

## LEXICAL PECULIARITIES OF D.H. LAWRENCE'S POETIC PROSE

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### Abstract

Our interest is focused here on D.H. Lawrence's conception and use of the lexical device of repetition. We have in view a selection of recurrent words and phrases that constitute most typical examples of this type of device in his masterpieces: *The Rainbow*, *Women in Love* and *Lady Chatterley's Lover*. Certain recurrent lexical structures, which we have identified and classified as binary, ternary, mixed and multiple, build up into equivalent types of repetition. The twofold purpose of our linguistic investigation is to highlight on Lawrence's peculiar use and variation of lexical elements and to prove to what extent these changes or 'deviations' from the norm constitute daring innovations. Our stylistic analysis refers to the exquisite poetic effects that the writer achieves through ingenious and intricate use of repetition.

**Keywords:** *lexical peculiarities, lexical repetition, linguistic code, poetic prose, expressive elements.*

One of the fundamental elements in the economy of any novel is the writer's handling of language. Before any other feature of the finished work, language is the medium by means of which the writer operates his fictional in-put.

There is a close interconnection between form and meaning in the case of poetic language, which can be also extended to poetic prose. This is possible because, in both cases, meaning can be analyzed and explained only in relation to other elements of poetic organization. "The requirement that the components of a structure be analyzed with relation to each other, that the problems of form be constantly correlated to problems of meaning is indispensable in the study of language"<sup>1</sup>, and, we consider, this is indispensable in the analysis of poetic prose, too.

The study of expressive language deals with the description of the elements of the linguistic code that are endowed with an emotive function, that is, elements that serve to express the writer's attitude towards his reader or to the thing spoken about. The expressive elements cannot be studied outside their relation to the distinctive elements

of language. In other words, this means speaking about the problem of the linguistic code in poetic language, which by extension means referring to peculiarities of the linguistic code in poetic prose. As in the case of poetry, that operates with some linguistic features which do not occur in "casual" language (phonemic, lexical or grammatical), poetic prose also operates with various differences on the lexical or syntactic level. "Deviations" from the accepted norms frequently occur in poetry, in particular, and they must be viewed as the result of manipulations of available linguistic material and of the skilful use of the multiple possibilities existent in the standard language. When speaking about a recognized standard language, any departure from the norm may be restricted to one of its levels or to some of its elements. Quite common is the use of lexical items that pertain to different systems or to different strata of one system. "This is achieved by the introduction of dialects, archaic words, of foreignisms or of specialized, technical terms."<sup>2</sup> Few of these are applicable in the case of Lawrence's novelistic prose; his use of non standard language and his peculiar style (in his later novels in particular) are obviously due to an original handling of the lexical strata.

Our analysis here will be focused on one particular lexical device – lexical repetition – otherwise frequently exploited and peculiarly employed by Lawrence, as it is one which he paradoxically makes responsible for varied poetic effects in his novels.

Among the most recurrent poetic effects in his late novels, in particular, is that of rhythmic pattern. According to Stankiewicz, verse "is the highest form of poetic organization, differing from prose in its rhythmic pattern."<sup>3</sup> We may say Lawrence's prose contains certain distinctive elements that are responsible for rhythmic

patterns which provide a poetic quality to his prose.

The purpose of our linguistic investigation is twofold: on the one hand, we intend to highlight on Lawrence's peculiar use and variation of lexical elements and, on the other hand, to prove to what extent these changes or "deviations" from the norm constitute daring innovations.

We start from the premise that any great poet is the man (and Lawrence can rightly be considered one of the greatest stylists in English prose) who "possesses an intuitive mastery of the rules that are obligatory within his own poetic tradition and language, but who also can manipulate these rules"<sup>4</sup>, thus going far beyond the traditional linguistic norms.

D.H. Lawrence had strong opinions and clear ideas about the proper use of literary language. He quite explicitly saw himself as "inventing" language, both in terms of the functions he expected language to perform from novel to novel, and in the ways he adapted, refined and reinvented language and linguistic forms over the years. Looking back, for example, at the end of 1913 on the style of *Sons and Lovers*, the writer himself described it as "that hard, violent style full of sensation and presentation."<sup>5</sup>

As late as 1925, in his essay *The Novel and the Feelings*, Lawrence complains that we "have no language for the feelings" and that "our feelings do not even exist for us."<sup>6</sup> Accordingly, he constantly strives to find his own linguistic means to express feelings and he reaches perfection in his later novels: *The Rainbow*, *Women in Love*, and *Lady Chatterley's Lover*.

