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Рогачевская Марина Станиславовна доктор филологических наук, доцент, профессор кафедры зарубежной литературы Минский государственный лингвистический университет, г. Минск, Беларусь

Marina Ragachewskaya

Habilitated Doctor of Philology, Professor at the Department of World Literature, Minsk State Linguistic University, Minsk, Belarus marinaragachewskaya@gmail.com

«ВЛЮБЛЕННЫЕ ЖЕНЩИНЫ» В ЛОНДОНЕ (исследование лондонской богемы в романе Д. Г. Лоуренса)

WOMEN IN LOVE AND IN LONDON (a Study of London Bohemia in D. H. Lawrence's Novel)

В статье рассматривается ряд вопросов, связанных с прототипами и топосом романа Д. Г. Лоуренса «Влюбленные женщины»: связь биографии писателя и сюжетных сцен романа, образ лондонской богемы начала XX в., сопоставительный анализ реальных людей и их художественных двойников, образ Лондона и кафе «Роял». Делается вывод о том, что лондонская богема является катализатором социальной эмансипации главной героини и разрушения моральных границ. Однако автор сумел имплицитно утвердить моральные ценности личности на фоне послевоенного хаоса.

Ключевые слова: Д. Г. Лоуренс; «Влюбленные женщины»; лондонская богема; кафе «Роял»; биографический; послевоенный.

The article deals with a number of issues related to the prototypes and topos of D. H. Lawrence's novel *Women in Love*: the connection between the writer's biography and scenes of the novel, the image of the London bohemia of the early twentieth century, a comparative analysis of real people and their fictional counterparts, the image of London and the Café Royal. It is concluded that the London bohemia serves as a catalyst for the social emancipation of the main character and the destruction of moral boundaries. However, the author managed to implicitly affirm the moral values of the individual against the backdrop of post-war chaos.

Key words: D. H. Lawrence; Women in Love; London bohemia; Café Royal; biographical; post-war.

Given the factual biographical connections that hold together D. H. Lawrence's mental and emotional perception of London and his literary evocation of this city, one tends to read London-based scenes and London-related characters as this unmistakable direct link. London, with its complex and tangled life that puzzled and disconcerted Lawrence so much, is undoubtedly at the core of the metropolis-related scenes in *Women in Love* (1920).

I will offer my reading of a group of characters in *Women in Love* who make up a sort of sub-cultural cluster, an artistic bohemia. Besides identifying the objective correlatives that link these characters with their flesh-and-blood prototypes, I also pay attention to the typicality of the collective image of the London bohemia during and immediately after the war years – the aspect that historicizes the way London, with its Café Royal, shaped Lawrence's novel *Women in Love*. Finally, I focus on Lawrence's purely subjective brush strokes in the characters' portrayal, which can throw light on the distortions, modifications and personal grudges he might have held against the more posh and less restrained members of fashionable circles.

Renowned Lawrence critics (David Ellis, Neil Roberts, Harold Bloom and others) have offered a number of references to the parallels between Lawrence's life experience, his involvement in London's bohemian parties and the scenes in *Women in Love*. In particular, David Ellis mentions Lady Ottoline's country house in Garsington as "a meeting place for numerous artists and thinkers, united for the most part in their opposition to the war" [1, p. 56]. Lawrence often congregated among the famous Bloomsbury group, however, as Paul Delaney explains, the reasons for Lawrence's breaking up with this artistic group include his vehement criticism of Duncan Grant's paintings, "but worse yet was its admixture with the homosexuality that linked many members of the Bloomsbury set" [2, p. 50].

Hence the tone that underlies the London bohemian scenes in *Women in Love* is saturated with bitter sarcasm. Neil Roberts pointed at the distinct opposition between Birkin and the London artists' group: "It is very important that Birkin stands out as an individual, not as a member of a group, so he labels the characters we are to meet in London as 'pettifogging' and 'calculating'" [3], thus highlighting the main pivot in the novel's imagery.

The issue of prototypes for the novel's heroes has been addressed by a number of scholars. John Worthen claims that at least twelve people might have found recognizable versions of themselves or their family members in the book: Heseltine, Minnie Lucy Channing, Ottoline and Philip Morrell, Louie Burrows and the Burrows family, Thomas Philip Barber and members of the Barber family, John Middleton Murry, Maxim Litvinov, Bertrand Russell, William Henry Hocking, Anne Estelle Rice, Gordon Campbell, and Eleonora Duse [4]. The Café Pompadour corresponds to the Café Royal, and, as Philip M. Weinstein observes, "Creme de Menthe' is one of the chapters in *Women in Love* that best display[s] the era's belly" [5, p. 116], alluding here to Lawrence's expression in "The Crown" – "We roam in the belly of our era" [6, p. 255].

