs to, with people he is naturally drawn towards. The dichotomy between self-fulfillment and social-gratification follows; self-fulfillment is not same as self-gratification, to realize one's potential is more important than not to sacrifice this potential in the pursuit of pleasures.

Literature Review

Lawrence is viewed as a writer with the spirit of the modern age. His novels explore the world, society and the fundamental contradiction between Lawrence's vision about the nature of

primitive being and the experience of the alienated modern man in a fragmented social structure (Worthen 1989).

The imbecilities and illusions of modernity and its dehumanizing ramifications have been critiqued by various other writers of the twentieth century. Joseph Pearce commenting on the modernity and its effects says:

“Modernity’s ignorance is indeed a great tragedy, but its ignorance of its ignorance is a greater if darker comedy, warranting the grim gallows humour of the satires of Eliot, Lewis and Waugh. Yet, although the hollow men are lost—and there are none so lost as those who do not know that they are lost—there is no reason for future generations to follow them into the wilderness of the Waste Land of just deserts that they are building for themselves. The task for those of us who have not succumbed to the malaise of modernity is to ensure that future generations have the gift of a real and true knowledge of the humanities. As Chesterton said, and it is right that the last word is his: ‘Teach, to the young, men’s enduring truths, and let the learned amuse themselves with their passing errors’.” (Pearce, 2014, para. 9)

In his works, Lawrence confronts the issues relating to spontaneity, sexuality and human instincts, therefore his novels are considered as psychological novels that talk about the hidden desires of the characters. John Bayley states that Lawrence’s writing has reduced the ‘gap between literature and

life’ and therefore common man in the modern world became his subject (Meyers 1987). Lawrence talks about the ordinary man and his conflicts and problems. He not only questions the religion but also the people who are not affected by any kind of summoning. His characters are always struggling at different levels of failure. They are the representative of modern lives and are always yearning for freedom and fulfillment of their deepest unconscious desires.

Suzanne Lynch in her article *Out of the Wasteland: The First World War and Modernism* (2015) states “Modernism was an attempt to find new ways of capturing experience and identity, ways that would prioritize the individual and the interior mind, and push the boundaries of language and form to its limits. The focus was on experimentation and newness, and abandonment of the fixed point of view, driven by restlessness with regard to the traditional structures of 19th-century realism”. (Lynch, para. 7)

Lawrence was of the view that the modern man has been forced to live a degrading life and he was “too intelligent to believe that the clock could be set back and the lost Eden re-established, and that men would forget about machines” (Niven, 1978, p. 4). He sought in his novels and stories to find a viable way of coping with modern society and of bringing about a new world where the full

potential of the man would be realized in conditions of love and harmony.

Philosophical thinkers like Nietzsche and his contemporary Martin Heidegger had a strong influence on Lawrence. Nietzsche was of the view that life was without meaning. He considered the role of making free choices, particularly regarding fundamental values and beliefs, and how such choices change the nature and identity of the chooser. Nietzsche's assessment of the human predicament is that life is devoid of any objective meaning, value or purpose (Ebbatson 1980). In the essay, *The Madman* Nietzsche writes, "Whither is God? He cried, I shall tell you. We have killed him--you and I. . . .God is dead" (Nietzsche 1954). The vocabulary here is dictating the death of God. God is dead because tradition is veering away from tradition and the related Christian attachments. In this scenario envisaged by Nietzsche, the madman claims that he has arrived too early and that the actual death of God is still in process. The modern man that Lawrence depicted in his works feels that life was without a grand meaning, and most of all suffering seems to be meaningless.

Virginia Woolf in her essay *Modern Fiction* elucidates what she and many of her contemporaries were trying to achieve. Woolf argued that in their attempt at "catching life", her literary predecessors were too bound up with form and design. She believed individuals did not experience life the way it was

presented by realist novelists, through an omniscient narrator observing external details. Instead, "the mind, exposed to the ordinary course of life, receives upon its surface a myriad impressions . . . From all sides they come, an incessant shower of innumerable atoms, composing in their sum what we might venture to call life itself." (Lynch, para. 30)

Lawrence explored in his works the deepest problems of modern life that surface from the claim of the individual to preserve the autonomy and individuality of his existence in the face of overwhelming social forces, of historical heritage, of external culture, and the technique of life. Lawrence saw modern life as breaking away from the conventionally established rules, and traditions, a novel take on man's position and function in the universe. It was an age of great changes; everything that people believed was being questioned. The theory of evolution brought about many mental and intellectual changes. People began to question the futility of life and started denying the institution of religion and the existence of God.