As far as the lexical dimension is concerned, there is a clear unifying element of language that brings all three novels very close in terms of stylistic achievement: that is, the device of repetition.

Our interest is focused here on Lawrence's conception and use of repetition. We have in view a selection of recurrent words and phrases, which constitute most typical examples of this type of lexical device, in the above mentioned novels. This is done according to certain recurrent structures that we have identified (*binary*, *ternary*, *mixed* and *multiple*) that build up into equivalent types of repetition. Finally, our stylistic analysis refers to the most common poetic effects that

Lawrence achieves through frequent and deliberately intricate use of repetition.

## **BINARY LEXICAL STRUCTURES**

This type of repetition implies the 'double' use of a word or phrase. This is one of the most frequently employed types of repetition in Lawrence's novels. One first example of the type belongs to Chapter I in *The Rainbow*:

He put his mouth on hers, and *slowly, slowly* the response came, gathering force and passion, till it seemed to him she was thundering at him till he *could bear no more*. He *drew away*, white, unbreathing. Only, in his blue eyes, was something of himself concentrated. [...]

She *was drifting away* from him again. And he *wanted to go away*. It *was intolerable*. He *could bear no more*. He *must go*. Yet he was irresolute. But she *turned away* from him. (TR: 38-39)<sup>7</sup>

As in many other instances in *The Rainbow*, the writer chooses to suggest the thrilling emotions experienced by the two lovers by resorting to the device of repetition. The man's [Tom's] panic and uncertainty, fear and torment are stressed upon by equivalent verb phrases: *wanted to go* and *must go*, *could not bear it* and *could bear no more*. In spite of the slight variation in the structure of the last two phrases, Lawrence deliberately uses repetition to stress upon Tom's inner emotional conflict. On the other hand, Lydia's emotional remoteness and reserved nature is also suggested by means of two synonymous phrases - *was drifting away* and *turned away*, both containing the adverb *away* that implies spatial orientation towards the exterior. Of the two verbs (*drift* and *turn*), the latter is more radical as it trenchantly expresses the character's emotional detachment by emphasizing upon it by means of semantic reiteration.

A remarkable example of the way Lawrence creates sheer poetry, whenever he intends to refer to sexual matters and sensuality, is to be found in a minute description of a love-scene in Chapter XV suggestively called *The Bitterness of Ecstasy*:

He held her enclosed, soft, unutterably soft, and with the unrelaxing softness of fate, the relentless softness of fecundity. She quivered, and quivered, like a tense thing that is struck. But he held her all the time, soft, unending, like darkness closed upon her, omnipresent as the night. He kissed her, and she quivered as if she were being destroyed, shattered. (TR: 376)

The passage illustrates the writer's preference for repetitive binary structures that he deliberately uses for obvious stylistic effects such as poetic rhythm. The alternation of the noun softness in the metaphors enclosed her soft, unutterably soft, unrelaxing softness of fate and relentless softness of fecundity, as well as the repetition of the adjective soft in held her enclosed, soft, unutterably soft, emphasize on the tenderness between the two lovers. Again, Lawrence relies on repetition to suggest deep emotions such as passion and sensuality, responsiveness and reciprocal love, as it is the case of the verb quiver. There is also a nice symmetry in the manner this verb is used. In both instances quiver is followed by similes, each containing the synonymous verbs struck, destroyed and shattered, respectively, as in: like a tense thing that is struck and as if she were being destroyed, shattered.

The idea of the woman's total abandonment to the man's power of seduction is poetically hinted at by means of symmetrical repetitive structures. This is a common device with Lawrence that, along with the use of metaphor, keeps his prose away from the obscene and very close to poetic perfection whenever he refers to sensuality.

