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A Comparative Study Of D.h. Lawrence And Henry Miller As Novelists

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Abstract: *D. H. Lawrence and Henry Miller are the most controversial novelist of the 20th century they resemble each other in very various ways they are outrageous, offensive and obscene. They are anti civilization and anti industrialism. They are audacious enough to break the barriers on pornography they are literary adventurers and trend setters who refuse to follow the trend set by their predecessors. They also resemble on their views on art, religion sex. Both were bitterly criticized for their outrageous views and took a long time to be recognized as novelists.*

Key Words: Controversial writers, Literary adventurers, Schismatic, Anti Intellectual metaphysics, prophetic.

D. H. Lawrence and Henry Miller have been studied from various points of views but no comparative study of the two has been made so far. D. H. Lawrence and Henry Miller were born in different countries, but they were of the same age and there are many features common to them.

They resemble in their opinion on sex, on their love of art and their desire to live the life of artist, in their criticism of religion, civilization and industrialism, and in their use of four letter words, in their refusal to trod the beaten path, in the courage of their convictions and the novelty of their ideas. Both of them often cause violent reaction in their fellow beings, make the conservatives raise their eyebrows in anger and baffle their contemporaries. Both took a long time in being recognized as novelists for they were bent to demolish the whole fabric of the novel created by their predecessors declaring that social values are hollow, and our life patterns are outmoded and, therefore, no longer significant, that there are new modes of perception as yet unknown to us which may yield richer consciousness.

D. H. Lawrence and Henry Miller are the two most controversial writers of the modern age. They both belong to the category of great odd-man literary figures like Blake, Whitman and Emerson. They are literary adventurers and the great literary movement represented by Eliot, James, Joyce and Proust remained alien to them. They may be regarded as the first writers - to make a break with the tradition of the modern and to establish an outlook more "schismatic" than any adopted by the literary masters of their age.

Lawrence and Miller were born at a time when Bergson and Spengler dominated the scene. Both of them believed in an anti-intellectual metaphysics. They freely chose their ideas from the intellectual upheavals. They derived their intellectual equipment from different sources like Bergson, Spengler and Psychologists of the Freudian school.

It is true that Lawrence and Miller have done in the domain of fiction what may be called outrageous. They are audacious enough to break the barriers on pornography. They give a very frank description of the physical relations between man and woman which, of course, shocked the reading public of England and America, and that is why Lawrence's *Lady Chatterley's Lover* and Miller's *Tropic of Cancer* were banned in England and America for some years. Their plea is that civilization has degraded man's sexual life, which they see as the only life force that can resume man from the machine.

They are outraged to find that sex, which is the primary fact of life and undeniable reality, is treated more often than not as a dirty thing, as something which should not be mentioned in the polite society. They believe that this attitude of keeping sex as a secret thing destroyed that holy reverence for body's sensations which the primitives had. Therefore in their description of sex they have broken all the taboos and rejected all the tradition because they think them a hindrance in free and full development of individual whom they give the supreme importance. They are both prophetic and apocalyptic, but there is also a difference between the temperament of the two, where Lawrence is inclined to play the 'Messiah', Miller prefers to play the 'clown'. Like Lawrence Miller does not develop a mysticism of sex. To Miller sex is usually casual, carnal, anarchic and indiscriminate.

Apart from sex, religion and art are also used in the novels of both Lawrence and Miller to shed light on the perennial issues of man. They are Christians but don't believe in christianity. By conventional religious standards, they are immoral profane and blasphemous. They are not pious, virtuous, solemn, puritanical, dogmatic or orthodox. They have none of the virtues of christianity or of any other religion. Both of them call themselves 'strictly religious' and frequently use 'God' in their works, but they are not ready to accept religion as a way of life. They are of the view that the mystery of life lies outside the way of mind, it speaks directly to the instincts of man, to his physical and natural self. They set forth their belief



in the religion of blood.