In Lawrence's novels the middle class, his subject conflicted between self-fulfillment and social-gratification. This materialized the thinking of his characters that represent the dilemmas of modern man. This also leads to the degeneration of man to the level of id. Lawrence wrote in *Nottingham and the Mining Countryside*, that life in late 19th century Eastwood "was a curious cross between

industrialism and the old agricultural English of Shakespeare and Milton and Fielding and George Eliot". His attack was never at the essence of intellect itself but at the undue importance given to modern society and its numerous sham counterfeits. In *Apocalypse*, he wrote: "For man, the vast marvel is to be alive". Survival in this modern age was of prime importance in Lawrence's work (Tianying Zang 2013).

Orwell argues about Lawrence and has come up with that he demands "a movement away from our mechanized civilization, which is not going to happen and which he knows is not going to happen. Therefore his exasperation with the present turns once more into an idealization of the past". This was ultimate subject matter of most of Lawrence's novels: the failure of contemporary men. (Meyers 1978). Lawrence sought to propagate the effort that was being made to overcome the alienation that was the aftermath of industrialization.

Analysis & Discussion

D. H. Lawrence documented his prose with somber fidelity, disappointment and bewilderment of characters struggling to adjust to the demands of modern life. He talked insistently of a disillusioned society and wrote to reclaim the primitive simplicity for mankind. "He sought in his works a way to combat the tendency of modernity

to fragment human life and dividing it into disconnected departments, like reason and feeling, further dividing man from nature and dividing man from each other". (Meyers 1987)

Lawrence believed that the universe and the individual soul were throbbing with mysteries, from which men and women were eternally distracted by desire or greed or belief. "Man has little needs and deeper needs," he wrote; and was of the view that if one voices out, these little needs the result would only be mediocrity and disappointment. "We have fallen into the mistake of living for our little needs till we have almost lost our deeper needs in a sort of madness" (Lawrence 2015). The social self to which Lettie in *The White Peacock*, aspired, was reflective of her little needs and in attaining these she killed some of her deeper needs. She responded to George and desire the physical relationship he offered but the self which possessed these desires had been overlaid by another and stifled. Although in the end she chose the life of sophistication which society expected her to, the choice was made without complete conviction and with the sense that something had been lost.

Lawrence's greatness as an artist lies in his determination to face every aspect of modern life, whether it made his writings social, psychological, political or religious. In the opening paragraph of *The White Peacock*, he relates the natural world to the human. The image that he

created by stating that the fish were descendants of 'silvery things', epitomizes the degeneration of human beings. He sought to find a feasible way of coping with modern society and eventually bringing about a new world where the full potential of man would be realized in conditions of love and harmony. The opening paragraph of the novel also established the conflict that hints at the entire action of the novel. The gray, shadowy fish that 'slide through the gloom of the mill-pond' were the descendants of the 'silvery thing that had darted from the monks, in the young days when the valley was lusty' but now 'the whole place was gathered in the musing of the old age' (Lawrence 1950). Life was stagnant, bemused and incapable of developing. This was a world once cultivated and developed by holy men, where common man came and went but now he returns only as an onlooker or a violator. The natural world throughout this novel had harmony and self-sufficiency that contrasted with the descriptions of the social world. The movement of the opening lines is enacted in the insidious degeneration of George Saxton from primal strength into premature alcoholic collapse.

Lawrence's awareness of the repressive, dead influence of materialism makes his attitude more in tune with that of modern man. He talked of the "horrible... insatiable and desire to possess" and creeping corrosive force of industrialization (Lawrence 2015). Lettie became a social lady after marrying

Leslie but there were instances where she was fiercely unhappy with her existence and she wrote to Cyril that "she had nothing at all in her life, it was a barren futility" (Lawrence 1950).

Lawrence made middle class people the subject of his first novel, *The White Peacock*. It is about the lives and relationships of the young farmer George Saxton, the middle class girl Lettie Beardsall and the son of a local coal owner, Leslie Tempest, set against the background of the rapidly changing world. The peacock becomes the symbol of vanity and pride of the English people of modern society. Each of these characters is struggling to find new ways of survival in this world of economic development and fading nature both socially and economically.