Other examples, of how poetically effective controlled binary repetition can be, are illustrated in a passage we have identified in the last chapter in *The Rainbow*:

She slipped from her seat and went vaguely along the path vaguely. It was a long way home. She had an idea that she must walk for the rest of her life, wearily, wearily. Step after step, step after step, the monotony produced a deep, cold sense of nausea in her. How profound was her cold nausea, how profound! [...] she seemed destined to find the bottom of all things today: the bottom of all things. Well, at any rate she was walking along the bottommost bed – she was quite safe: quite

safe, if she had to go on and on forever, seeing this was the very bottom, and there was nothing deeper. (TR: 414)

The repeated use of the adverbs vaguely and wearily, as well as their syntactic dislocation in the sentence, is obviously justified by the writer's intention of obtaining poetic effects. To do this, he undergoes a minute and skilful 'manipulation' of the language. The result is that the word order in the sentences is more appropriate to poetry than to prose, as other examples in the passage show: the structure step after step and how profound are also deliberately 'misplaced.' The former collocation is placed at the beginning of the sentence, thus emphasising on Ursula's consciousness of her monotonous and pointless movement, and of its nauseating effect on her. Similarly, the noun phrase the bottom of all things forms a binary structure at the end of the clause; deliberately or not, it creates poetic emphasis while stressing on the character's state of mind.

Another example of the use of repetition and of syntactic disruption that, by contrast, creates variety, is to be found in the next sentence: How profound was her cold nausea, how profound! The adjective phrase how profound is placed both in initial and final position. The same happens in the case of the reiterated predicative quite safe.

There is no doubt that Lawrence deals with lexical repetition in a most careful and controlled chaotic way. The cumulated effect of repetition and the use of an atypical word order are meant to suggest the character's §Ursula's§ fall into a state of confusion and delirium preceding a long period of physical and mental illness.

In yet another series of extracts from *The Rainbow* (Chapter VIII) we find other illustrative examples of D.H. Lawrence's preoccupation with creating variety in language:

He had an inkling of the vastness of the unknown sensual store of delights she was. With a passion of voluptuousness that made him dwell on each tiny beauty, in a kind of frenzy of enjoyment, he lit upon her: her beauty, the beauties, the separate, several beauties of her body.

There was no tenderness, no love between them anymore, only the maddening, sensuous lust for discovery and the insatiable, exorbitant gratification in the sensual beauties



of her body. And she was a store, a store of absolute beauties of her body.

He must enjoy one *beauty* at a time. And the *multitudinous beauties of her body, the many little rapturous places*, sent him mad with delight, and with desire to be able to *know more*, to have strength to *know more*. (TR: 197)

The first passage contains the binary repetition (*tiny beauty, her beauty*) with its variant (*the beauties, the separate, several beauties of her body*). The latter binary structure anticipates the metaphorical structures in the next two passages. These contain a series of metaphors that have a common element (the noun *beauties*) that is used repetitively.

It is by means of the devices of repetition and conversion (*beauty, beauties, several beauties*) that the writer suggests gradual increase in male's  $\text{\$Will's}$  passion and lust on the verge of obsession or even madness, as in the sentence *she was a store, a store of absolute beauties*; this is Will's appreciation of Anna's sex appeal that Lawrence indicates through indirect poetic reference to it. We learn that Anna's *multitudinous beauties* become Will's sole preoccupation: they stir his imagination and light his desire to discover each and every one of them.

There are several instances, in the above quoted paragraphs, in which Lawrence directly qualifies Anna's sensuality and its effect on Will: *passion of voluptuousness; frenzy of enjoyment; sensually transported; maddening, sensuous lust; insatiable, exorbitant gratification; drove him mad; maddening perception; sent him mad with delight, and with desire*. We can easily notice the frequency of the synonymous nouns (*passion, frenzy, lust, delight, desire*) and of the adjectives (*maddening, sensual and sensuous*), all these lexical elements covertly pointing at the characters' state of mental and physical "intoxication" with sensual pleasures. There seem to be no self-imposed limits to Will's lustful drives: as the reiteration of the verb *to know more* suggests. Lawrence achieves poetic effects of great subtlety and fantastic impact on the reader by means of the cumulative effect triggered by the use of repetition.

