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**'LOVING AUSTEN! A STEP BACK FROM GENDER ISSUES: RECONSTRUCTING WORLD
A WRITER'S WAY' ***

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ABSTRACT

Humanity has traversed a long path from pastoral love of Edmund Spenser's *The Faerie Queen* and love extolled in pastoral play, *As You Like it*, by William Shakespeare. Author of this paper attempts to eulogize simple, pure, and uncomplicated universal love that allows dreams to be woven by young, healthy budding lives that allows for survival of human race on this planet. Simplicity and warmth of uncomplicated relationships is viewed against raging debates on gender issues. A small attempt has been made to understand the importance of word called 'Love' between different sexes and same sex, Paper goes on to examine gender issues in Virginia Woolf's *Orlando*, D H Lawrence's *Women in Love* and *The Rainbow*, and *Nana* by Emile Zola among others. Queer theory has been taken up to understand threat imposed by diverse sexualities to traditional gender structures that have been base of tradition and culture for centuries. This paper is a small attempt to understand LGBT and its distinct offshoots. World of Lesbians, Gays, Bisexuals, Trans genders and Asexuals plus more is explored under the lens of English Literature.

Keywords: Queer, Gender, bisexuals, Love, Relationships, Sexuality

Introduction

Triangular theory of Robert Sternberg measures **love** on scales of intimacy, scale of passion and that of commitment. No matter how much one discusses it, reads about it, writes about it or talks about it, love remains a beautiful, fascinating, and complicated affair. Edmund Spenser has mentioned romance of knight and lady and feeling of love as friendship shared by knights who strive toward similar goals in his epic work, *The Faerie Queene*. True love between Arthegall and Britomart transcends all that tries to come between these lovers. Spenser's couple has patience and endures all to finally be together. According to a psychologist, "The truth is that you have to put in time and energy and make a conscious effort to sustain the **relationship** and the passion." For a good relationship one requires regular communication on emotional level. Love is taken to be euphoria that comes with great happiness and lots of excitement.

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Methodology

Works taken up to study different shades of **love** are from different literary ages. This makes it easier to understand the emotion that is both ancient and new, a word that has never lost its sparkle and remains fresh with magical fragrance of its own. Though the paper does not take up issue of Polygamy, i.e., one man with multiple wives and Polyandry, one woman with many husbands, yet a reflection on the same has been made to invite reader to ponder over the problem of love in such cases. It would be perhaps wrong to say that love does not exist between couples in such cases. The same can then be perhaps said for those who are homosexuals, lesbians, transgenders, or **bisexuals** etc. Love then is an exultant experience that is savored by the soul and thus cannot be given any name. Poets do not define love as a conversation or a sound, but a silence that itself is a speaker who listens to itself.

Literary Review

Austen gives her protagonist words to express moment of realization. Elizabeth Bennet says, **love** “came on so gradually”, when, she is unable to tell the exact moment. Even though she says that it could have arisen on seeing Pemberley, yet a reader does not think Elizabeth’s love is so weak as to have an estate for its base. Darcy loves in biblical sense that says:

“Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth”.

No other writer has managed to come out with this strongest emotion felt by man in true and simplest of words than Austen.

‘In vain have I struggled. It will not do. My feelings will not be repressed. You must allow me to tell you how ardently I admire and love you.’

None other than Austen comes out with natural reaction of a woman hearing such unexpected words from a suitor. Elizabeth is shocked to silence. She stares, colours and doubts Darcy. Male protagonist of Austen remains undaunted and continues to pursue Elizabeth, wooing her with whatever opportunities providence provides to attain his love.

Shakespeare extolls love in *Romeo and Juliet*. Dramatist’s star-crossed lovers do not fall in with tinkling of bells, kicking of nerves, or fluttering in stomachs. But they kiss and separate to continuously think about each other. Here one sees a fine example of Eros, romantic and passionate love as mentioned in Greek mythology. Austen gives us both romantic and familial love in *Pride and Prejudice*. Elizabeth is enamoured with Darcy when he gives their **love** time to flourish. He is kind to her family and takes to defending family name that further paves way for healthy relationships. Theirs is a mature love while original Shakespearean Juliet is merely 13 to Romeo’s 16 years.

Culture, tradition, environment, and other factors do have a say in course of one’s love relationship. Elizabeth lives in a society where:

‘It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a wife’.

Hence, social order of English society determines relationships at the onset. But for Elizabeth and Darcy, there is more to be focused upon to understand their relationship. And when one looks at Romeo and Juliet, one does not forget that Romeo immediately forgets about Rosaline, earlier he is besotted with the dame. Juliet on the other hand manages to escape love-less marriage as fixed by her parents after she meets Romeo.

Emotional entanglements of 18th C Austen and Elizabethan Shakespeare are far apart from those brought forth by Lawrence in *Women in Love*. His novels come with matter that is both stimulating and **sexually** arousing. Reason enough for his novels to be banned time and again. Sedgwick compares homosexuality to incest. Lawrence introduces his characters as:

There was a pause of strange enmity between the two men, that was very near to love. It was always the same between them; always their talk brought them into a deadly nearness of contact, a strange, perilous intimacy which was either hate or love, or both....They burned with each other, inwardly. This they would never admit. They intended to keep their relationship a casual free-and-easy friendship, they were not going to be so unmanly and unnatural as to allow any heart-burning between them. They had not the faintest belief in deep **relationship** between man and man, and their disbelief prevented any development of their powerful but suppressed friendliness.

If one goes by Lawrence's *Fantasia of the Unconscious*, then one gets to understand Lawrence's views about men and women:

"Every single living cell is either male or female and will remain either male or female as long as life lasts. And every single cell in every male child is male, and every cell in every female child is female. The talk about a third sex, or about the indeterminate sex, is just to pervert the issue".

