

MYTHMAKING IN THE FICTION OF D.H. LAWRENCE

In the 20-th century the works of the Cambridge School of Classical Anthropology had a dominant intellectual impact on literature. Being the founder of ritualism, James Frazer reasoned that all the myth and verbal art had developed out of ancient rites. He discovered the ritual complex of the dying-reviving god, that reflected recurrent processes in nature and human life. The god personifying vegetation (particularly, corn and wheat) died every autumn in harvest and came back to life in spring. Osiris, Ashtaroth, Adonis, Tammuz, Baal, Dionysus and Bacchus were pagan dying-reviving gods, that appeared in Frazer's major work "The Golden Bough". In those myths the wife-mother-lover goddesses mourned over their dead husbands, that embodied vegetation. "The Golden Bough" unites the astral, vegetative and human worlds in a model of birth, death and revival. This cyclical pattern of time shaped the modern spirit and had a profound literary influence on 20-th century literature.

Major writers and D.H. Lawrence among them drew motifs and anthropological models from James Frazer's "The Golden Bough" into the fabric of their narrative. There are structural and stylistic affinities between Frazer's anthropology and Lawrence's mythopoeic outlines. Lawrence's fiction contains ancient allusions and incarnational entities pretty much in the pattern of Frazer's "dying-reviving god". Anthropological are the names of Isis, Osiris, Astarte, Cybele, Baal, etc., a fact, that underlines the archetypal role of his figures. They act out in the contemporary world, but their symbolic nature maintains a prehistoric implication.

Lawrence viewed death, marriage, fornication, initiation, dancing, sacrifice, arrival and departure as certain rituals of life phases. The symbolic imagery lying behind the contemporary setting underscore their deep mythopoeic orientation. The archetypes of the stranger, sacred marriage, scapegoat, virgin, love and death shape the theme and structure of most of his fiction.

To Lawrence the imagery of blood, "the dark passion of primeval people" had a virtual connotation. Apart from the analytical mode of

consciousness there is also a blood-being. This is one half of life belonging to the darkness. All living beings, even plants have blood knowledge, which "comes either through mother or sex". This level of consciousness was termed spellbound, underlying the behaviour of many of his characters, who are possessed by a mysterious spirit and are in a state of trance. His works can be viewed as a pattern of tension between the rational mode of consciousness and irrational or blood consciousness.

Lawrence's mythopoeic references are associated with the vegetative and animal worlds, such as corn, wheat, tree, snake, fox, ladybird, scarab, etc., which are seen as spirit possessing powers.

In "The Fox" Lawrence employed the totemic myth and the archetype of the stranger. According to Frazer the figure of the stranger is a disturbing entity because of his aura of fecundity and magical potency to master others. Henry Grenfel is associated with the fox, who is identified with the fertility deity in the totemic myth. The story gradually brings out its totemic form through the use of psychological associations and prophetic dreams.

Nellie March and Jill Banford had taken a farm to work it out all by themselves, making a living by poultry. However, things didn't flourish, one of the reasons being a marauding fox, who carried off their hens. The totemic myth first occurs when Nellie March encounters the fox. "... he looked into her eyes... she knew he knew her". She was spellbound and her soul failed. The fox began to dominate her unconsciousness, her spirit was invisibly mastered by him. The fox became a settled effect in her psyche. Her possession by the fox predetermines her infatuation with Henry Grenfel, with whose arrival the myth is reached its next stage. At this point the totem moves into Nellie's consciousness from her unconscious. She was spellbound by Henry just as by the fox. She identified him with the fox, which was due both to his physical appearance and behaviour. "And it was as a young hunter that he wanted to bring down Nellie March as his quarry". According to "The Golden Bough" during the harvest season the man who hits the last sickle is called the Fox. Thus the fertility figure, man and animal are all related in the story.

Henry Grenfel and Nellie March were drawn to each other. Jill Banford stood between them. Henry resolved that she should be removed. The slaying of the fox by Henry precedes Jill's removal. In the totemic myth the offering of an animal to deity is part of an animal ritual. Henry's animal nature and social

function is that of a "hunter". Jill is the bird. She must be sacrificed to observe the animal myth in modern society. Thus the totemic ritual is projected into contemporary life.

In "England, My England" myth functions as a concealed anthropological paradigm. The mythologemas of the dying-reviving god and the scapegoat underlie the story. The events and characters are interpreted in the light of archetypal references.