The central theme of the novel concerns with the choices one faces on reaching maturity. All the main characters lead disillusioned lives and face destruction because of the wrong choices they make and most importantly whom they choose to marry. To achieve self-gratification, these characters negate their instincts and innate desires. For Lawrence, self-fulfillment must come before the dictatorship of social duty. Self-fulfillment is not same as self-gratification, to realize one's potential is more important than to sacrifice this potential in the pursuit of pleasure. George remarks about Lettie that 'she's like a woman, like a cat – running to

comforts – she strikes a bargain. Women are all tradesmen.’ (Lawrence 1950)

Cyril narrates the tale, of his sister Lettie, his friend George; the man who loves her and Leslie; the man she marries rejecting, more pagan George. Lettie denies the fundamental needs within herself to attain social gratification. This conflict between self-fulfillment and social-gratification reflects the more impersonal battleground of society’s encroachment upon nature.

In *The White Peacock*, Lawrence celebrated the beauties of his native countryside with the extravagant enthusiasm of one who fears that it may be destroyed by creeping industrialization, a theme he symbolized through an opponent of materialism, the gamekeeper Annable, crushed by a fall of stones in a quarry. Annable was able to respond to life more than any other character that was a social being. He was a man of pagan instincts, freed by his extra-social status as a gamekeeper. Jessie Chamber comments: “Annable seemed to be a focus for all Lawrence’s despair over the materialistic view of life he left compelled to accept for lack of an alternative” (Ebbatson 1980). Annable who appeared ‘like some malicious Pan’ is more than a focus of despair. The demonic outcast embodies Lawrence’s hatred for materialism and society. Annable ‘man of one idea: - that all civilization was the painted fungus of rotteness’ (Lawrence 1950), displayed the power of physical and sexual mastery,

humbling even the assertive George, who is similar to him in masculine authority. Annable was a man who opted for the simplicity, raising his children as ‘natural weasels’ according to his belief that ‘One’s more a man here in the wood, though, than in my lady’s parlor’ (Lawrence 1950). He was presented as an outcast from society, a ‘devil of the woods’ (Lawrence 1950) to villagers and miners who pledged for vengeance on him, contriving to lead an amoral and animalistic life. He was drawn to Cyril as a ‘thorough materialist’, when he saw Cyril watching maggots at work in the dead rabbit, and he proceeded to expound his motto, ‘be a good animal, true to your instinct’ (Lawrence 1950). When Annable saw a peacock perched on an angel in the Hall churchyard he said to Cyril: ‘Look at it! Perched on an angel, too, as if it were a pedestal for vanity. That’s the soul of a woman – or it’s a devil’ (Lawrence 1950). He considered a woman to be an embodiment of ‘vanity, screech and defilement’ (Lawrence 1950). This inability to accept the natural functions of the woman underlined the hollowness and deathliness of Annable’s reversion of nature, a retreat he justifies by telling Cyril of his marriage to Lady Crystabel, who was an unwitting agent of evil that destroyed Annable by viewing him in ‘an aesthetic light’ (Lawrence 1950). Lettie also viewed George in this very similar way, foreshowing the future of their relationship. After this incident, Annable has been propelled by his nihilism towards death and his return to

the animalistic level has rendered him non-human qualities due to which he lacks the organic connection with the natural habitat. Lawrence through this illustrated the emasculation of the male by the aristocratic lady, the effeteness of a life lived alone and effects of a destructive relationship.

Cyril may be enthralled by Annable's animal potency but Lawrence also depicted the poverty and grim insecurity of the widow and children who survived him. He didn't portray the gamekeeper's life as a final success, but a wasted potential. Through Annable's death, Lawrence propounded that his determination to rear his children as healthy animals had disastrous results, his wife Proserpine, became desperate and Annable's son, Sam became a thief.

