

THE CONCEPT OF THE FLOWER IN THE NOVEL “LADY CHATTERLEY’S LOVER” BY D. H. LAWRENCE

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The article explores the concept of the flower in the novel “Lady Chatterley’s Lover” by David Lawrence. Even though certain aspects of the stated topic have already been partially covered in Ukrainian and foreign literary studies, there are no special investigations, which makes the presented research relevant. **The article aims** to determine the peculiarities of the actualization and functioning of the flower concept in the novel “Lady Chatterley’s Lover”. The attention is focused on the analysis of the concept of the flower in the projection of Lawrence’s philosophical views; the study of the artistic representation of flower images in the novel; and the characterization of the protagonists in the light of flower imagery. **Methods.** To solve the tasks, we use the principles of conceptual, hermeneutical, functional, and semantic approaches. **Results.** The study has confirmed that the concept of the flower is an important semantic construct in the work, through which Lawrence represents his own worldview and philosophical and aesthetic visions. The main features of the flower concept are brightness, completeness, maturity, perfection, tenderness, harmony, short duration, etc. These characteristics correspond to the author’s concept of the flower as the highest expression of life, its apogee. In human life, this exceptional state is achieved in unity with nature through the love and bodily union of a man and a woman – opposites that complement and enrich each other. In the author’s approach to the representation of flower images, there are two distinct trends. On the one hand, there is a tendency to anthropomorphize flowers, to humanise them, and, on the other hand, to identify characters with flowers or their elements. The spiritualized world of flowers acts as a metaphorical guide for Constance and Mellors on their way to comprehending the fullness of life. This approach creates a visual and symbolic convergence between humans and nature, demonstrating their intrinsic correlation and interdependence. **Conclusions.** Thus, flowers in Lawrence’s works go beyond their physicality to become a platform for the development of the characters’ emotions and feelings. They do not only surround the main protagonists from the outside but also have a profound impact on their identity.

Key words: actualisation, picture of the world, symbol, image, anthropomorphisation, metaphor.

КОНЦЕПТ КВІТКИ В РОМАНІ «КОХАНЕЦЬ ЛЕДІ ЧАТТЕРЛЕЙ» Д. Г. ЛОУРЕНСА

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Стаття присвячена дослідженню концепту квітки в романі Девіда Лоуренса «Коханець леді Чаттерлей». Попри те, що окремі аспекти заявленої теми вже частково висвітлювались в українському та зарубіжному літературознавстві, спеціальних досліджень немає, що зумовлює актуальність поданої розвідки. **Мета статті** – визначити особливості актуалізації та функціонування концепту квітки в романі «Коханець леді Чаттерлей». Увагу зосереджено на аналізі поняття квітки у проєкції філософської концепції Лоуренса; дослідженні специфіки художньої репрезентації образів квітів у творі; характеристики провідних персонажів роману у світлі квіткової образності. **Методи.** Для реалізації завдань використовують принципи концептуального, герменевтичного, функціонально-семантичного підходів. **Результати.** Дослідження підтвердило, що концепт квітки виступає важливим смисловим конструктором у творі, за допомогою якого Д. Лоуренс репрезентує власні світоглядно-філософські й естетичні візії. Основними ознаками концепту квітки визначено яскравість, повноту, зрілість, досконалість, ніжність, гармонію, короткочасність та ін. Вказані характеристики відповідають авторській концепції квітки як найвищого вираження життя, його апогею. У людському бутті цей винятковий стан досягається в єдності з природою через любовно-тілесне єднання чоловіка і жінки – протилежностей, які доповнюють і збагачують одна одну. В авторському підході до репрезентації образів квітів простежуються дві чітко виражені тенденції. З одного боку, спостерігаємо тяжіння до антропоморфізації квітів, їхнього олюднення, з іншого – до отождолення персонажів із квітами чи їхніми елементами. Одухотворений світ квітів виступає для Констанції і Мелорза метафоричним провідником на їхньому шляху до осягнення повноти буття. Такий підхід створює візуальну та символічну збіжність між людиною і природою, демонструючи їхню внутрішню співвіднесеність та взаємозалежність. **Висновки.** Отож, квіти в Лоуренса виходять за межі своєї фізичності, щоб стати платформою для розвитку емоцій і почуттів персонажів. Вони не лише оточують головних героїв ззовні, але й мають сутнісний вплив на їхню ідентичність.

Ключові слова: актуалізація, картина світу, символ, образ, антропоморфізація, метафора.