Another example of how varied and poetically effective repetition can be with Lawrence is to be found in a passage by the end of *Women in Love*:

*'I've had enough – I want to go to sleep. I've had enough.'* [...] He wanted so to come to the end – he *had had enough*. Yet he did not sleep. [...] He knew he was following the track towards the summit of the slopes, where was the marienhutte, and the descent on the other side. But he was not really conscious. He only wanted *to go on, to go on* whilst he could, *to move, to keep going*, that was all, *to keep going*, until it was finished. He had lost all his sense of the place. (WL: 414-415)

The passage contains two identically built structures (*I've had enough + I've had enough*) + *he had had enough* and *to move + (to keep going + to keep going)* that is, binary structures contained into triadic formulae. The verb *to move* is also repeatedly associated with them so that poetic effects are evidently obtained by means of their repeated use. Stress is thus put on Gerald's indefinite nausea and on his unstable state of mind, on his total loss of rational thinking as well as of his *sense of the place*. The infinitive verbal forms are meant to suggest his fixation and the rigidity of his thinking: his sole motivation is his moving forward in his wish to leave everything behind him, thus trying to escape his own unbearable condition. He is seeking to put an end to his life, as the reiterated sentence (*he had had enough*) in the passage stresses on. Ironically, it is through ceaseless movement (e.g. *to go on, to move, to keep going*) that Gerald reaches his final rest in *cold death*.

The constant employment of binary structures creates an overall rhythmic effect and occasional hypnotic effects that are heavily responsible for the poetic quality of Lawrence's prose.

## TERNARY LEXICAL STRUCTURES

Besides binary structures, which are quite frequently and effectively used by D.H. Lawrence in his novels, ternary structures are the second most used type of repetition.

Our selection refers here to examples from *The Rainbow*, *Women in Love* and *Lady Chatterley's Lover*.

The first excerpt belongs to Chapter II in *The Rainbow*:

They looked at each other, a deep laugh at the bottom of their eyes, and he went to take of her again, wholesale, mad to revel in the inexhaustible wealth of her, to bury himself in the depths of her in an inexhaustible exploration, she all the while revelling in that he revelled in her, tossed all her secrets aside and plunged to that which was secret to her as well, whilst she quivered with fear and the last anguish of delight. (TR: 50)

The key element in the paragraph is the verb *revel*, used thrice in three distinct forms (of which two are non-predicative) associated with an alternation of their corresponding subjects. The effect obtained by means of the use of ternary repetition is a rhythmic movement that is quite suggestive of the characters' intimate communication. The writer obliquely refers to the passionate involvement of the two in the sexual act. The effect he obtains is clearly poetic, as the author achieves both rhythm and musicality here.

There is also the reiteration of the adjective *inexhaustible* in the metaphor *inexhaustible wealth of her* and in the noun phrase *inexhaustible exploration*. Repetition creates here a direct parallelism between goals and means that is, between the richness of her physical qualities and the equally required diversity of the means of their exploration. What Lawrence actually achieves here, by means of lexical repetition, is to hint at intense and intimate feelings that he is not keen on revealing otherwise because he is obviously aware that that would devoid his prose of all its magic and poetic touch.

We are further analyzing a passage belonging to *Women in Love*, chapter III (*Class-Room*):

They thought she has finished. But with a queer rumbling in her throat she resumed, 'Hadn't they better be anything than grow up crippled, crippled in their souls, crippled in their feelings – so thrown back – so turned back on themselves – incapable –' Hermione clenched her fist like one in a trance – 'of any spontaneous action, always deliberate, always burdened with choice, never carried away.'<sup>8</sup> (WL: 32)

This is another example of D.H. Lawrence's reliance on ternary repetition for the sake of

poetic emphasis on a certain idea. Lexical variation is also achieved by means of inclusion of variable elements into the ternary structure. The metaphoric meaning of the adjective *crippled* (used thrice) is only obvious through its reiteration in the two noun phrases *crippled in their souls* and *crippled in their feelings*. The repeated occurrence of the adjective *crippled* is justified by the explanatory function it achieves within the phrase context. Had these two noun phrases been omitted, several of its collateral meanings ('coldness', 'self-consciousness', 'introversion', 'lack of sensitivity') would have been lost. Consequently, the context would have been deprived of semantic clarity, as well as of rich poetic effects.