In *The White Peacock*, Nethermere is considered as an Eden, however, it is the decadence of Nethermere, ruled by the 'head of an ancient, once even famous, but now decayed house' (Lawrence 1950). This applies to all the characters of this novel. Lawrence argued that 'fatal change today is the collapse from the psychology of the free human individual into the psychology of the social being'. This collapse was due to the withering away of Nature from the human world:

"When the human being becomes too much divided between his subjective and objective consciousness, at last something splits in him and becomes a social being... while a man, remains a

man, before he falls and becomes a social individual, he innocently feels himself altogether within the great continuum of the universe. He is not divided nor cut off." (Lawrence 2015)

Lawrence's theory is significant as Lettie, acted unwittingly as Eve, where she asserted that George was only 'half alive and 'half born' (Lawrence 1950). She educated him, imagining him to be 'a monk, a martyr and a Carthusian' (Lawrence 1950). George acknowledged her influence on him: 'you have awakened me to life' (Lawrence 1950). The novel, therefore, takes the form of a dialogue between culture and primitivism. This sense of cultural crisis is derived from the awakening of the characters and their consequent separation from the landscape that is why George is reduced from a natural being to a mere non-entity.

The White Peacock is all about the evolution of a primitive man to the modern life that worked similar to the 'Darwinian theory' of the survival of the fittest. Fittest is the one who can survive in this modern world and can help others survive as well. Emily is the only character that falls into this category. She survives the brunt of life and is content with her life and also tries to bring George back to life. George, Cyril, Lettie and all others are competitors in the enclosed and dying pastoral confines of Nethermere, their careers are a tragic instance of Darwin's words on evolution in a confined area, where 'new places in

the natural economy of the country are left open for the old inhabitants to struggle for and become adapted to' (Burns 1989). This struggle and adaptation take various forms, from George's disillusioned social and intellectual aspirations, through Cyril's aestheticism and Annable's primitivism, to Lettie's entry into the land-owning class.

George Saxton, who is closest to an organic way of life, moves away from it, under the pressure of modern life and consciousness. His tragedy is that of individuation, the characters are uprooted from the reviving life of nature and thrust into the advance post of modern consciousness without the imaginative resources to occupy this exposed position. This inexhaustible, fruitfulness and fluctuation of nature becomes the source of tragedy, the resultant dislocation, failure and blind struggle extending and deepening the similar plight of Henchard, Tess or Jude.

Cyril and Lettie are both, in different ways idealists who projected their fantasy upon the nature and society. If George's heavy stooping towards the earth represented his roots in the earth, the Beardsall children suffered from excessive idealism which etherialized and displaced reality by wishful thinking. Cyril turned to nature to gain solace for his inadequacy. Lettie too projected her pathetic fallacies upon nature. Lawrence showed Lettie moving away from the natural world into the social universe

where her brightness still shone, 'the sun loved Lettie, and loathed to leave her' (Lawrence 1950). Cyril and Lettie were attracted by George's animalism, but their education became the cause of his destruction. The same conflict between the straitjacket of rationality or learned behavior and the natural, spontaneous and instinctive reactions of the unconscious was also presented in the picnic scene, 'Pastorals and Peonies' with its uneasy conjunction of upper class idyll and agrarian realism. The effect of this juxtaposition is that George and Lettie injured one another, neither of them could accommodate natural vitality to the social surroundings.

It is not that there is a conflict between the developing social world of the characters and the crumbling world of farm and woodland; rather it is that the characters are dwarfed by the intensity of the realization of the life of nature. George, Lettie, Cyril and all the others, in their complex interrelationships, are not sufficiently individuated, they are swamped by their environment, and the novel inevitably culminates in the disintegration of Nethermere as a social organism. The characters that are set against amoral nature contended but their frail struggles ultimately become a withdrawal from the organic nature. The concluding note in *The White Peacock* is that of retreat and failure. The novel indeed suggested a significant key to life has been lost, dooming the characters to a life of struggle and failure. The parallelism between human and natural

worlds is persistent throughout the novel. When Cyril's unknown father is discovered asleep on a log, 'suddenly through the gloom of the twilight-haunted woods came the scream of a rabbit caught by a weasel' (Lawrence 1950), the trapping and drowning of Mrs. Nickie Ben, the hunting down of the rabbits and mice, the depredations of the wild dog amongst the sheep and its strangulation by Emily in the quarry, the burning of Mrs. Saxton's chick, these all illuminate the struggle for existence in both natural and human world. This ruthless struggle is equally located in the human world, and Lawrence reinforced his point with the subtly understated images of domestic unpleasantness in Annable's cottage and of the miners trapped by the pit at Selsby.