1. Introduction

The theme of flowers and nature in general is a leading one in David Lawrence's literary work. In English literature, it is difficult to find a writer who could compare with Lawrence in terms of the number of names and descriptions of flowers included in their works. Flowers consistently hold a prominent place in his artistic awareness throughout his lifetime. In some novels, such as "The White Peacock" (1911) or "Women in Love" (1920), more than three hundred references to different flowers have been found. These include roses, dandelions, daisies, celandine, primroses, hyacinths, forget-me-nots, daffodils, jasmine, bluebells, violets, lilies, anemones, chrysanthemums, and many other names,

including many rare ones. Lawrence generously shares his thoughts on flora in reviews, prefaces, letters, and essays. An illustrative essay is “Flowery Tuscany” (1927), where the author demonstrates a wide knowledge of flowers, describes their types in detail, studies the origin of their names, etc.

The study would be incomplete without acknowledging Lawrence’s poetic contributions within this context. The titles of the poems speak for themselves: “Flowers and Men”, “Under the Oak”, “Swan”, “Pomegranate”, “Cypresses”, “Red Geranium and Godly Mignonette”, “Almond Blossom”, “Purple Anemones”, “Hibiscus and Salvia Flowers” and others. The famous collections “Birds, Beasts and Flowers” (1923) and “Pansies” (1929) draw attention. They are an example of poetic comprehension of the uniqueness of the floral world and its influence on human consciousness.

“Lady Chatterley’s Lover” (1928) contains fewer images of flowers than other literary works by Lawrence. However, it is in this work that the floral discourse reaches its artistic perfection in terms of its correlation with the author’s pantheistic concept of the unity of humans and nature. Some aspects of the stated topic were covered in the studies of N. Hlinka, O. Bandrovskya, R. Draper, N. Zhluktenko, N. Kudryk, F.R. Leavis, K. Millett, H. Moor, V. Panchenko, N. Sobetska, D. Stifler, and others. But there has been no special study so far. The purpose of this article is to determine the peculiarities of actualization and functioning of the flower concept in D. Lawrence’s novel “Lady Chatterley’s Lover”. The research tasks are to analyse the concept of flower in the projection of Lawrence’s philosophical views, trace the specifics of the artistic representation of flower images in the novel, and characterise the protagonists of the novel in the light of flower imagery.

To achieve our goals, we apply the principles of conceptual, hermeneutical, functional, and semantic approaches. Understanding the concept as a literary category, we rely on the definition of I. Fisak, according to which “an artistic concept is an open dynamic semantic structure embodied in stable repeated images and endowed with culturally significant content, which can generate different meanings and build up new ones over time, has a mental nature, reflecting the essential features of reality and its perception by a person of a certain time, and is the basis of the writer’s artistic picture of the world” (Фісак, 2014: 75). We are also attracted by the interpretation of V. Shevchuk, who refers to the concept as an intellectual core that unite the work “into a single structure, is its defining thought”. It (the thought) “passes through the whole work in the form of figurative signs <...> is the motive for the creation of symbols and metaphors, connecting inconsistent concepts in an unexpected perspective and thus filling the work with in-depth content” (Монахова, 2007: 91). Based on the above considerations, we agree with O. Kahanovska’s statement that the conceptual approach to the analysis of a literary text as “a multi-level process of establishing the meaning “encoded” by the author, determines its corresponding “decoding” and requires entering certain mental structures unfolding in time” (Кагановська, 2001: 114). In the context of our study, we will endeavour to decode the rich tapestry of floral imagery embedded within the novel, aiming to shed new light on the overall system of images employed by the author.

2. The concept of the flower in the author’s picture of the world

The author’s conception of reality is formed based on the ideas represented in concepts. For Lawrence, this basis is the language of trees and flowers, through which he implements his vision of nature as something sacred and mystical, opening up space for deeper reflections on man. For Lawrence, flowers are the quintessence and core of natural existence, symbolising the fullness and maturity of life, its most perfect expression. Unlike the enlighteners, for example, Goethe or Voltaire, who emphasised the importance of the fruit, Lawrence was sure that “the flower is the culmination and climax, the degree to be striven for” (Phoenix, 1961: 403). The writer considers human existence in line with the philosophy of life as self-creation, the achievement of “the real Me”, and only “of the complete Me will come to the complete fruit of me” (Phoenix, 1961: 403).

Lawrence often compares the blissful moment of harmonious perfection to a poppy blossom – short and bright – and sometimes to a blooming rose. The perfect rose, in Lawrence’s understanding,

is not a static, complete entity but a “running flame, emerging and flowing off” (Phoenix, 1961: 219). This metaphor extends to life itself, depicting it as a constant movement rather than a frozen state. The flower for Lawrence is “the maximum” of one’s desire (Phoenix, 1961: 678), the triumph of life, “the final aim” (Phoenix, 1961: 403), “little laugh of achieved being” (Phoenix, 1961: 235).

