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A STYLISTIC ANALYSIS OF D. H. LAWRENCE'S 'TWO BLUE BIRDS'

D. H. Lawrence'ın 'İki Mavi Kuş' Öyküsünün Biçembilimsel bir Analizi

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Öz

Lawrence'a göre doğada her kavram zıtlıktan doğar ve iki karşıt arasındaki ebedi denge "zıtlar arasındaki ikili uzlaşmayı" doğurur. Lawrence'ın öyküleri, "Lawrence İkiliği" fikriyle örtüşecek şekilde Erkek ve Kadın arasındaki çatışma ve denge meselesine odaklanır. Bir sevgi ve nefret üçgeni çerçevesinde, D. H. Lawrence'ın öyküsü 'İki Mavi Kuş' karşıt güçler arasındaki çatışmayı ve üç ana karakter arasında gidip gelerek değişen dengeyi konu edinir: bir karı-koca, ve kocanın sekreteri. Biçembilimsel olarak incelendiğinde öyküdeki Lawrence İkiliği'nin sözdizimsel yapısı ve farklı sözcüksel tekrarların kullanılmasıyla işlendiği görülmektedir. Bu çalışma, yazarın mesajlarını okuyucusuna iletme kadına bazı biçembilimsel işaretleyicileri nasıl tercih ettiği sonucuna varmak için, Lawrence'ın öyküsündeki sözdizimsel yapıları ve sözcüksel tekrarları biçembilimsel olarak analiz etmeyi amaçlamaktadır.

AnahtarKelimeler: D. H. Lawrence, ikilik, sözdizimsel yapı, sözcük, biçembilim.

Abstract

For Lawrence, in nature, every concept arises from its opposite and the eternal balance between the two opposites can bring about 'a double reconciliation of opposites'. His stories are based on the clash and balance between Male and Female, reflected through the 'Lawrentian Dualism'. Based on a love and hate triangle, D. H. Lawrence's short story 'Two Blue Birds' comprises the clash between the opposing forces and the shifting balance between three main characters: a husband, a wife and the husband's secretary. When analysed stylistically, it is evident that Lawrentian Dualism in the story is achieved via syntactic structure and the use of distinctive lexical repetitions. This study aims at depicting a stylistic analysis based on the study of syntactic structure and lexical repetitions in Lawrence's short story, 'Two Blue Birds' to conclude how the writer prefers certain stylistic markers to convey his messages to his readers.

Keywords: D. H. Lawrence, dualism, syntactic structure, lexis, stylistics.

1. INTRODUCTION

David Herbert Lawrence, one of the most prolific writers of the twentieth century, expressed his ideas on politics, psychology, religion, and human relations in his novels, novellas, poems, and short stories. Born in 1885 in Nottinghamshire, in an industrial area, Lawrence experienced the impacts of war and the clashes in his own family. His parents came from different backgrounds, which shaped his idea of ‘dualism’ from his early ages. He has always approached love “as embracing and demanding a set of extreme emotional binaries” (Burgers & Mitchell, 2015, p. 175). The mother was from a middle class family and she was highly aware of her superiority while the father was an uneducated coal miner. After finishing his education in Nottingham, he became a teacher in his native village. Having decided to escape from the industrial life, he began a quest to find his ideal place. He lived in Italy, Australia, California, and New Mexico. He finally returned to Europe in 1929 and died in France the next year.

Lawrence was a proponent of a primitive life where one can unite himself with the unconscious self unlike the mechanical civilized man. For him, man’s primitive instincts can provide inner peace and real self-identity as described by Dobrée (1964), Lawrence: ‘is savage, and has mystic apprehensions of being, of blood, of fibre and fire, which the cultivated man has carefully eliminated’ (p. 88). Intellect, for him, causes evil within the boundaries of mechanization, industrialization, and standardization. He favoured emotions and primitiveness rather than logic in all fields of life, particularly in the relations of sexes. As he indicated in his works and letters, men and women need personal distance at a glance for a better harmony.

For Lawrence, civilization destroys the human nature and causes the evil. As man involves both mind and soul, for him, ‘wholeness’ is important in our integrated personality; man should focus on the primitive and combine his mind and body. This clash within human nature also destroys the balance in relations between men and women. In his view, every individual should balance the mind and soul to reach a balanced relation with the other sex.