In yet another passage from *Women in Love*, chapter XXIII (*Excuse*) we can detect the use of the device of repetition for the sake of creating visual effects. The passage is an intimate picture of domestic love between Ursula and Birkin:

Her arms closed round him again, her hands spread upon his shoulders, moving slowly there, moving slowly on his back, down his back slowly, with a strange recurrent, rhythmic motion, yet moving slowly down, pressing mysteriously over his loins, over his flanks. The sense of the awfulness of the riches that could never be impaired flooded her mind like a swoon, a death in most marvellous possession, mystic-sure. (WL: 275)

The frequency with which the writer uses the verb phrase *moving slowly* (thrice) in association with the verb *slowly* is meant to project a moving picture in front of our eyes. This repetition sets a certain rhythm to the prose of the passage. This prosodic rhythm backs up what Lawrence refers to as *a strange recurrent, rhythmic motion* when describing Ursula's minute caressing of Birkin's body.

In the final sentence of the passage we are offered an example of how close to perfection Lawrence's language can get to. This sentence is exclusively made up of figures of speech: three metaphors (*the sense of the awfulness of the riches, could never be impaired and a death in most marvellous possession*) and mixed tropes (metaphor + simile: *flooded her mind + like a swoon*). It is not only the density of the figures of speech but mostly the

vividness and the thrilling, unexpected associations in them that give the passage a most powerful poetic imprint. Lawrence obtains shocking effects here (as he often does) through the combination of opposite or incongruous terms, which determines a high degree of semantic tension, as in the case of the noun phrases *awfulness* (a piece of language innovation in itself) *of the riches* and *a death in most marvellous possession*. It is out of this linguistic tension (determined by the contradiction in terms such as *awfulness* and *riches*, *death* and *marvellous possession*) that the reader gets the most of his aesthetic pleasure.

Another case of the use of ternary lexical structures is illustrated by a passage in *Lady Chatterley's Lover*:

As for people! People were all alike, with very little difference. They all wanted to get money out of you: or, if they were travellers, they wanted to get enjoyment, perforce, like *squeezing* blood out of a stone. Poor mountains! Poor landscape! It all had to be *squeezed and squeezed* and *squeezed* again, to provide a thrill, to provide enjoyment. What did people mean, with their simply determined enjoying of themselves? (LCL: 267)

The repetition of the verb *squeeze* (in the passive infinitive form) has a definite semantic connotation: it puts emphasis on the people's frenzy of exploiting the environment either for enjoyment or for immediate material gains (*to provide a thrill, to provide enjoyment*). The suggestiveness of the verb *to squeeze*, that carries certain metaphorical force, is made even more evident through repetition. The overall effect is rounded up by the use of the variable form *squeezing* in the simile *like squeezing blood out of a stone*. Thus, Lawrence stresses on the sickness and absurdity of the single-minded and vain preoccupation of people; he does this in an indignant explosion of criticism.

## MIXED LEXICAL STRUCTURES

This lexical category of repetition proves to be widely used by D.H. Lawrence, particularly in *Women in Love* and *Lady Chatterley's Lover*. The mixed-type repetition implies the alternative use

of the binary and ternary repetitive structures in various combinations between one of the two and various types of lexical elements and variants.

In the following passage from *The Rainbow* we can find a few such examples of mixed type repetition both at the lexical and the syntactic level. The excerpt is a description of Ursula's mental unstable condition, her half-delirious state during her illness.

Always the ache, the ache of unreality of her belonging to Shrebensky. What *bound* her to him when she *was not bound* to him? Why did the falsity persist? Why did the falsity *gnaw, gnaw, gnaw at* her, why could she not wake up, if she could but wake up to clarity, to reality. *If she could but wake up, if she could but wake up, the falsity of the dream*, of her connection with Shrebensky, would be gone. But the sleep, the delirium pinned her down. Even when she was calm and sober she was in its spell. (TR: 415)

We have here an example of how Lawrence can make repetition work at both the lexical and the syntactic levels.

### 1) Lexical level:

First, there is the binary structure *the ache, the ache of unreality*, which contains elliptic elements. It develops into an original metaphor that carries various connotations ('confusion', 'indecision', 'fear', 'mental pain' etc.).