Lawrence surrounded his characters by a nature whose chief feature was eternal incomprehensibility and this unfathomed nature determined all the human action in the novel. The third part of the novel replicated a slow decline and the inability of a human being to find a purpose in the nature or society leading the characters into a state of mental dissolution. The valley is now seen as a lost paradise: 'it's time for us all to go, to leave the valley of Nethermere whose waters and whose woods were distilled in the essence of our veins' (Lawrence 1950). The uprooting from the 'happy valley' is painful and ultimately disintegrated the consciousness of all the characters.

George dreaded, 'this slow crumbling away from my foundation by which I free myself at last' (Lawrence 1950). Freedom is achieved, but the price paid is too great. This cultural shock reduced George to a drunken horse-dealer and he mistakenly married Meg, a sensual girl who was unable to understand his dilemma and this marriage also presented an image of man's enslavement to a woman.

Though Cyril suffered 'acutely the sickness of exile' in London, he came to love the urban scene 'for its movement of men and women', 'with all the subtle grace and mystery of their moving shapely bodies' (Lawrence 1950). By comparison with the metropolis, with its bustling movement, Cyril recognized on his return to Nethermere that it is 'a small, insignificant valley lost in the spaces of the earth' (Lawrence 1950).

Lettie as a mother had determined 'to ignore her own self, to empty her own potentialities into the vessel of another or others, and to live her life at second hand' (Lawrence 1950). This negation of self-signaled her falling away similar to George's dependence on alcohol. Similarly, Leslie Tempest embraced Social Darwinism, becoming an 'advocate of machinery which would do the work of men' (Lawrence 1950).

The final movement of the novel with Cyril as a 'cast out' from Nethermere and losing Emily to a local farmer, and George drunkenly dominated by his wife and daughter, completed the

pattern of dissolution. This is also exemplified through the fate of Alice Gall, most iconoclastic of the Beardsall circle. Alice married a pious clerk and lived near the iron foundries, 'in a dirty little place', and 'all her little crackling fires were sodden down with the sods of British respectability' (Lawrence 1950). In the final chapter of the novel, the culminating sense of inevitable deterioration is expressed in terms of natural imagery, and accordingly George's waveringly improvement from delirium was seen by Cyril as 'a tree that is falling, going soft and pale and rotten, clammy with small fungi' (Lawrence 1950).

None of the characters except Emily in the novel flourished or bloomed as they are all trapped. She had sought to free herself through her relationship with Cyril, married a stolid Englishman and retreated into the 'shadows' and 'ease' of traditional life: 'Emily had at last found her place, and had escaped from the torture of strange, complex modern life' (Lawrence 1950). All of them desired to break free, wanted something new and fresh and most of all wanted to become alive. But all were victims of life's blind momentum, which moved them into relationships that condemned them to destruction both psychological and physical.

George was too weak to act in his own right rather he pathetically begged Lettie to tell him what to do and 'with terror and humility pledged her, 'No

Lettie; don't go. What should I do with my life?' (Lawrence 1950) thus George remained immersed in the marsh, unable to assume his responsibility for his life. He looked up to marriage to make him 'whole and complete' and once cut off from Lettie, who was 'like the light' to him, while he was 'dark and aimless' and had 'nothing to be proud of' in his life (Lawrence 1950). The same mistake was made by Leslie, who functioned as an Edgar Linton, contrasted with the Heathcliff of George. Leslie, too, is like a 'moth' fluttering about the light of Lettie. Like George, Leslie too is 'a child'; and he ends by serving up Lettie as 'the rejoiced husband and servant'. Only Cyril and Annable, among the male characters in the novel, escape this servitude, however, Annable is killed and only Cyril remained to exhibit the 'right' way of developing one's potentialities and assuming responsibility for one's own life (Lawrence 1950). Cyril, however, he stood outside of life and contemplated it in the spirit of detachment.

Lawrence propounded that submission to the will of nature means the death of the soul; acceptance of one's innate and animalistic desires brings about disasters and even submission to social conventions is equally stifling. Lawrence, in his works, struggled to find a way to avert disaster brought by modern life. While searching for the answers to these questions, he asserted that there must be some kind of balance to be achieved by the man to survive in this modern life that is in continuous flux. The