Within this scope and due to the clashes he experienced in his early ages, Lawrence developed his own idea of dualism; it was later called as ‘Lawrentian dualism’. Everything in life has an opposite such as dark and light, good and evil, man and woman, mind and flesh. However, these opposites can create harmony only if they are combined in an individual essence. In other words, when people reconcile the opposing traits within themselves, they can meet the opposite sex in a perfect balance.

2. LAWRENTIAN DUALISM

Lawrentian dualism reminds us the idea of Saussure's binary opposition which refers to the concept that each unit is defined in relation with another term, as in binary code. It is not a contradictory relation, rather a complementary one (Fogarty, 2005).

For Smith (1996), the theory of binary opposition is the system in which two mutually contrasting theoretical opposites are strictly defined and set off against one another (p. 383). In other words, it is impossible to grasp the concept of good without conceiving the evil. In general, structuralists believe that "things cannot be understood in isolation-they have to be seen in the context of the larger structures they are part of" (Barry, 2002, p. 39). Binary opposition is fundamental in every field including literary studies. For structuralists, in order to understand the whole, as readers, we need to study the relationship between the opposite elements in a literary text to reach the big picture. As Fogarty (2005) states binary opposition is not a contradictory, but a complementary relation, thus, can be observed in all fields of science and literature. D. H. Lawrence is one of the authors in whose works binary opposition is present for a thematic purpose.

Lawrence has a fascination for depicting the interrelation of mind and body for both sexes. For him, human nature is composed of two components, i.e., the mental and the bodily. For Lawrence, man is the logic while woman is the emotion without privileging one over the other. Man and woman depend on each other in different ways. His dualism is based on the theory that the two opposites (male and female) need cooperation to create a unified harmony (Daleski, 1965, p. 25). For Lawrence, 'both forces are of equal importance, and the individual can never be happy until he has achieved a balanced appreciation of these two aspects of his existence' (Grayson, 1975, p. 5).

For Inniss (1971), Lawrence's dualism is the reflection of his world view (p. 33) and Draper (1964) indicates that his idea of dualism emerged from his difficult childhood and the clash between his father and mother coming from different backgrounds (p. 21). Lawrence considers the male as the strong and rational being with reason and spirit while the female, the emotional and weak, is the passion; and the female and the male should first combine the opposites in their own nature in order to be able to complement the opposite sex in unity. Similarly, as Daleski (1965) states, the opposites not only complete each other, but also should combine in one self to have balance in life (p. 23). In ideal relations, a person should find a way to

preserve both sides in his or her nature to meet the needs of the opposites. However, this idea of Lawrence's dualism does not imply his gender distinction, i.e. for him neither of the sexes is weaker or superior. He devoted his life to the principle of 'order in the universe', i.e. for him, man should behave manly and woman womanly by acting proper to their roles.

As is the case with most of his short fiction, which Lawrence uses to explore his major preoccupations (Becket, 2002, p. 91), his short story 'Two Blue Birds' centres itself around one Lawrence's philosophical outlook on modern life, his idea of dualism. Lawrentian dualism is greatly observed in 'Two Blue Birds' based on the theme of individuals' alienation accompanied by a love/hate triangle. We witness the relationship between a couple and a secretary. The secretary, Miss Wrexall is devoted to Mr Gee while Mrs Gee is estranged from her husband whom "she could not live with" (Lawrence, 1976, p. 514). She becomes the 'super-guest' of the house while the secretary and her family devotedly serve Mr Gee living in a 'comparative isolation' from his wife.

The story involves a triangle love-hate relation between a husband, his wife and his secretary. The husband is a vain writer, quite successful, and the wife is an independent cynical woman who goes south every winter to have "gallant affairs" (Lawrence, 1976, p. 515). Although they cannot live together, they share the same house "in some odd way, eternally married to one another" (Lawrence, 1976, p. 514). The husband's secretary, Miss Wrexall and her family serve the husband with selfless devotion unlike the self-centred indifferent wife. When compared to Miss Wrexall, the wife has lust for power, and thus, becomes the destructive force in marriage. The relationship between the husband and the wife mirrors the Lawrentian dualism as the loss of balance between genders causes dissatisfaction in relations.

