Ordinarily, a modernist work will be expected to be experimental in terms of structure and plotting; it will be expected to reject traditional values, favor order and knowable structures in seeking for truth and meaning on the one hand. On the other hand, it will be expected to subvert same—that is, order and knowable structures in seeking truth and meaning. In other words, it will be expected to regard truth and meaning as flux, inherently carrying the germ of post-modernism. While D.H. Lawrence’s Lady Chatterley’s Lover is not experimental in terms of plot—that is, it obeys the rules of order: the ideas in the text itself question tradition, and subvert known structures or truths. In a society where human beings have become slaves to the machine, where money and class or social status are the only reasons for living, where the fullness of living is hindered by metaphysically justified morality, an alternative reality becomes inevitable, a reality whose themes will speak to every epoch in the modern/post-modern age. Will then D.H. Lawrence’s Lady Chatterley’s Lover intervene for the Age? The objective of the paper was to find out to what extent Lady Chatterley’s Lover intervened for a Hopeless Age. Qualitative method was used all through.

Keywords: Utopia, Modernism and Post-modernism, Truth, Flux, Traditional Values and Knowable Structures

INTRODUCTION

John P. Dolan, while introducing Utopia by Thomas More, had described the book as More’s masterpiece, and he went further to describe the concept “utopia” as the country whose name means “no place”, but which over the centuries has become the “everywhere” of humanistic hope for a society in which wisdom and justice prevail (n.pag).

The Modern Period was a period of great change in the historical process of the unfolding of the world’s spirit in its progressive evolution, which Hegel, the German Philosopher identified as the Phenomenology of the Spirit. It was this same dialectic process that Karl Marx used in his materialist interpretation of historical process, in which it is expected that at the final collapse of capitalism in this dialectic process once it reaches its final stage, which is imperialism, socialism will take its place and will continue in the dialectic process until it reaches a stage of assumed bliss, Communism, where there will be no class divisions, no inequality, unemployment, in fact a state of assumed
bliss, which in itself is Utopia. Is then D.H. Lawrence’s Lady Chatterley’s Lover the everywhere of humanistic hope?

**DISCOURSE**

The Renaissance Period in Europe changed the way the world was looked at. Prior to this time, truth seemed to be known through inner revelation, that is, subjectively. But the humanists of the Renaissance, through their study of the science, art, philosophy and philology of the classical period, came to the conclusion that man was the centre of all things. If they could not feel and see God, there was no need wasting their energy on Him; man and how to better his lot was of utmost importance to them; in other words, there was need for a better human society and this could be achieved through the application of human reason: they must put their minds to things to create a better society. It was in fact during this period that Thomas More wrote his Utopia. This way of looking at the world became even more intensified during the 18th century, known as the Age of Enlightenment. Scientific discoveries revealed scientific truths. Therefore, truth became the outcome of observable realities. The 18th century application of reason in the study of nature gave rise to scientific and technological innovations, which in turn gave rise to industrial revolution. A new class of wealth owners had emerged and they had been empowered by reason, as such, they had displaced Monarchy, Aristocracy and the Church and had abandoned tradition and trusted in the progress made through science and technology and had great confidence in the progress of the future. The effect of this new system of wealth ownership and mind-set to sustain wealth accumulation reflected in the environment or nature so that there increased urban slum, poverty of the exploited class and debasement caused by the use of the machine or industrial revolution (Ile, 23-38).

In England, scholars and Intellectuals of the Victorian era battled to save England from exploding: advance in science and technology, the growing industrialization had made humankind overtly confident in the proven capacity of the human mind. Religion had become suspect and the proclamation of the German Philosopher, Fredrick Nietzsche, in his fictional, but philosophical masterpiece, Thus Spoke Zarathustra, that Gott ist tot, er stab in seinem Mitleid mit den Menschen: God was dead and that He died of his pity for Humanity (114) as well as the fact that values and morality were human constructs (55-57), increased the Godlessness of the Age. Queen Victoria tried to represent for the Age the quintessential womanhood. She insisted on the need for monogamy and strong family values and tradition, things that would come to haunt England. The devastation occasioned by the first-world-war made people to lose faith in modernity. The equality, freedom, justice and progress hoped for by the modernist spirit seemed now all elusive. This state of hopelessness, the injustice and man’s inhumanity occasioned by industrial capitalism had prepared the ground for D.H. Lawrence to write Lady Chatterley’s Lover.