It is followed by another similar structure with negative variants (*bound... was not bound*) in which the verb *bound* is used in both positive and negative forms for the sake of obtaining contrastive poetic effects. There is also an effective alternation of active and passive past forms, the latter suggesting the irresistible spell of sexual attraction on Ursula.

The reiteration of the noun *falsity*, that is used thrice (once as part of the noun phrase *the falsity of the dream*) is meant to stress on Ursula's awareness of the unreality of her relationship with Anton.

The ternary repetition (*gnaw, gnaw, gnaw at*) puts emphasis on the terrible psychological pressure she feels at the thought of her connection with Shrebensky.



## 2) Syntactic level:

The binary lexical structure containing the conditional sentence *if she could but wake up*, which follows the slightly different sentence (rhetorical question – *why could she not*), has a clear explicative function: it suggests, on the one hand, Ursula's rejection of their relationship; on the other, it reveals her realisation that she was trapped down in that relationship because she was carrying his child (*The child was a like a bond. It bound her to Anton.*). Ursula's sense of being a victim of her own passion for the man she had once loved is being hinted at by the proximity and similarity between the predicative (*like a bond*) and the predicate (*bound*) in the respective sentences.

In a series of passages belonging to *Women in Love*, chapter VIII (*Breadalby*), the recurrent stylistic feature is the mixed type repetitive structure. Repetition is not only effective at the lexical level, but also at the visual and conceptual levels.

And then she realised that his *presence* was the wall, his *presence* was destroying her. Unless she could *break* out, she must die most fearfully, *walled up* in horror. And he was the wall. She *must break down* the wall – she *must break* him down before her, the awful *obstruction* of him who obstructed her life to the last. It must be done, or she must perish most horribly.

A terrible *voluptuous* thrill ran down her arms – she was going to know her *voluptuous consummation*. Her arms quivered and were *strong*, immeasurably and irresistibly *strong*. What *delight*, what delight in strength, what delirium of pleasure! She was going to have her *consummation of voluptuous ecstasy* at last. [...] Her heart was a pure flame in her breast, she was purely unconscious in *ecstasy*. She moved towards him and stood behind him for a moment in *ecstasy*.

She *must smash* it, it *must be smashed* before her *ecstasy* was consummated, fulfilled forever. A thousand lives, a thousand deaths mattered nothing now, only the fulfilment of this perfect *ecstasy*. (WL: 88-90)

There is a whole series of words, or rather a concentration of abstract nouns (*presence, obstruction, consummation, delight, ecstasy*) that are

reiterated in the three passages above. An idea that could be articulated in the form of a simple statement is here expressed by means of two series of phrases (*terrible voluptuous thrill* and *voluptuous consummation*). They run in parallel and flow into one another, though each continuously expresses a single idea: Hermione's personal fulfilment in 'perfect ecstasy' during her physical assault on Birkin.

The binary lexical structures contain key words, such as:

- "his *presence*, his *presence*";
- "obstruction of him" – "obstructed her" (it contains variable elements obtained through conversion);
- "were *strong*, immeasurably and irresistibly *strong*", containing an elliptic element (*was*) and variable elements (the adverbs *immeasurably* and *irresistibly*);
- "what *delight*, what *delight* in strength", containing elliptic elements";
- "must *smash* it, it must be *smashed*", containing variable elements (active and passive verbal forms);
- "a thousand *lives*, a thousand *deaths*", containing dichotomy elements.

The stylistic effect created by the use of binary repetition is again musicality. It is clear that Lawrence relies on rhythmic effects, determined by verb and noun repetition, to achieve poetic effects.

The ternary lexical structures contain other key words:

- "was the *wall*" (used twice), "must break down the *wall*" and the association of the noun *wall* with its converted counterpart *walled up*;
- "consummation of voluptuous *ecstasy*, purely unconscious in *ecstasy*, stood... in *ecstasy*."

Considering the examples above, it would surely be inadequate to say that Lawrence is making something essentially simple into something unnecessarily elaborate. The language of simple, direct statement belongs to a certain rhetoric that Lawrence obviously avoided: his preoccupation with "deeper statements" entails the development of a complex prose style. Yet,

we could say that there is perhaps a case for arguing that Lawrence is overdoing the technique here, substituting lexical repetition and hypnotic rhythms for a clear, direct, concrete statement.