In the story Egbert and Winifred's love and marriage transform into a severe confrontation. It is a battle between liberty and old blood-power, that culminates with Egbert's expulsion and death. He is both the dying god and the scapegoat that should be banished and end up with death as it was in ancient myths.

At the beginning of the story the flourishing vegetation and Egbert and Winifred's passionate love scene were in harmony, recreating the images of pagan fecundity and voluptuousness. Over time due to the changes in their world structure they became estranged and alienated. Egbert's character was pretty much projected into the primitive world of ancient times. He was the bearer of secret, pristine instincts, thus roaming within the boundaries of the mythical and real. In the beginning he enacted as a fertility figure, kind of higher being, whom Winifred loved as a pagan god. Egbert had a passion for old gods, old folk-music and dances and customs of old England. The spirit of bygone days had a strong hold over him, whilst he was "sketchy in the world of business".

It was never quite the same between him and Winifred after the child was born. In Winifred's spirit the responsibility of wifehood yielded to the responsibility of motherhood. Without anything happening Egbert was unconsciously excluded from the landscape of her life. Being possessed by the sense of duty towards her children Winifred became to resent and despise the physical lust. She no longer found in her husband authority and male power. On the other hand Egbert held aloof rejecting any supremacy and responsibility. His power lay in the abnegation of any power, himself being the living negative of power.

Winifred turned to the Roman Catholic Church for comfort, whereas Egbert retreated to the mystery of blood-sacrifice. She couldn't betray her gods, submitting to his Baal and Ashtaroth, whilst his heart and soul were yearning "for lost passions and the intense sensation of the primeval people".

After Winifred's rejection he was no longer able to function as a worshipper of life potency. He was forever dismissed from the family and had to fulfil his role of the dying god and scapegoat by subjugating himself. He came and went, appeared and disappeared like a dying-reviving god.

When the war broke out he resented committing himself into the power of an inferior control. But he acknowledged his mythical identity and acted as a fertility deity. Egbert's life was predetermined as a ritual of sacrifice the opportunity of which was provided by World War I into which he was projected by his wife and father-in-law "Futility, that horrible marshpoison had killed him before he was physically killed in the war", his death being an elaborate ritual of sacrifice.

Myth functions as a double plot in "The Ladybird", where the "dying-reviving" mythologema is one of the major recurring themes. Mythical allusions underscore the archetypal role of his characters and relate them to ontology, i.e. to the nature of beings. They enact in real life but typologically are relevant to mythical figures.

Lady Daphne was married to Basil Apsley, an adorable, well-bred Englishman, whereas the reckless blood and wild energy "damned up inside her" craved for a "dare devil".

First she was unconsciously drawn to Count Johann Dionys Psanek, a Bohemian, who had been wounded in the war and was interned in the hospital, where Daphne went with her mother to visit the enemy soldiers. She was bewitched by the dark flame of the Count's selfhood and hot power of his small, but perfect stature.

Her husband's love for Daphne was like a religious worship, as if she were a divinity, a pagan goddess, himself being rather a sacrifice or offering to her. Basil's outpouring adoration inflicted anguish on her and she began to resent his passion for her. She recoiled from his ecstatic worship and began to yearn wistfully for the Count, who archetypally functions both as a stranger and "dying- reviving" god, possessing an inexplicable affinity with mystic powers.

The wild craving induced her to go and give in to the Count, "to die the death". She offered her soul to him, to the king of the dark and night, who was powerful only in the after-death. Lawrence sees a deep connection between death and sex. Man obtains his true selfhood through sex and blood which are interrelated to death.

Lawrence's ethics doesn't regard adultery as a moral sin. Daphne's sexual intercourse with the Count is seen as a religious rite and sacred initiation.

In the aesthetics of the writer the flowers, trees, insects, animals, the moon and the sun are seen in mythical dimension and are closely linked to the characters, disclosing their in-depth impulses. The imagery of moon and blood are associated with love and passion ("He said her white love was like moonshine". "Basil always said she was the Moon". "The darkness flowed about them thick like blood"...etc).

Archetypally the Count is linked to the pharaohs through his ladybird (part of his crest) which is a descendant of the Egyptian scarabeus, the symbol of the creative principle.

Thus Lawrence's characters function as archetypes and their names are taken from Greek, Egyptian and other mythologies. Myth permeates the texture of his narrative and reunites all the animate and inanimate in the ritual cycle of existence.