

TRADUÇÃO DO ARTIGO “D. H. LAWRENCE, UM CLASSICISTA”

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Apresentação da tradução

O artigo intitulado “D. H. Lawrence, um classicista”, de autoria de Lourdes Bernardes Gonçalves, apresenta uma síntese de questões importantes dos princípios estéticos de elaboração e desenvolvimento do romance do escritor inglês moderno D. H. Lawrence. Através da explanação de pontos teóricos e de contextualização histórica do pensamento clássico, um dos principais elementos de influencia na construção do projeto de escrita do autor, bem como da análise de alguns dos textos de Lawrence, o artigo ilustra as principais questões levantadas pelo escritor inglês em sua obra.

A tradução desse artigo para o inglês poderá ser utilizada como fonte de consulta para professores e alunos de literaturas de língua inglesa no contexto da sala de aula.

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D.H. LAWRENCE, A CLASSICIST

Lourdes Bernardes Gonçalves*

Abstract

In the Greek classical conception, the ideal man represents the unity of the intuitive and the rational. In the Middle Ages one finds the concept of sin linked to the human body. There is a rupture within the harmonious ensemble body and spirit. With the Renaissance, the search for balance reappears, and Humanism tries to conciliate these two aspects of human nature, now described as a triad, with the three basic components of the classical man being reason, sentiment and sensuality. It is observed that, after the Renaissance, no other literary school made an effort to convey a vision of man with equal emphasis to the intuitive, emotional and rational aspects. D. H. Lawrence, a modern English writer, attempted a classical unity in his vision of man. He puts it clearly in his afterword to *Lady Chatterley's Lover* (1929). This position is made perfectly clear throughout his work. An examine of the short-story "The Horse Dealer's Daughter" shows how Lawrence's classical vision defines love. The writer was openly criticized in his time and even afterwards, but is now universally accepted and admired, which proves that he, too, became a classic.

Key-words: Classicism, balance, triad, reason, sentiment, sensuality.

In the Greek classical conception, the ideal man represents the unity of the intuitive and the rational. The Marathons, the Dionysus parties, and the Peripatetic Rides are examples of activities which indicate that the body and the spirit were equally exalted.

In the Middle Ages, with the consolidation of Christianity in the Western world, the concept of sin linked to the human body arises. The sensitive world perceived by man through his body becomes a threatening source of lust, gluttony and other capital vices. Scourging is introduced as a means of purification, and the harmony between body and spirit is broken.

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With the Renaissance, the search for balance reappears and Humanism seeks to combine the body and the mind in a harmonious whole, which is no longer described as bipartite, but with the recognition of *three* basic components in the shaping of the complete classical man, the animal (body), the rational (mind) and the emotional (heart). We can find in the great works of intellectuals of the Renaissance this preoccupation with conveying the tripartite concept of man. For example, in Shakespeare, the situation of tragedy is established when there is an unbalance in these three essential aspects. Man in Renaissance is seen in all of his integrity and potentiality, as a being in complete domain of his body, mind and emotions, directing all of his potential in search of a quality of excellence in life. Perhaps, because of that, Renaissance classicism is frequently regarded as the golden age of the Western civilization.

It is observed that, after the Renaissance, no other literary school has been conceived with conveying a view of man with equal emphasis on intuitive, emotional and rational aspects. In Neoclassicism, the Age of Enlightenment, reason is supreme. This excess leads, afterwards, to an overstated valorization of emotions, which had been suppressed so far, determining one of the most important characteristics of Romanticism. In Realism, hereafter, we observe a return to the predominance of reason and, in Naturalism, an emphasis on the sensual, on the body, on the animalistic aspect of man.

We have come, then, to the modern period. D.H. Lawrence (1885-1930), son of a miner and a teacher, tries to show a classical conception in his view of man, retrieving the idea of the reason, sensation and emotion triad. His own background suggests an integration of physical and intellectual activities. Author of novels, short stories, essays and poems, Lawrence writes *Lady Chatterley's Lover* in 1928, which could be only published in full in 1960, in Italy, because of censorship. In 1929, the author writes an afterword, "**A Propos of *Lady Chatterley's Lover***", as an elucidation of his position. It is almost a manifest, in which Lawrence defines true love as a manifestation of the three aspects of human nature. He not only criticizes union for convenience, because of reason, but also unions derived of a mere sentimental affinity, based upon a fraternal feeling between friends:

“Modern people are just personalities, and modern marriages take place when two people are ‘thrilled’ by each other’s personality: when they have the same tastes in furniture or books or amusement, when they love ‘talking’ to one another, when they admire on another’s ‘minds’. Now this, this affinity of mind and personality, is an excellent basis of friendship between sexes, but a disastrous basis for marriage.”