Most of Lawrence’s works are infused with the theme of compassion for those individuals who are incapable of attaining the essence of a flower-like state. The unrestrained desire to meet social expectations distances people from their inner selves and deprives them of the bliss of knowing the beauty inherent in the floral moments of existence. The poem “Flowers and Men” by Lawrence is noteworthy in this regard. The author emphasises the innate desire of flowers for self-realisation in it. He marvels at the ease with which they reach their prime, calling this process a “miracle”, contrasting it with the unnecessary struggle that consumes human life. The writer implores men and women to preserve their authenticity, to draw inspiration from the simplicity of nature, and, like flowers, to achieve their own beauty: “All I want of you, men and women, all I want of you // is that you shall achieve your own beauty as the flowers do” (Lawrence, 2011).

Lawrence assigns a decisive role in this process to love, which he considers to be the flower of life. According to Lawrence, the flourishing of a personality finds its fullest expression in a loving and bodily union with a person of the opposite sex. This is not only consistent with the natural order but also forms the fundamental basis of human existence. In essence, Lawrence sees love as a conduit through which people can realise their best and most authentic selves by resonating with the rhythms of the world.

It is interesting that the writer originally intended to title the novel “Tenderness”, drawing attention to the natural ease and fragility of the characters’ relationships associated with flowers. The author puts a special emphasis on “touches of tenderness”, contrasting them with mechanical reality. To be tender, in the author’s terms, means to have the courage and power to resist the civilised world, just like flowers do. These fragile creatures, despite the hardships, retain their beauty, inner dignity, and love of life.

In the novel, the floral motif plays a pivotal role, intricately linked with the author’s pantheistic ideology, which emphasises unity between humanity and nature. Lawrence uses the flower as a symbol, highlighting it as a transient yet paradigmatic manifestation of human existence, contrasting sharply with the mechanistic realities depicted in the narrative.

Lawrence also considers creativity to be one of the highest manifestations of human existence, the incarnation of the present moment. He often compares books to flowers. Like a flower, each book goes through stages of growth and decline; it “flowers once, and seeds, and is gone” (Phoenix, 1961: 235). And this is a natural process. In this sense, “Lady Chatterley’s Lover” can be considered the most charming and enduring flower in the author’s literary bouquet. The novel clearly shows Lawrence’s talent as an observant and talented painter, who, according to A. Huxley, “seemed to know, by personal experience, what it was like to be a tree or a daisy or a breaking wave or even the mysterious moon itself” (The Letters, 1956: xxx). As evident in the novel, Lawrence emerges as a skilled craftsman adept at portraying the intricate landscapes of both human emotions and the natural world.

3. Floral utopia as a reflection of human aspirations

The concept of the flower is actualized in the novel in the semantic field of the topos of spring, marked by the dynamics of change and transformation. It plays a key role as the ideological and semantic centre of the novel. Lawrence believed that spring is an “initial force”, a “primal and original” creature (Phoenix, 1961: 678), without which all subsequent stages are impossible. In the novel, the author focuses on the creative impulse of spring nature and its unrestrained desire for rebirth. Enveloped in the magic of spring, people also strive for renewal. The scene of Constance’s walk through the spring forest, which has just awakened from its winter sleep, is eloquent. The abundance of flowers and their ubiquity in the forest create a sense of new life that makes a strong impression

on Constance. The descriptions of spring forest, presented through the woman's eyes, are replete with metaphors and similes, which tend to anthropomorphize flowers, endowing them with human characteristics: “The bluebells were coming in the wood” (Lawrence: 164), the hazel copse made “a silent effort to open their buds” (Lawrence: 177), anemones bobbed “their naked white shoulders over crinoline skirts of green” (Lawrence: 122), the oaks “were putting out ochre yellow leaves: in the garden the red daisies were like red plush buttons” (Lawrence: 244) “forget-me-nots were fluffing up, and columbines were unfolding their ink-purple ruches” (Lawrence: 242), daffodils “shook their bright, sunny little rags in bouts of distress” (Lawrence: 123), and so on.

Lawrence's flowers are spiritual, living their own simple but full life. They can be sad, cheerful, mischievous, sometimes anxious, and preoccupied. They are sincere and incorruptible, purposeful in their desire to realise themselves in their short bloom. Using flowers as an example, the author models a kind of utopia, an ideal worldview based on beauty, harmony, and love of life. This is what Constance and Mellors strive for in their thoughts, wasting their days in cold loneliness. As one can see, Lawrence paints a blooming canvas in the novel, where the spiritualized world of flowers serves as a metaphorical guide and reflection of the characters' aspirations for a fulfilled life.