The Café Royal was a far too famous place to miss, and hosted at certain times Oscar Wilde, Virginia Woolf, D. H. Lawrence, Winston Churchill, George Bernard Shaw and other literary, political and artistic celebrities. In 1907, Arthur Ransome in his book on London Bohemia, pointed out: "Of course, in London too, there are people who are Bohemians for fun, but not so many, because the fun in London is not an organized merriment that anyone may enjoy who can pay for it. Visitors to London do not find, as they do in Paris, men waiting about the principal streets, offering themselves as guides to Bohemia. The fun is in the life itself, and not to be had less cheaply than by living it" [7, p. 5].

Max Beerbohm, on first entering the Café Royal, had exclaimed "This indeed is life!" [8, p. 102]. Verlaine adored the Café, too. Deghy and Waterhouse remark that "Shaw sometimes dined there but avoided bohemian society. D. H. Lawrence

detested and satirized it viciously" [9, p. 152–155]. The war years had a certain embittering effect on this milieu: "the social and artistic tone of London life changed significantly" [10, p. 113]. These changes, especially affecting the inner controversies and competitiveness are visible in Lawrence's treatment of the Bohemian life.

The London bohemian group in Lawrence's novel are *painters*, *musicians*, *writers* – *hangers-on*, *models*, *advanced young people*, *anybody who is openly at outs with the conventions*, *and belongs to nowhere particularly*. *They are often young fellows down from the University*, *and girls who are living their own lives*, *as they say* [11, p. 60]. Individually, they are Halliday, the Pussum and Maxim, the young Russian man, and Loerke, a bohemian German artist, all of whom reflect a certain circle of Lawrence's friends and associates, hence, historical and biographical references come in handy. The above-mentioned artistic personae may roughly be related to the prototypical real-life characters. Thus, Philip Heseltine (also, Peter Warlock) threatened to take legal action against M. Secker for Lawrence's libelous – as he believed – portrait of him as Julius Halliday.

Loerke, as M. Squires and K. Talbot state, "borrows surface features from the painter Mark Gertler (1892–1939) – as others have noted – but ... underneath, surprisingly recreates [Otto] Gross" [12, p. 169], Frieda's German lover, her experience Lawrence had never forgotten. As the biographers note, Loerke is "a strangely perverse version of Gross" [ibid.]. The actual prototype was in a troublesome relationship with his own father, embodied recklessness and instability, had a homosexual experience and was treated by S. Freud and C. G. Jung. In the novel, Loerke's sense of a new life fascinates Gudrun. However, his rather cruel and meandering nature leads Birkin to the conclusion: almost like a criminal [11, p. 196]. Neil Roberts writes about Loerke: "When [he] asserts that 'machinery and the acts of labour are extremely, maddeningly beautiful' <...>, he is speaking with the voice of Italian Futurism whose most prominent spokesman, Filippo Marinetti, Lawrence had cited when trying to explain his new approach to the novel in 1914 <...>. When Loerke contemptuously insists to Ursula that the horse in his sculpture is 'a piece of form' that has 'no relation to anything outside that work of art' <...>, he reflects the views of the critic Clive Bell, who was instrumental in introducing Post-Impressionist art <...> to Britain in the years immediately before the war" [3]. Besides, as John Bullen hints, "the similarity between [the portrait] of Loerke and the portrait of Moest painted in 1912 by his friend Robert Seuffert is very strong" [13, p. 7].

Minnie Lucy Channing (Halliday's wife), called "Puma" among her friends, appears as the artist Halliday's model, the Pussum, and Maxim Litvinov¹, the

¹ Maxim Litvinov was a leading Bolshevik revolutionary from the opening decade of the century, when, like so many, he was exiled from his Russian homeland. He came to London in 1908 and was adopted by the Fabians of the Bloomsbury set (which is likely where he first met Ivy) (J. D. Bernal: The Sage of Science. Contributors: Andrew Brown – Author. Publisher: Oxford University Press. Place of publication: Oxford, England. Publication year: 2006. Page number: 117).

revolutionary exile and future Russian diplomat whom Ivy Low married in 1916 – as the young Russian Maxim Libidnikov. Little is known why this character hangs around with the bohemian group. However, as a future Soviet representative in the League of Nations, Maxim M. Litvinov was an ardent advocate of peace and disarmament, of which he often spoke at various political conferences, proclaiming amid the general Soviet propagandistic stuff: "What is required is to find a way for putting an end to war" [14, p. 82]. So, objectively, this stance resonates with Lawrence's loathing of war.