In their treatment of religion and God, they are outrageous offensive and blasphemous. In it Miller is far ahead of Lawrence. Lawrence says, **“My own great religion is a belief in the blood, the flesh as being wiser than the intellect. We can go wrong in our minds. But our blood feels and believes and says is always true. The intellect is only a bit and bridle. What do I care about Knowledge. All I want is to answer to my blood, direct, without fribbling intervention of mind, or moral or what not.”**

Miller is convinced that religion has no role in our present world. It can't bring any change. “To want to change the condition of affairs seemed futile to me; nothing would be altered, I was convinced except by a change of heart, and who could change the heart of man? Now and then a friend was converted; it was something to make me puke. I had no need of God then He had of me, and if there were one, I often said to myself, I would meet him and spit in His face (Tropic of Capricorn. P.9). In the field of Art they desire that art should be a way of life. They want to achieve the state where art is expressed in every human action. Through art they want to elevate man to a level where he becomes ‘thoroughly religious, not a believer but a prime mover, a god in fact and deed. Their work marks the end of the French Symbolists tradition which makes art its religion. Indeed art and religion go together in their work. It was their personal feelings that one has to be terribly religious to be an artist. They are religious because they have a reverence for life, as one has reverence for one's prophets or idols.

Lawrence and Miller also resemble each other in another way. There is a great controversy over the literary status of these two writers. On the one hand they are dismissed as ‘minor writers’ mad men; ‘cullist and homosexual villains, who added nothing to the form of the novels, while on the other they are called ‘the innovators’ the ‘trend setters’ who not only invented the new form and style but also epitomize a trend, a movement and perhaps a revolution in mores. They are autobiographical, formless, incoherence, rambling and shocking. They express themselves through interior monologues and drift back and forth in describing various incidents and episodes. They invented a language in which sexual experience can be described freely. They give more importance to what they want to say than how to say. But the whole method of their treatment is outrageous, outspoken, unorthodox and even offensive. What distinguishes them from the other writers of the age is their method which is unique and original.

Social Criticism : Lawrence and Miller are against the industrialized civilization of the world. They believe that modern civilization has disfigured nature and spread ugliness, frustration and despair. It has made man selfish, greedy and degraded. They criticise the social inequality and exploitation of man in the progressive Western Civilization. Besides, they also criticise the moral and religious taboos. They are rebels, Iconoclasts, Anti-Nomian, Anti-white-Nordic Protestants and Anti-civilization. They beheld themselves as the prophets of a new order who draw the moral of immoral acceptance. They may also be regarded as cultural heroes or villains to those who see them as menace to law and order. There may not be full coherence in their thinking but they have a definite vision of life which is distinctly and deeply enshrined in their work.

D. H. Lawrence and Henry Miller resemble in their view of the predicament of the modern man. Man is in a tragic position, it is tragic because the modern man is unhappy, because he has been denied full and complete life, because he has lost his sense of community; and because he is rotting in side Lawrence begins his famous novel *Lady Chatter lay's Lover* with these sentences.

“Our's is essentially 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 habits, to have new little hopes. It is rather hard work; there is now no smooth road into future : but we go round, or scramble over the obstaches. We have got to live, no matter how many skies have fallen”.

Henry Miller is more gloomy than Lawrence. He presents modern man in the predicament worse than that of Lawrence's. Lawrence refuses. to take the tragic age tragically, Miller enjoys it. He writes, “Everywhere I go people are making a mess of their lives. Everyone has his private tragedy. It's in the blood now – misfortune, ennu, grief, suicide. The atmosphere is saturated with disaster, frustration, futility, scratch and scratch - unlit there's no skin left. However, the effect upon me is exhilarating. Instead of being discouraged, or depressed. I enjoy it. I am crying for more and more disaster, for bigger calamities, for grander failures. I want the whole world to be out of wreck, I want everyone to scratch himself to death”. (Tropic of Cancer 19-20).

These abstracts show that Lawrence and Miller had nothing but intense anger for science and the modern civilization, since their sinister influence has fragmented the personality of man, thus making him absolutely incapable of making a full



and total response to the mystery of life.

Lawrence and Miller have been so accurately and brilliantly assessed today that their works are again in print and much criticism is devoted to them in England and America. They are now ranking among the important modern novelists. They are likely to outlast many modern novelists who at the moment seem more important. They present a generation of writers inheriting their traits to a large extent. It is also to be noted that like D. H. Lawrence Miller is equally popular in Europe and many European critics like Lawrence, Durrell and Alfred Perles have written about his work. Besides, Miller himself has mentioned his resemblance with D. H. Lawrence in many of his works. His important novels appeared first in Europe and then in America. Hence in view of what I have stated above it is clear that D. H. Lawrence and Henry Miller resemble each other in their various aspects. Therefore, a detailed study of the themes, techniques and other important aspects of their novels is absolutely necessary.

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