He considers this perspective of marriage as an aggression to the physical, carnal parts of man; a source of unbalance:

“Life is only bearable when the mind and the body are in harmony, and there is a natural balance between them, and each has a natural respect for the other.”

He suggests, then, how we should look at ourselves and at the act of loving:

“We have to [...] Balance up the consciousness of the act and the act itself. Get the two in harmony. It means having a proper reverence for sex, and a proper awe of the body’s strange experience. It means being able to use the so-called obscene words, because these are natural part of the mind’s consciousness and body. Obscenity only comes in when the mind despises and fears the body, and the body hates and resists the mind.”

He affirms that, if people insist on what he calls “counterfeit love” (fake love), frustrations and feelings of dissatisfaction will generate strong negative emotions such as hatred, and deep resentment against those who, maybe innocently, have generated such conflict:

“The peculiar hatred of people who have not loved one another, but who have pretended to, even perhaps have imagined they really did love, is one of the phenomena of our time.”

In the short story “**The Horse Dealer’s Daughter**” we can clearly see Lawrence’s position, now developed in an artistic way. After the death of the father, a horse dealer, the three sons and the daughter are reunited to think about their destiny, since the father’s house is going to be sold and the business extinguished. We have the following description of Joe, one of the sons:

“Joe watched with glazed hopeless eyes. The horses were almost his own body to him. He felt he was done for now. Luckily he was engaged to a woman as old as himself, and therefore her father, who was steward of a neighbouring estate, would provide him with a job. He would marry and go into harness. His life was over, he would be a subject animal now.”

It can be immediately noticed what Joe's choice means to Lawrence: a marriage of reason, the loss of freedom. The metaphors "go into harness" and be "a subject animal" describe vividly the feeling of imprisonment. Mabel, his sister, chooses to stop fighting and decides to commit suicide. Ferguson, doctor and friend of the family, rescues Mabel and by doing that releases strong emotion in the girl, who regards her salvation as an act of love. The romantic involvement between Mabel and Ferguson represents the inverse situation from of Joe. The doctor does not accept an emotional involvement because he has already established a doctor-patient relationship with the girl. Reason is here an element which prevents the blossoming of love. When, after saving Mabel from suicide, she embraces him, recognizing an intuitive love, an animal attraction, Ferguson reacts in a way that highlights the manifestation of love despite the apparent impediment of reason:

"He had no single personal thought of her. Nay, this introduction of the personal element was very distasteful to him, a violation of his professional honour. It was horrible to have her there embracing his knees. It was horrible. He revolted from it violently. And yet – and yet – he had not the power to break away."

The sequence of the plot shows the transition from the intuitive attraction to the emotional reaction, as a wave that controls the whole being:

"Her hands were drawing him, drawing him down to her. He was afraid, even a little horrified. For he had, really, no intention of loving her. Yet her hands were drawing him towards her. He put out his hands quickly to steady himself, and grasped her bare shoulder. A flame seemed to burn the hand that grasped her soft shoulder. He had no intention of loving her: his whole will was against his yielding. It was horrible. And yet wonderful was the touch of her shoulders, beautiful the shining of her face."

The culmination of this process occurs when the rational is triggered by involved through the formal marriage proposal.

Lawrence's vision of love, full of sensuality, shocks the English morality, still strongly influenced by the Victorianism of the previous century. There was in fact disagreement in relation to the acceptance of Lawrence in the most respectable intellectual circles of that time. Although nowadays the author is considered, together with James Joyce and Virginia Woolf, one of the greatest representatives of English modernism, only few people understood him at his time, as we can mention E. M. Forster, Aldous Huxley, and the critic F.R. Leavis as exceptions.

In the 1960's, with the sexual revolution, the views on Lawrence become, in a certain way, common place and, according to David Lodge, the author is regarded as a "posthumous honorary hippie". In the 1970's, with the American feminist movement, Lawrence is compared to Henry Miller and Norman Mailer by Kate Millet, in her book *Sexual Politics* (1970), and classified as an agent of sexual exploration, abuse and humiliation of women by men.

Finally, today, in a less passionate judgment, D.H. Lawrence is considered an original writer, an independent genius, more modern than one has ever thought, because beyond his themes, it can be recognized in him the polyphony defined by Bakhtin. His work became a classic in another sense of the word.

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