Stating the novel's characters' resemblance with the actual individuals is only the first step in the recreation of the broader image of the London bohemia. The second perspective from which to study these characters is to locate them both in the novel's chronotope and the historical time of intense artistic competition and opposition of the urban to the rural minds, reenacted on the venue of the Café Pompadour (Royal). Typification of the artistic circles in Lawrence's novel takes place easily and predictably. In the fundamental study of this subject, Peter Brooker reports many typical features of the Bohemia in London, among which – the view of bohemian cafes as the "disreputable domain of artists and artist types" [10, p. 103]. Brooker also points out that "cafes were places to parade, be seen and hold court, to plot and plan, to write and edit in, and places to paint" [10, p. 115]. Weinstein, commenting on such a typical place as one of the novel's settings, expounds: "London Bohemia, with its 'very thorough rejectors of the world,' frequents the Café Pompadour; and though these avantgardists seek to be free of convention; they remain, as Birkin tells Gerald, 'for all their shockingness, all on one note.' Their repudiation of respectability has not brought freedom but merely exchanged one social code for another; Lawrence finely conveys the fixed, foreclosed quality of their motions" [5, p. 116].

The café in Piccadilly Circus in the novel appears as a place, perhaps, like many others, but the writer's personal resentment of the urbanistic milieu is projected onto this assembly that plays its transformative role, however, in the life of the major female characters. Lawrence's subjectivity in perceiving the Café's atmosphere lies in its description through Gerald's unsophisticated mind: *Gerald went through the push doors into the large, lofty room where the faces and heads of the drinkers showed dimly through the haze of smoke, reflected more dimly, and repeated ad infinitum in the great mirrors on the walls, so that one seemed to enter a vague, dim world of shadowy drinkers humming within an atmosphere of blue tobacco smoke. There was, however, the red plush of the seats to give substance within the bubble of pleasure [11, p. 62].*

Unlike those who saw "indeed life" in Café Royal, Gudrun's and Birkin's (and Lawrence's as well) reactions were the opposite. *I feel I could NEVER see this foul town again – I couldn't BEAR to come back to it* [11, p. 386], exclaims Gudrun following one of those meetings, thus summing up her vehement judgment of the London bohemia with whom she had been congregating for a while. Birkin also declares: "*I'm tired of the people I am bound to find there…London*

Bohemia – the most pettifogging calculating Bohemia that ever reckoned its pennies. But there are a few decent people, decent in some respects. They are really very thorough rejecters of the world – perhaps they live only in the gesture of rejection and negation – but negatively something, at any rate" [11, p. 60].

Gudrun, however, is as if under the Freudian repetition compulsion, when a person repeats a traumatic event or its circumstances over and over again: *Gudrun hated the Café, yet she always went back to it, as did most of the artists of her acquaintance. She loathed its atmosphere of petty vice and petty jealousy and petty art. Yet she always called in again, when she was in town. It was as if she HAD to return to this small, slow, central whirlpool of disintegration and dissolution: just give it a look* [11, p. 380].

There is an objective reason to be cited: in 1916, in September, Lawrence learned from Koteliansky "that some Café Royal habituees had sat mocking his *Amores* poems until Catherine Mansfield boldly intervened" [12, p. 57]. On another occasion, celebrating his return to London in the said café, Lawrence started to "recruit" friends to his Rananim project, felt unwell and fainted right at the table. Being carried in a taxi to a flat and put to bed was the moment of unheard of embarrassment, especially for someone as sensitive as Lawrence.

Lawrence's irony and antipathy towards the place and the group, however, are not univocal: a complex discursive variety of verbal means features in the descriptions of people and the reproduction of their dialogues. The first prominent scene that highlights Lawrence's revisionary reconsideration of gender relations catches into focus the awkward meeting of the Pussum and Halliday, after he got his fill of her as a model and lover and forbade her from leaving the countryside. Lawrence's unsympathetic attitude to the patriarchal patronizing treatment of women is felt even from the description of Halliday, with his *high*, *hysterical voice*, changing into a squeal, with Birkin playing the girl's advocate (*She comes as she likes*) [11, p. 66]. This definitely reflects what Brooker describes: "Unattended women at the Café Royal were either, with some ambiguity, dancers, artists, models, or prostitutes" [10, p. 103].