existence of man on the animalistic level is believed to be only half developed. As George came to realize that it is not enough to be a 'fixed bit of a mosaic', or a 'toad in a hole'. Somehow the sensual man must emerge from the unconsciousness, the dark waters in which the grey fish glided, and must connect himself with the 'light' of consciousness and spiritual development. At the same time, it is not enough to be only a conscious being. Characters like Emily and Lettie seemed to have lost the 'meaning' of the snowdrops, which 'belong to some old wild religion'. The snowdrops, Lettie realized, belonged to some knowledge that has been lost and also that she had lost what she needed. She asked Cyril that can one 'lose things off earth – like mastodons, and those old monstrosities – but things that matter – wisdom?' She later realized that it was not just her independence or having her way that she wanted: 'When I have had my way, I do want somebody to take it back from me' (Lawrence 1950). It was her deficiency that prompted her to turn to George, to seek in the animal man the sensuality, or the connection with the nature, that she had lost. As the balance is needed, it was clear that George and Lettie should have complemented each other.

Lettie lacked the courage to dare and to be herself completely, which Lawrence considered as a vital part of human nature. She made a wrong choice in marrying Leslie and became a mere social being and denied herself an

essential part of her being. Lawrence illustrated through Lettie's mistakes that winning social admiration and finding economic security shouldn't be one's only priority, rather the focus should be on fulfilling the potentialities of one's self.

Lettie and George blocked their directions, withering and crumpling in the desiccated second-best of their marriages to Leslie and Meg. Lettie was reduced to a showpiece, a captive peacock for social admiration whereas George was drained and ruined by the brutal marriage into which he forced himself. Their lives became a wretched hollow. The capacity for growth, which Lawrence believed could never be utterly destroyed in a person, who is living in the true sense, was stunted and all the central characters proved themselves to be fatally ordinary. Lawrence knew that it was easier for the people to submit into becoming social beings, everyone wanted money, to marry suitably, to be socially acceptable and successful rather than releasing and being true to the innate human nature. Bertrand Russell, in the light of Lawrence's complex writings, stated that "he had no real wish to make the world better, but only to indulge in eloquent soliloquy about how bad it was" (Russell 1968). However, Lawrence has put forth the conflicts of modern man that became the reason of his degeneration. He has not only affirmed the futility of the modern life but also provided the possible solution.

Conclusion

In the light of this discussion, it is evident that Annable's reversion to the animalistic level of existence looked healthy as compared with Leslie's submission to society and the white peacock, Lettie, but as nature ends in lawlessness Annable's way ended in animalism as well. Cyril's detachment looked attractive when compared to the bondage of the other characters, but his isolation was of no good either, it was a negative form of freedom from the world. Another fundamental problem of modern society that Lawrence depicted in his works is that the institution of marriage has been thrown out of equilibrium and most people can't manage it. He illustrates this by the marriages between Lettie and Leslie and Meg and George. Each of these couples neglected their instinctive desires to attain social-gratification but in doing so they failed to fulfill their responsibilities. These failures lead to disillusionment and death ultimately. However, Lawrence's female characters were able to confront this failure by giving up their desires and submitting themselves to 'a small indoor existence with artificial light and padded upholstery' (Lawrence 1950). Lawrence used the concept of fluidity and flexibility for his female characters. He was of the view that they can always find an escape from the failure and reality in their children, they shed their desires and took up the role of a mother and managed to survive. Whereas his male characters were left alone, trapped and doomed, like

George who represented a man with romantic notions, unable to make himself 'whole and complete' (Lawrence 1950) drunk himself to death because he was unable to confront his failure in every field of life.

The novel, *The White Peacock*, implies that spirit and flesh must be balanced in a new responsible way of life. His characters were caught between the dichotomy; the desire for spiritual development versus the desire for sensual connection, the desire for freedom versus the desire to surrender oneself to another person, the desire for art and culture versus the desire for nature.

It was because of industrialization and modernity that man was no more a super being and life had become so futile. The modern man had been reduced to the level of animals, Annable, who lived at the level of id ego, was of the view that human beings were decaying and a rotten race because there were not true to their instincts. They negated their instincts to acquire social acceptance. George, for instant, failed to gratify his instinctive demands and consequently failed to confront the demands of the society.

Lawrence in this novel stated that if people tried to limit themselves according to the social molds and the roles that society allocated them, life would tend to become bizarre and muddled. Most of the characters, in *The White Peacock*, were not strong enough to accept their responsibilities. Cyril was

different, though he remained detached and self-possessed, free from all sorts of social pressures. Lawrence's characters are always struggling at different levels of failure. They as the representative of modern lives are always yearning for freedom and fulfillment of their deepest unconscious desires.

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