In the story, the main attention is on the opposition between the secretary Miss Wrexall and Mrs Gee mirrored through the episode of two blue birds. Lawrence artistically portrays the destructive love between the wife and the husband in comparison to the pure, sacrificing and primitive love of the secretary for Mr Gee.

3. STYLISTIC ANALYSIS

3.1 Syntax

The content of the story is supported by its syntactic design, and thus, it would be proper to analyse the syntactic structure within a stylistic

perspective to reach Lawrence's messages.

In its broadest definition, syntax is the way words are put together into sentences, images the content and the study of syntactic structure focuses on how words are used in a text. Undoubtedly, there is an intentional connection between the 'said' and the 'implied' when the writer's aim to awake the readers' attention for his messages in a particular literary text.

When sentence structure of 'Two Blue Birds' is analysed, it is evident that Lawrence uses cumulative sentences, fragmented sentences, frequently repeated lexis and short dialogues within narration.

In the opening sentences, the narrator outlines the dynamics of the relationship: the wife 'loves' the husband; the husband is 'sincerely attached' to the wife. The reader is also informed that they could not live together but they cannot break away either. Also it is further revealed that there is nothing sexual between the secretary and the husband just as there is none between the husband and the wife, but the wife has an active sexual life away from home. Based on this information, it can be argued, in the light of Lawrentian Dualism, that there lies behind the fact that the husband and the wife cannot live together. Their inability to complement the opposite sex in unity which, in turn, stems from the fact that neither the husband nor the wife were able to combine the opposites in their own nature. Mrs Gee is over balanced being manlier while Mr Gee is over balanced being more feminine.

Daleski outlines the traits of 'Male' and 'Female' in Lawrentian Dualism by collecting the scattered instances they are mentioned by Lawrence in different works his as follows: Activity/Immutability, Will-to-Motion/Will-to-Inertia, Doing and thinking/Procreation, Authority/All-Sympathetic Role, Active/Passive, Utterance/Emotion, Insentient/Sensitive, Idea/Body (1959, p. 9). In the second paragraph of the story, the narrator exposes both the husband's and the wife's state who are separated from each other with one sentence for each. A stylistic analysis of the syntax of these sentences reinforces the characterisation of Mr and Mrs Gee as over balanced in the way mentioned above.

Starting with the sentence that relates Mrs Gee's state, a diagrammatical representation lays bare the complexity in the statement (Figure 1).

Mrs Gee as their subject and 4 of these are verbs of activity: she ‘drinks’, ‘turns’, ‘likes’, ‘is preoccupied with’ and ‘thinks of’.

The diagrammatical representation of the sentence relating Mr Gee’s state, on the other hand, weighs more towards the feminine traits: procreation, passive, immutability, emotion, will-to-inertia (Figure 2).

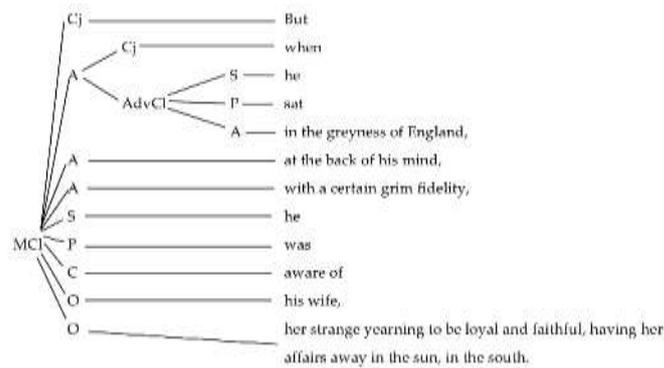


Figure 2 The sentence relating Mr Gee’s state, representation on a tree diagram

There is only one instance of nesting where an adverbial clause is subordinated to a main clause. There are only two predicates and they are more like stative verbs: Mr Gee ‘sits’ in greyness compared to his wife’s drinking and looking at the face of her lover in the sun; and he ‘is passively aware of’ his wife’s infidelity while Mrs Gee actively preoccupies herself with his husband’s relation with his secretary. As Carol Dix maintains, then, just in the way Lawrentian duality states that “opposites do more than attract, they are firmly held together in eternal combustion; they repel, attract and at base are firmly linked” (1980, p. 54), Mr and Mrs Gee are attracted to each other as people who are overbalanced in a different direction, at the same time being unable to stay peacefully together.