For all this, Lawrence expresses his warm sympathy towards Pussum, frankly stating the natural beauty and simplicity which appeal to Gerald so strongly: *At Birkin's table was a girl with dark, soft, fluffy hair cut short in the artist fashion, hanging level and full almost like the Egyptian princess's. She was small and delicately made, with warm colouring and large, dark hostile eyes. There was a delicacy, almost a beauty in all her form, and at the same time a certain attractive grossness of spirit, that made a little spark leap instantly alight in Gerald's eyes [11, p. 62]. Her appearance was simple and complete, really beautiful, because of her regularity and form, her soft dark hair falling full and level on either side of her head, her straight, small, softened features, Egyptian in the slight fulness of their curves, her slender neck and the simple, rich-coloured smock hanging on her slender shoulders [11, p. 65].*

The evident indecency in Halliday's behaviour, his meanness and crudeness sets off the fact of Pussum's reputation, occupation or social demise. However much Pussum strives to ascertain her own independence, her power and emancipation, she still embodies the type, which Lawrence scorns so adamantly, with relentless sneering in "Give Her a Pattern". The bohemian milieu remains the "men's world", and the artist Halliday with his own *soft, rather degenerate face*, with a *warm corrupt nature* [11, p. 65] is able to produce this very type: an "eternal secret ideal of men – the prostitute" [15, p. 163]. An ironic combination of Pussum's *babyish pronunciation*, her smallness, delicacy and childish immediacy and *something curiously indecent, obscene* [11, p. 382], for Gerald, turns out to be *sickening beyond words* [11, p. 382].

Halliday is a curious creation, possessing almost in equal degrees the arrogance of a bohemian artist and the naiveté and childish simplicity. He can be spiritually cruel, yet sociable and kind – for taking a destitute Hindu man into his service and for putting up people in his London flat. At a certain point, he even voices Lawrence's own worldview when posing naked in the company of his male companions: "Oh – one would FEEL things instead of merely looking at them. I should feel the air move against me, and feel the things I touched, instead of having only to look at them. I'm sure life is all wrong because it has become much too visual–we can neither hear nor feel nor understand, we can only see. I'm sure that is entirely wrong" [11, p. 78].

A combination of violence and sexual titillation hovers around the actions and the place where the artists get together. The Pussum stabs a young man in the café, and the men go around naked in each other's company, the girl is almost openly there for "sale", and Gerald nearly gets involved in an ugly fight. This only reinforces the novel's underlying struggle: between the power of love and love of power. *He knew the Pussum was merely glad to be rid of him. She had got her Halliday whom she wanted. She wanted him completely in her power. Then she would marry him. <...> Gerald was what she called a man, and these others, Halliday, Libidnikov, Birkin, the whole Bohemian set, they were only half men. But it was half men she could deal with. She felt sure of herself with them. The real men, like Gerald, put her in her place too much [11, p. 81].*

The scene of Pussum's stabbing a young man serves as a sort of exposure, climactic epiphany whence Lawrence's own nature transpires. As Bloom comments, "The calculated sex-play and the accumulating brutality are not alternative activities; they are versions of an identical dynamic: the programmatic itching of raw nerves, sensual gratification through self-abuse and the abuse – verbal, physical – of others. Within well-ordered confines the Bohemians at the Pompadour avert the ennui that stalks their life by teasing at, toying in public with, the constitutive elements of their passional life. They know they are alive by the lacerating, self-delighting sensations thus produced" [5, p. 116].

Maxim Libidnikov plays a minor role, almost a decorative one, with his quick, hushed, elegant manner [11, p. 70], suave, discreet and precise,

the voice *small and perfect* that *sounded in the blood rather than in the air, correct and COMME IL FAUT in appearance and manner* [11, p. 80]. He is almost imperceptible, only the background decency. This is, perhaps, as far as Lawrence's imagination can picture a diplomat.

Loerke, of all, is probably the most conspicuous expression of the bohemian standards, albeit, not exactly London-related, but still very much in the same vein. *Herr Loerke was the little man with the boyish figure, and the round, full, sensitive-looking head, and the quick, full eyes, like a mouse's. He glanced swiftly from one to the other of the strangers, and held himself aloof* [11, p. 405]. *His body was slight and unformed, like a boy's, but his voice was mature, sardonic, its movement had the flexibility of essential energy, and of a mocking penetrating understanding. Gudrun could not understand a word of his monologue, but she was spell-bound, watching him. He must be an artist, nobody else could have such fine adjustment and singleness* [11, p. 406].

Jack Stewart associates him with decadence which, in turn, is associated with "a cult of primitivism" [16, p. 113], which the critic – in the form it is practiced by Loerke – judges to be "fantasy and escapism": "Amid this 'flux of dissolution' the creative individual must resist inertia, struggle for awareness, make existential choices that determine his being. That is why Birkin has to go through a phase of conscious primitivizing, sharply distinguished from Halliday's self-indulgent playing at 'the primitive' or Loerke's exploitation of it for mental thrills. He must resist the tide of his culture, which seems set for destruction, and draw from other cultures whatever helps to restore inner balance" [16, p. 113].