Lawrence talks about Ursula's **lesbianism** in *The Rainbow*. Before meeting Winifred, Ursula had passionate affair with Anton Skrebensky. Lawrence deals with sexual psychology of characters in his works. His characters are difficult to be relegated to a certain category. Both Rupert and Gerald firm their heterosexual relationship before solidifying their **homosexual** urges. They do so in "Gladiatorial".

So the two men entwined and wrestled with each other, working nearer and nearer...He seemed to penetrate into Gerald's more solid, more diffuse bulk, to interfuse his body through the body of the other, as if to bring it subtly into subjection, always seizing with some rapid necromantic foreknowledge every motion of the other flesh, converting it and counteracting it, playing upon the limbs and trunk of Gerald like some hard wind. It was as if Birkin's whole physical intelligence interpenetrated into Gerald's body, as if his fine sublimated energy entered into the flesh of the fuller man, like some potency, casting a fine net, a prison, through the muscles into the very depths of Gerald's physical being.

Complexities found in *Women in Love* are natural and man-made (product of industrialized world).

"to make a man as useful as possible [it is necessary] to approximate him, as far as possible, to an infallible machine: to this end he must be equipped with the virtues of the machine (– he must learn to experience the states in which he works in a mechanically useful way as the supremely valuable states; hence it is necessary to spoil the other states for him as much as possible, as highly dangerous and disreputable)."

Above narrative from Nietzsche's *The Will to Power* is applied to Lawrence's *Women in Love* to understand Gerald as prime example who stands for Nietzschean values. Gerald considers himself to be the God or arch-God responsible for running inhuman machine. Nietzschean argument regarding old moral values that need to be completely smashed to "go for something better".

Lawrence uses Rupert and Gerald as his mouthpieces to reflect upon insatiable sexual drive that exists in man. The Author of *Women in Love* consistently talks about desire of men that wants to overpower others either through love or through force; recipient could be of either sex. Gerald goes Schopenhauer's way to release vital energy that courses through his body. As product of industrial age, Gerald looks at his employees as part of a large machine. On becoming head of his father's coal mines, Gerald gets rid of old workers who work inefficiently. Widows of miners are denied free coal. Gerald here becomes anti-Christian.

Rupert Birkin too uses his Will to achieve satisfactory relationship with Ursula Brangwen. But this achievement comes in another manner. While Rupert emphasizes on love as a single and pure activity for one's life; Gerald says life is simply to be lived. Rupert is a misanthrope who hates London for its crowds.

Rupert represents Lawrence himself in the novel. There is repeated emphasis on his being thin and of poor health. The protagonist is called "both" the devil and "savior of man". As representative of Jesus, the man preaches love and idealism. Unlike man of purely holy thoughts, this man is sensual. According to Ursula:

“wasn’t it rather horrible, a man who could be so soulful and spiritual, now to be so-she balked at her own thoughts and memories; then she added-so bestial?”

Through Rupert’s partner in sex, we come to know that the man comes with dual nature. He shares love/hate relationship with the man. Gerald has his own views about the man. According to him Rupert was “not to be taken seriously, not quite to be counted as a man among men”. Both the men protagonists in the novel seem to be on journey of self-awareness. Rupert tries to understand his own desires and wants to act upon the same. Gerald on the other hand is practical and hard. He is physically and emotionally strong. He is not interested in knowing his inner make-up; his attractions lie in knowing the outside world. He represents the ugly and destructive side of man in pursuit of bigger change.

Rupert and Gerald are **bisexual**. As Lawrence says, there is no one law to govern human beings. The same holds true for sexual urges to course through a man’s physique. In chapter 16 one comes across an instance where one finds both men attracted to each other. There is physical beauty that attract them to each other but Gerald tries to repress this attraction.

Emily Zola’s naturalism asks one to: “see everything, know everything, say everything.” He observed reality and depicted unspeakable truths that came from human condition in society in his literary works. Protagonist of *Nana* is taken to be product of French gutters; and it is this environment that paves her way in the society. Though Nana goes on to become high class prostitute, yet she relieves her boredom felt in high circles with men found on streets. Her body exudes **sexuality** that appeals to animalistic nature in man. Zola depicts Nana as a woman trapped by unseen forces in a universe that is hostile. Nana is a flawed woman of a capricious age where moral values had no say. Though Nana is heterosexual, she goes for **lesbian** relationship during hard times. Zola took up **gender** issue not because he loved the **queer** culture, but to talk about moral depravity that he saw in the world that surrounded him.

In Orlando, Virginia Woolf gives us a character who enjoys sex as an androgyne. Here in Woolf’s *Orlando* one sees **gender** from Judith Butler’s view point where gender is not one’s **sexuality** as determined biologically, but how one acts. Orlando is attracted Sasha as an individual, not to a male or a female. As a Victorian woman, Orlando finds “her” sex to be a burden because of expectations of the society.

Conclusion

Literature on gender studies is all about being man or woman in given frame of time and place. Gender studies is different from feminism. One does not see oppression of females in general. Both sexes are free to move through their lives with equal enjoyment. Traditionally men might dominate over women; but there is emphasis on the “individual” in gender studies. Writers have tried to justify LGBT themes with examples from mythological texts. Homer and Plato often talk about pederasty. Petronius too talks about homosexuality in his *Satyricon*. Murasaki Shikibu talks about sex between boy and man in *The Tale of Genji*. Giovanni Boccaccio’s famous *Decameron* comes with knight like Lanval who has “no desire for women”. To say that sexual theme is a newly constructed genre would be wrong. It has always been part of societies down the ages; difference might be in exposure that it is getting in these modern times through different sources.

Reader of this paper is free to take away from the paper, his own perception regarding “Love”.

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