4. People and flowers: description of characters in the light of floral imagery

The spiritualized realm of flowers, as depicted in the novel, functions as a metaphorical compass, offering both guidance and reflection of the protagonists' aspirations towards existential fullness. Concurrently, the imagery of flowers serves as a critical means of characterising the protagonists, acting as a symbolic medium to articulate their authentic selves. This symbolic expression serves as an interpretive key, allowing readers insight into the innermost essence of the characters.

The descriptions of spring landscapes are imbued with the semantics of movement, which signals changes in the lives of the main characters, Constance and Mellors. The author assigns a key role in this process to the woman. Energised by the vitality of anemones, primroses, and crocuses, Constance is convinced that she can also be reborn: “When the crocus cometh forth I too will emerge and see the sun!” (Lawrence: 122). Under the influence of the powerful energy of flowers, her feminine essence comes to life. This, in turn, becomes a source of nourishment for the man. It is in the moments of fascination with the forest landscapes that Constance's mind recalls the memory of Mellors's thin white body, which she associates with a lonely pistil of the “invisible flower” (Lawrence: 121). In Lawrence's interpretation, the pistil is a female entity. It is the centre around which the male stamens revolve: “As in my flower, the pistil, female, is the centre and swivel the stamens, male, are close-clasping the hub, and the blossom is the great motion outwards into the unknown, so in a man's life, the female is the swivel and centre on which he turns closely, producing his movement. And the female to a man is the obvious form, a woman” (Phoenix, 1961: 444). Constance recognises herself in the pistil, which is the life-giving principle and catalyst, and this points to her self-identification as a woman. Her awareness of her own femininity gives her determination, helps her to recognise herself in the Other, and thus becomes the stimulus for the awakening of masculinity in Mellors.

The symbolic expression of Mellors's inner self is the image of daffodils, which the author presents through Constance's perception of them. Observing the golden heads of flowers blooming profusely behind the forester's house, the woman is filled with respect and love for them. Connie is impressed by the fragility yet strength and steadfastness of the flowers, with which she associates the owner of the house. Thanks to the flowers, she comprehends the true essence of Mellors. This episode vividly illustrates the situation of “disclosedness” (Heidegger, 2010), when a person's being is revealed to them. Now Constance is aware of her own destiny. This inspires and motivates her, and it becomes an impetus for making her own choices.

It is significant that in his essay “Flowery Tuscany” Lawrence describes daffodils as “rather cold and shy and wintry <...> To me they are winter flowers, and their scent is winter” (Phoenix, 1961: 47). This is how we see Mellors at the beginning of the novel. He feels lonely and alienated; his soul is not

warmed by love and warmth. In fact, Constance, “in whom a free woman awakens, helps the forester overcome his existential fear” (Девдюк, 2020: 348) to be freed from the captivity of cold loneliness in which he was, and thus to feel the fullness of life, that is, to achieve a blissful state of flowering.

While Mellors is associated by Connie with lonely and proud daffodils, Clifford is associated with an orchid, a flower that is usually grown in a greenhouse environment. Orchids are also known to be epiphytic plants, avoiding traditional rooting in the ground and growing on other plants rather than being rooted in soil. The words of Connie, who compares the relationship with Clifford to an orchid, “a bulb stuck parasitic on her tree of life, and producing, to her eyes, a rather shabby flower” (Lawrence: 119), are understandable. It’s about the lack of real interaction with Clifford, who drains her energy. Constance is Rugby’s air and water, the source of his life force. The man understands that he is tied to his wife and will die without her. And this is the main reason why he does not want to let her go. As a result, Constance’s body gradually withers and loses its femininity, while Clifford feels more confident and stronger.

The semantics of Clifford’s unnatural essence is generated in the image of the wheelchair, his only means of transport. Moving the half-dead body of the owner of the Rugby estate through the forest, the bulky and clumsy machine ruthlessly tramples on the spring bells that perish under its wheels. The scene with the wheelchair is a symbolic reflection of Connie and Clifford’s marriage, which is devoid of vitality. Just as the wheelchair destroys the blooming heads, the husband’s selfishness and rationalism emasculate Connie’s soul, killing her feminine nature. The author emphasises the danger of Clifford’s nature, which is destructive at its core and disruptive to the world order.