Simultaneously, Lawrence as a shrewd observer, a chronicler of the subtlest changes in the outward and the inward, he plays with the artistic detail in the psychological portrayal, body language depiction and creation of the mood and atmosphere. He uses these skills at his very best in the chapter "Gudrun in the Pompadour": *She sat with Gerald drinking some sweetish liqueur, and staring with black, sullen looks at the various groups of people at the tables. She would greet nobody, but young men nodded to her frequently, with a kind of sneering familiarity. She cut them all. And it gave her pleasure to sit there, cheeks flushed, eyes black and sullen, seeing them all objectively, as put away from her, like creatures in some menagerie of apish degraded souls. God, what a foul crew they were! Her blood beat black and thick in her veins with rage and loathing. Yet she must sit and watch, watch. One or two people came to speak to her. From every side of the Cafe, eyes turned half furtively, half jeeringly at her, men looking over their shoulders, women under their hats [11, p. 380].*

If, for a moment, we apply the formalist perspective, the paradox of the tension – between the pleasure to sit there and the apish degraded souls, between rage and loathing and the compulsion to watch – reveals Gudrun's own dark fascination with what her mind proclaims evil. Jill Franks treats this as Kristevian expression of the abject [17, p. 39].

The scene in which Halliday ridicules Birkin's meditative letter, with hickups *in the sing-song, slow, distinct voice of a clergyman reading the Scriptures* [11, p. 383] is of electric transformative power for Gudrun: *Surely there will come an end in us to this desire – for the constant going apart, – this passion for putting asunder – everything – ourselves, reducing ourselves part from part – reacting in intimacy only for destruction, – using sex as a great reducing agent, reducing the two great elements of male and female from their highly complex unity – reducing the old ideas, going back to the savages for our sensations, – always seeking to LOSE ourselves in some ultimate black sensation, mindless and infinite – burning only with destructive fires, raging on with the hope of being burnt out utterly* [11, p. 384].

On the one hand, we can easily read Lawrence into this letter projecting in the narrative his own plight of exposure to the hypocritical and vicious minds. His unmistakable preaching philosophy sounds amid giggles, drunken hiccups, derision and humiliation. The gap between the near-religious quality of the letter and the smoke, drink and booing, the cruel exposure of one's intimate soul is all what Gudrun needs to become a heroine, to rise – with her country origins and yet, a splendid fashionable dress – above the crowd, who are, ironically, proclaiming themselves to be above old-fashioned crowds. In spite of himself, perhaps, Lawrence underscored the female "coming of age" through Gudrun's London exploits, with this one being exceptionally remarkable. Carola M. Kaplan makes an observation that is particularly relevant for the study of the London Bohemia: "class differences; the emergence of the New Woman" [18, p. 186].

When we take a piece of psychoanalytic methodology into this scene, it may well pass for a wish fulfilment, a fantasy that compensates for the bad feeling the author had about London Bohemia. It is worth noticing that it is not Birkin who avenges his humiliation, but a female protagonist. Could it be Lawrence's trust in, reliance on and clinging to the power of woman? On the other hand, there is Gudrun to observe: with flushing eyes, flushed cheeks, fashionably dressed – all green, grey and silver – she performs this courageous deed which reestablishes her self-pride and esteem, her naturalness reaffirms her stance favourably against Pussum's "diablerie".

The verbal dramatization of the scenes involving the bohemian group of London artists and their associates, bespeaks authorial anxiety, deep-rooted fear of self-exposure, and an almost electric tension filling the gap between more provincial people like the main heroes and those occupying London's rented furnished rooms, *common and ugly*.

Resulting from a host of contradictory experiences, Gudrun faces her own introspection: Young as she was, Gudrun had touched the whole pulse of social England. She had no ideas of rising in the world. She knew, with the perfect cynicism of cruel youth, that to rise in the world meant to have one outside show instead of another... Everything was intrinsically a piece of irony to her [11, p. 418].

Through a combination of borrowed features from real-life prototypes, generalized imagery of the Café Royal and other bohemian parties, and using his subjective attitudes, Lawrence created a dynamic image of the London Bohemia and made it function as a catalyst for Gudrun's further becoming, as a trial agent that crystalizes heroic stance, but leaves her meandering and cynical. Lawrence also shows his acquiescence of women's changing social roles, personal independent choices, of collapsing moral boundaries. However, the sense of the moral as something deeply human, never leaves the reader's mind, without actually being imposed by the narrative.

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