3.2 Lexis

The rhythmic repetition of words in the syntactic structure of the sentences attracts the readers’ attention in terms of the writer’s messages and world view. The story begins with the repeated lexis ‘could not live’ that describe the relation between Mr. Gee and his wife:

There was a woman who loved her husband, but she could not live with him. The husband, on his side, was sincerely attached to his wife, yet he could not live with her. Yet they could not live together. (p. 514)

Certain frequently repeated subjective and possessive pronouns are

given with quotation marks that provide the hidden messages in the deeper structure. Stylistically, this use of lexis indicates that Lawrence underscores both how restrictions might affect relations and how people long for belongings:

*“He,” of course, had debts, and he was working to pay them off.....
“She,” of course, was the wife who loved her husband, but helped him into debt..... Yet when she appeared at her ‘home’ (p. 516).*

Lawrence uses ‘he’ repeatedly in quotation marks to imply that Mr. Gee represents all the men. Another frequently repeated word is ‘devoting’ in the story. When Lawrence defines the feelings of the secretary to Mr Gee, he uses the word ‘devotion/devoting’ (5 times), ‘adore’ (7 times) while he prefers ‘depend on’ and ‘rely on’ as he expresses Mr Gee’s feelings for the secretary in return. This might indicate Lawrence’s perception of genders. Although he uses similar meanings that enrich the context, there is a slight difference between ‘adoring’ and ‘depending’ in the deeper analysis that underscores the Lawrentian idea of binary opposition between men and women:

He didn’t “adore” her. A man doesn’t need to adore his secretary. But he depended on her. “I will simply rely on Mrs Wrexall.” Whereas he could never rely on his wife (p. 515)

While the secretary is resembled to the blue bird by Mrs Gee who implies at the tea party that ‘I see strawberries, and I know you are the bird for them’ (p. 520), the wife is associated with ‘wolf’ (repeated 6 times): a ‘were wolf’: ‘she-wolf leg of hers’, ‘were-wolf’, ‘wolf-like stealth’, ‘wolf-like figure of the wife’. She is, in fact, an embodiment of the primitive and strong woman figure that Lawrence makes use of in his fiction frequently, “women as relying on their primitive natures and actions ultimately to show their strength and power as women (Lashley, 2016, p. 1). The weak, naive and caring secretary becomes a prey for the wild wife.

The motive of ‘blue birds’ appear throughout the end of the story. In the scene where the couple and the secretary appear in the garden, as two blue birds appear, they represent the two women surrounding the man: ‘A couple of blue birds of happiness, having a fight’. The blue birds flutter round the ‘pretty but rather common little feet of the little secretary’ while Mrs Gee is irritated and calls them as ‘demon’. Disturbed by the fight of the birds, Mr Gee mildly shouts as ‘Get out!...Fight your little fight, and settle your private affairs elsewhere’ (p. 519). When compared to Mrs Gee, we understand that the secretary is a ‘little’ woman with ‘dainty little feet’ that

attract the two blue birds. Mrs Gee realizes how the birds and her husband feel secure around the secretary as he says: 'I'm utterly incompetent. I never earn anything. I'm the parasite of the British oak, like the mistletoe. The bluebird doesn't flutter round my feet. Perhaps they are too big and trampling'. (p. 521).

At the beginning of the birds fighting scene, three characters of the story have a conversation in the garden. The wife wildly seduces and mocks both her husband and the secretary who appear in a perfect harmony while working on an article. As the wife invites the secretary for the tea party, both women appear in blue dresses of the same shade representing 'a couple of two blue birds of happiness' (p. 519) fighting around the husband's feet. The parallelism of the completely contrastive two women with the two blue birds attracts the readers' attention towards Lawrence's idea of dualism in the deeper structure.