Unlike Clifford, who draws his inspiration from mechanisms, Connie is inspired by the wisdom of nature. For her, trees and flowers are examples of freedom, resilience, and boundless love of life. It is not for nothing that the woman is associated with hyacinths – beautiful and at the same time masculine flowers. This similarity is voiced by Mellors, who understood the true essence of the woman after the first meeting: “Somewhere she was tender, tender with a tenderness of the growing hyacinths, something that has gone out of the celluloid women of today” (Lawrence: 173). It is noteworthy that in the above scene, there are hyacinths that hold back Clifford’s wheelchair, preventing it from moving across the flowering meadow. Delicate flowers are stronger than a destructive machine because they are nourished by the earth and warmed by the sun. The comparison of Constance to hyacinths not only reinforces the depth of her character but also symbolises her resilience and the power of tenderness in the face of the “insentient iron world and the Mammon of mechanized greed” (Lawrence: 173). It suggests that properties rooted in nature, such as tenderness and beauty, have a great inner power that can balance the dehumanising influence of the mechanised world represented by Clifford’s wheelchair.

Related to the flower concept is the image of the earth as a sacred place that revives and heals. It is the powerful energy of the earth that fills Constance’s body with life and desire. She feels like a part of this world, joining its natural order. Constance becomes aware of her destiny to be happy and to experience the triumph of flowering in unity with her man, for whom the forest was an organic space of being.

The scene where the lovers run naked through the rainy forest and then cover their bodies with flowers can be considered a vivid manifestation of the harmonious relationship between Connie and Mellors, which corresponds to the author’s understanding of the state of the flower. The symbolism of the rainy forest reflects fertility, vitality, and connection with nature. It is a place of intersection between the world of people and nature, where the characters can feel the fullness of their being. The nudity of their bodies is a manifestation of the acceptance of oneself in one’s naturalness and the desire to be connected to the environment without any restrictions or coverings. This combination of anima and animus in one scene indicates the fullness of the relationship between Constance and Mellors. They do not only feel the natural power and energy but also perceive it as part of their

inner identity. This unity is especially evident in the episodes of bodily intimacy between the lovers when Mellors tenderly calls Constance a flower: “His hands held her like flowers” (Lawrence: 258); “And his hands stroked her softly, as if she were a flower” (Lawrence: 258); “she was fresh and young like a flower” (Lawrence: 307), etc.

The scene also reveals the author’s vision of the forest as a paradise, and in the images of the lovers, it is easy to recognise the first humans, Adam and Eve. Everything that happens to them resembles a wedding ritual. First, the lovers go through a stage of water purification and then receive a blessing from nature itself. In this interpretation, the forest appears in the symbolic image of a temple, and the forget-me-nots that Mellors tenderly flowers Connie’s body with are a kind of analogue of the lovers’ vow of fidelity. At the same time, forget-me-nots signal the transience of love, which is the best flower of life and its apogee – the shortest and most perfect expression. Like a flower, love “must flower and fade”. But this, in Lawrence’s opinion, is what makes life unique. So, combining Christian and pagan traditions, the spiritual and the physical, the author offers his own version of paradise, objectified in the image of a flower.

The flower associations play a transformative role in the characters’ interpersonal dynamics. Notably, the novel presents instances wherein the characters engage with flowers, such as Constance’s interaction with lonely and cold daffodils, which facilitates her understanding of the forester, and the forester’s identification of the true essence of the woman through the stable and tender hyacinths. These floral interactions become emblematic of a shared language between the characters, enabling a profound understanding and connection between them.

5. Conclusions

The concept of the flower is one of the basic semantic constructs in the novel, correlating with the author’s pantheistic concept of the unity of man and nature. For Lawrence, the flower symbolises the briefest, most perfect manifestation of human existence, which is in opposition to mechanistic reality. At the figurative level, the flower concept is realised in the motifs of spring and love. Spring, with its vital energy and rebirth, becomes a symbol of renewal and the cyclical nature of life. Love, intertwined with the images of flowers, represents a powerful force that connects people not only with each other but also with the wider world of nature.

As the analysis has shown, the spiritualized world of flowers in the novel serves as a metaphorical guide and a reflection of Constance and Mellor’s aspirations for the fullness of being. At the same time, the images of flowers, as an important means of characterization, are a symbolic expression of their true essence, their inner self. It is through flower associations that the main characters get to know each other: lonely and cold daffodils help Constance understand the forester, and steadfast and tender hyacinths become the forester’s identifier of the woman’s true nature. This approach creates a visual and symbolic convergence between man and nature, demonstrating their internal correlation and interdependence.

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