In his last novel, *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, D.H. Lawrence creates poetic effects by making use of a variety of linguistic means as we shall exemplify in a few paragraphs. The first one belongs to Chapter VII and it describes Connie's visit of London and her critical comments on French modern society:

In Paris at any rate she felt a bit of sensuality still. But what a *weary, tired, worn-out sensuality*. *Worn-out* for lack of tenderness. Oh! Paris was sad. One of the saddest towns: *weary* of its now-mechanical sensuality, *weary* of the tension of *money, money, money, weary* even of resentment and conceit, just *weary to death*, and still not sufficiently Americanized or Londonized to hide the *weariness* under a mechanical jig-jig-jig! (LCL: 265-266)<sup>9</sup>

The writer relies on a synonymic series (*weary, tired, worn-out*) to emphasise on the idea of lack of authentic sensuality in modern Parisian life. Emphasis is achieved through semantic accumulation but also through repetition: the adjective *worn-out* is used twice (binary repetitive structure), the latter occurrence having an explanatory function. Its repetition is required to solve the semantic ambiguity of the noun phrase *worn-out sensuality* that strangely encloses the adjective *worn-out* and the abstract noun *sensuality*. Their joining is quite unusual and that is perhaps why Lawrence feels the need to add an explanation, such as the one contained in the next elliptic sentence.

Another reiterated word in the paragraph above is the adjective *weary*. It forms a ternary lexical structure ("*weary* of sensuality", "*weary* of the tension", "*weary* of resentment and conceit") + a structure ("*weary* to death") used along with its corresponding noun *weariness*, to stress on the idea introduced by its synonymous term *worn-out*. Its last occurrence is in the noun phrase *weary to death* that comes as a bitter conclusion, expressing the writer's despite of the 'dry' nature of modern human relationships.

There is also the repetition of the noun *money* in the noun phrase *the tension of money, money, money* that emphasises on the contemporaries'

obsession with making and spending money. The cumulated effect triggered through repetition induces a certain degree of tension (on the reader's part), as well as critical indignation (on the writer's part) in the sentence.

## MULTIPLE LEXICAL STRUCTURES

We define multiple lexical structures as the extended repetitive use of a word or lexical structure within a given context. Though less employed by Lawrence, as compared to the other types of repetition, it is quite linguistically creative and poetically expressive.

The relative moderation in the use of multiple repetitions, as it is to be seen in the following excerpts, is justified by the fact that it can be responsible for overburdening the text with redundant elements. D.H. Lawrence seems to be aware of this, as he proves great craftsmanship in his careful 'manipulation' of the device.

The following passage, and one of the best in *The Rainbow*, is a very good example that backs up our argumentation. This illustration also shows how a rhythmic pattern can be created in prose by means of multiple repetitions.

He *stooped*, he *lifted* the weight, he *heaved* it towards her, setting it as in her, under the moonlit space. And he went back for more. Ever with increasing closeness he *lifted* the sheaves and *swung* striding to the centre with them, ever he *drove* nearly to the meeting, ever he did his share, and *drew* towards her, overtaking her. There was only the moving to and fro in the moonlight, engrossed, the swinging in the silence, that was marked only by the *splash of his sheaves*, and silence, and a *splash of sheaves*. And ever the *splash of his sheaves* broke swifter, beating up to hers, and ever the *splash of her sheaves* recurred monotonously, unchanging, and *ever the splash of his sheaves* beat nearer. (TR: 102)

The rhythmic movement of the two young lovers [Anna and Will] gathering the crop under the moonlight is referred to by means of the repetition of the noun phrase *splash of sheaves*. The almost obsessive repetition of the phrase (8 times) is highly suggestive of physical love, given the implied physical connotations. At the



same time, the structure splash of *sheaves* is characterised by a highly effective phonic resonance that adds to the visual effects.