During tea, the wife claims that Miss Wrexall is competent enough to write the book instead of the husband. However, with anger, the secretary accuses the wife of spoiling their relation. The wife explains that her only criticism is of her husband who takes but gives nothing in return. The secretary tells that he gives 'everything' and this response makes the wife angry as the secretary says: 'You see, we see things different'. The wife claims that 'no man can expect two blue birds of happiness to flutter round his feet' and she walks away. The story is open-ended, which indicates that the war between men and women did not end:

Love is in its essence reciprocal, a relationship of giving and taking, in the particular sense which Socrates appears to have understood so well in the Symposium. It is reciprocal in that it is based equally on penury and plenitude: on the need, the dependence of each upon the other, which is their common penury; and upon that fullness of the loving heart that expresses itself in the adoration and the service of the other, which is the plenitude of love (Krook, 1959, p. 265).

In many of Lawrence's stories, the clash between two characters represents Lawrence's idea of dualism:

The mentally-dominated individual belongs to the upper classes... a builder of civilization and a leader...The physically dominated individual is a peasant or a labourer... incapable of appreciating any formal system of belief...close to nature and is consequently powerless in the modern world (Grayson, 1975, p. 6).

Hitherto, in the story, the wife is the mentally dominated woman who is free while the secretary is the naïve sensitive labourer. Emerged in

modern times, Mrs Gee reflects the New Woman in contrast to the sacrificing caring Victorian woman, Miss Wraxell.

Similarly, the clash between the husband and wife is evident, which indicates the lack of a unified harmony in a marriage. As Lawrence explores how the mind and body function differently between genders, he concludes that

the male principle is that of Love, in which his mental desire for completeness of being will be complemented by consummation with the female, whose principle is the natural Law of the body (Lawrence, 1986, p. 123).

In this respect, Mr Gee is in search a love that completes and complements his soul while Mrs Gee is in search of bodily pleasures. By combining negative adverbs with positive adjectives, Lawrence emphasizes the dualism in self: ‘awfully kind’ (p. 515); ‘awfully clever’ (p. 515); ‘adorably whimsical’ (p. 515).

The binary opposition of Lawrentian style is evident in his depictions of the characters. ‘...he [Mr Gee] was highly aware of his wife, her strange yearning to be loyal and faithful, having her gallant affairs away in the sun, in the South’ (p. 515). For Lawrence, men and women have different natures, yet If combined in a balance, perfect relations may last. Otherwise, as implied by him in the story, marriage is a trouble for both:

So they remained friends, in the awful unspoken intimacy of the once-married. Usually each year they went away together for a holiday, and, if they had not been man and wife, they would have found a great deal of fun and stimulation, in one another...Each had a private feeling of bitterness about the other (p. 515).

And why must she take him so damn seriously, when she never really “enjoyed” him? (p. 517)

If you know a man too well, you don’t want him to kiss you (p. 517).

Awful! That’s what you call being married! (p. 517)

She may have a husband, but a husband is the mere shred of a man, compared to a boss, a chief, a man who dictates to you and whose words you faithfully write down and then transcribe (p. 515).

When compared to their marriage that lasted a ‘dozen years’ (p. 515), the relation between the secretary and Mr Gee is ‘beautiful’ (p. 520). As Mrs Gee implies that the secretary is the real writer of her husband’s book, the secretary cries out: ‘You want to spoil what there is between me

and him' (p. 521). Although they 'could not live together', it can be accepted that Mrs Gee is highly fond of her husband despite her 'gallant' relations with her admirers in the South when she is from home. She envies the relation between her husband and his secretary and her family who devote 'their lives to him... Three women pouring out their lives for him day and night! And what did they get in return? Not one kiss!' (p. 517).

Lawrence frequently interacts with the audience by asking questions, yet answering himself.

When a man has an adoring secretary, and you are the man's wife, what are you to do? (p. 515)

What on earth did she want then?...She certainly didn't want to take him down in shorthand, and type out again all those words (p. 517)

What did she want? Why had she such an extraordinary hang-over about him? Just because she was his wife? (p. 517)

4. CONCLUSION

Resembling a fable, 'Two Blue Birds' is a perfect example of Lawrentian dualism, which depicts the battle between sexes. Having used the birds as a motive, Lawrence, in this short story, conveys his message to his readers via his preference of syntax. In the flow of narration, his words dance in a harmony implying the vitality of harmony in human self:

Each of us has two selves. First is the body which is vulnerable and never quite within our control. The body with its irrational sympathies and desires and passions, its peculiar direct communication, defying the mind. And the second is the conscious ego, the self I know I am (Lawrence, 1988, p. 213).

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