**LADY CHATTERLEY’S LOVER AS INTERVENTION FOR THE HOPELESS AGE**

It starts: “Ours is a tragic age, so we refuse to take it tragically. The cataclysm has happened, we are among the ruins, we start to build up new little habitats, to have new little hopes. It is rather hard work: there is now no smooth road into the future: but we go round, or scramble over the obstacles. We’ve got to live, no matter how many skies have fallen (5).” With this statement, D.H. Lawrence begins his work of rescue. There is no doubt any more, from the statement above, that neither science nor technology, which had engendered industrialization, can guarantee the future progress of the world. In fact, they have
wreaked so much havoc to the earth that there is need for a new beginning in a new direction which requires a rediscovery of our humanity, lost in industrial capitalism, in the rationality of modernism: this is typically demonstrated by Lawrence in the conversation of Mr Clifford and his three intellectual friends, Hammond, Charles May and Tommy Dukes. The encouragement of mental life by modernism creates a situation whereby real knowledge is somehow thought to be divorced from the whole corpus of consciousness, which includes the belly and the penis as much as it does the brain and the mind (40). It is in the exclusion of feelings, emotions and intuition that the turning of man into machine, bereft of all humanity, begins. And man without humanity poses danger to life: it is this wrenching of humanity from man’s core that the machine, which represents progress becomes hate, the hate of life itself (41), for, according to Charlie May, Sir Clifford’s friend, “hate’s a growing thing like anything else. It’s the inevitable outcome of forcing ideas on to life, of forcing one’s deepest instincts; our deepest feelings we force according to certain ideas. We drive ourselves with a formula, like a machine (41).” D.H. Lawrence tries in Lady Chatterley’s Lover to show, therefore, that reclaiming life from this machine is possible. He uses sex as a focal point for his argument, shocking as it may seem. But again, in societies where couples are working class, one sees always the ugly head of that monster which sucks away the life of these people, rendering men impotent and women undersexed, tearing relationships apart, making conversations, to which the sexual act also belongs, according to Lawrence, impossible.

**LADY CHATTERLEY’S LOVER: A CONCLUSION**

It seems that the encouragement of the mental life, of the so-called ideal life by the intellectual or the working class is as a result of the fact that they have been rendered inhuman and impotent by hate or the machine or industrial capitalism. Sir Clifford seems to belong to this group of people whose lives have been destroyed by the machine: he is paralyzed from the waist down. He wants his wife, Lady Chatterley, to live the ideal life. He belongs to the upper class. He is also conservative. However, he is not conservative enough to suggest to his wife the need to have an affair and get a child, by another man, who will continue his lineage. He does not consider the psychological implications for the wife; he sanctions adultery once his acts are not discovered, once he maintains his reputation. This indeed is the absurdity of the modern world. D.H. Lawrence uses Sir Clifford’s situation to confront the conservative bourgeoisie who had never imagined that they would be in a situation, where they would throw conservatism overboard and be carried by the tide of life’s dialectics. He uses the character, Lady Chatterley, to project the argument that defining the future will lie not in science or industrialization, but in the restoration of life, which must not exclude the sexual act; for by the awakening of the need for sex, we awaken emotions, feelings and all those things we lost to industrial capitalism; for as the Game-Keeper, Lady Chatterley’s lover, says “the world is all alike: kill off the human reality, a quid for every foreskin, two quid for each pair of balls. What is cunt but machine-fucking! –it’s all alike. Pay ‘em money to cut off the world’s cock. Pay money, money, money to them that will take spunk out of mankind, and leave ‘em all little twiddling machines” (226). By implication, therefore, people all over the world have become slaves to capitalism, which is the world’s cock, fucking the cunt of industrial capitalism for their livelihood. They can be saved by being educated on how to live again in the fullness of life, in handsomeness (312). However, if living life fully is all about sex, then people as Sir Clifford are greatly disadvantaged. And we know that if given the choice, he would not
choose to be paralyzed from his waist down. Should he then live in sorrow for not being able to have sex or should he seek solace in intellectual life as well as in spiritual life? Or should he blame providence for his fate? Sir Clifford had married Lady Chatterley before he had the accident that rendered him impotent. He may well have satisfied Lady Chatterley’s sexual needs and they may well have lived happily and conservatively in Wragby, we can really never know. But we do know that even working men and women without disabilities count among those who have lost their humanity and as such needed reawakening; and since D.H. Lawrence had gone ahead to suggest ways we could redeem our world, not minding the injustice of nature to Sir Clifford, then one may say that he really did see the modern world as absurd and meaningless, a rat race. If then the modern world is absurd and meaningless as suggested by D.H. Lawrence’s Lady Chatterley’s Lover, then its redemption lies in going back to nature, living the emotional and intuitive life, making sex a conversation between man and woman. However, we know we can no longer return to nature in that sense, in the sense of Lady Chatterley living ever happily with the Inn-keeper in the woods in spite of the modern world all around them. Since we cannot return to such a state any more, then we can comfortably state that Lady Chatterley’s Lover is a Utopian Space-Time, the everywhere of humanistic hope, which keeps reminding us of the need for the ideal, the need to learn to live again as human beings!

Works Cited