If at the beginning of the paragraph the cadence of the sentences is supported by co-ordinated strong predicative verbs (*stooped, lifted x 2, heaved, drove, drew*), by the end of it the rhythm is created and backed up by the repeated alternation of the noun phrases *splash of his / her sheaves*. It is by means of gender personalization that the rhythm accelerates, through a crescendo, up to a frenzy of movement, which culminates with Anna and Will's meeting in an intimate embrace.

Repetition has a double fold role here: it helps to produce a vivid visual image, as well as a certain musicality in the text. The former is made up of closely related photographic sequences that unfold with great speed. They indirectly point at the irresistible physical attraction between the two lovers, which concludes with their final coming together in a frenzy of passion.

We have further selected an extended passage from *Women in Love* that can be considered one of the most beautiful and masterful achievements in the English prose:

Thousands of years ago, that which was imminent in himself must have taken place in these Africans: the goodness, the holiness, the desire for creation and productive happiness must have lapsed, leaving the single impulse for knowledge in one sort, mindless *progressive knowledge through the senses, knowledge arrested and ending in the senses, mystic knowledge in disintegration and dissolution, knowledge such as the beetles have, which live purely within the world of corruption and cold dissolution*. [...] this was why the Egyptians worshipped the ball-rolling scarab: because of the principle of *knowledge in dissolution and corruption*. (WL: 220)

It is by means of multiple repetitive structures that Lawrence reiterates here one of his favourite ideas developed along the novel, that is the dual nature of man, a mixture of spirituality (*creative spirit*) and sensuality (*knowledge in disintegration and dissolution, knowledge in dissolution and corruption*). One can easily discern the increased frequency of the latter type of noun phrases, which again underlines the writer's greater

apprehension for sensuality rather than rationality in man.

D.H. Lawrence also stresses on the idea of *the fall from the connection with life and hope, of lapse from creation and liberty and into knowledge in the mystery of dissolution*. His use of a parallelism between distinct characteristics of the white and the African races helps him to predict the modern man's regression and dissolution (*the knowledge in dissolution*) that is neither spiritual, nor sensual, it is somewhere in between, a meagre mimic of the African knowledge, yet far from the *African process of purely sensual understanding, knowledge in the mystery of dissolution*. The basic idea is that the white race lacks the subtlety, warmth and the mystery of the African sensuality. The white race is characterised by an *ice-destructive knowledge* that is an extremely synthetic metaphor of the cold, mechanical behaviour and sterile spiritual nature of modern men, the English in particular.

We have been trying to reveal D.H. Lawrence's laborious strive with language to make it express far more complex meanings than the words themselves usually have, to obtain shocking, contrastive meanings. We conclude that he manages to achieve these by frequently using contrastive parallelisms and lexical repetitions. The latter is, in this case, the linguistic support for discourse development, it is not an end in itself and it certainly does not serve mere aesthetic purposes.

Some critics argue that D.H. Lawrence resorts to repetition too much and too often. In his *D.H. Lawrence: Life, Work and Criticism*, Graham Holderness cites John Middleton Murry who states that Lawrence's prose is "inaccessible" and apparently "directionless", that "its rhythms are the unintelligible beating of an underground sea."<sup>10</sup> F.R. Leavis suggests that Lawrence's "insistent and over-emphatic" style<sup>11</sup> betrays not only lack of clarity, but also deep uncertainty on the part of the author about the value of what he offers.

The frequent use of this device may naturally raise the following question: is repetition (of words, phrases and sentences) overdone or justified by the effects Lawrence achieves? Some critics have often found fault with the continued, slightly modified repetition. A pertinent answer

is that, on the one hand, it is natural to the writer and, on the other, that it serves his purposes of communicating a whole range of meaning and emotions. Every natural crisis in emotion, passion or understanding comes from "this pulsing, frictional to-and-fro which works up to culmination."<sup>12</sup> As Ian Robinson remarks, Lawrence "does not conduct an argument in which restatement is unnecessary repetition... new contexts... make the same phrase express a further emotional development, not by describing or naming the emotion but by imaginatively creating it."<sup>13</sup> These movements of feeling have a direct impact on the reader because they offer him a fresh insight and first-hand knowledge on the characters' experiences. "This prose is, in a word, poetic, enacting an experience with a depth we do not expect from ordinary prose."<sup>14</sup>

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### Endnotes

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