

**G. Eliot, Forster and Lawrence (7)**  
**The Sisters : A Study of *Middlemarch*,**  
*Howards End* and *Women in Love*

(V)

Masako Hirai

要約

G. エリオット、フォスター、ロレンス（7）  
「姉妹」の小説  
(*Middlemarch, Howards End, Women in Love* の比較)

V

平井 雅子

さらに *Women in Love* を中心に、姉妹の対照的な愛の姿と、そこに集約される現代社会における個人の生き方、精神の葛藤をたどっていく。その背景にある文明と性の神話をめぐって、その伝統の習熟、破壊の衝動、および、それをを行う人間の演技と現実、drama と life の接点は、ここで、その中間地帯としてのフィクションに求められるであろう。

姉妹を比較すれば、Guðrun は、秘められた肉体の知恵——という女性神話を意図的に用いて社会を睥睨し、社会に対し敗北を知らぬ男 Gerald を挑発、支配するが、彼女の弱点は、その社会や Gerald の認識なしには、彼女の優越性、神話そのものが成り立たなくなる点である。優れた者を認知する能力を失い、これを引きずりおろそうとする社会に対し、なお依存しなければならないというジレンマに苛立ち、Guðrun は文明の極地とみられる雪一色のオーストリアの山へやって来る。Ursula は、自己の力より真実を求め、時に自己を忘れる事が出来るという自由さと不安定（これは表裏一体）を手に、社会から Birkin との愛にもしびこむ虚像という桎梏と闘い、ついに愛する者の真実に向き合う瞬間、全ての神話から解放される瞬間の愛の確信を得る。しかし、その確信は同時に、その瞬間が未知の虚像に遭遇する過程の始まりでもあるという認識と、切り離せないものである。Ursula と Birkin が後にする英国が〈石棺〉であるように、彼らを迎える大陸の風景も、もう一つの〈冬〉にすぎないという失望は、Ursula の確信を背後から脅かす。

Guðrun らの待つチロルの宿に Ursula らが到着する場面を頂点として、姉妹は、自らの立場を脅かす不安を背に互いを称えあい、支えあう劇的情景を作り上げ、また再び、それを放棄する。二人の生き方の中間に位置する、この劇的情景の意味は何か。その放棄は、姉妹にとって、それぞれの生き方、愛の挫折をもたらすものではなかったか。

*Middlemarch, Howards End* の最後にみられる曖昧な不安 (uncertainty) と確信 (certainty) とが入り混った状況。一見、これに呼応するかのごとき Ursula の不安と確信の背後に、我々は Guðrun の到達した究極のペシミズム、現代社会におかれた人間の意識の終末的状况 (空虚に操られる完全な機械) のヴィジョンを見る。あらゆる意味を焼き尽くす Artigone の情熱にも通じる Guðrun の芸術家、女としての自負を背景にして、初めての Ursula の希望と確信に力が漲る。

逆に、姉妹が互いを意識し、認め合うという関係が崩れれば、Guðrun の一見、破壊的にして社会の歯車に組みこまれた挑戦の演技もまた、その意味を失う。姉妹の緊迫したやり取り、debate から離れた時、あくまで演技たることをやめない Guðrun の恋愛ゲームは、単なるゲームとして現実との関わりを断つことでしか、自らの尊厳を守れないのである。

## V. The Middle Ground Between the Sisters

### (1) The Middle Ground of Fiction

Could the conflict between Ursula and Gudrun be resolved? and fruitfully? Does the novel offer a middle ground between the sisters? From this viewpoint, one of the most interesting scenes is the display of the sisters' affection on the stairs when they come together in the hotel in Tirol:

Gudrun looked over the rail, and immediately lost her sauntering, diffident air. Her eyes flashed.

"Really—Ursula!" she cried.

And she began to move downstairs as Ursula ran up. They met at a turn and kissed with laughter and exclamations inarticulate and stirring.

"But!" cried Gudrun, mortified. "We thought it was *tomorrow* you were coming! I wanted to come to the station."

"No, we've come today!" cried Ursula. "Isn't it lovely here!"

"Adorable!" said Gudrun. "Gerald's just gone out to get something.—Ursula, aren't you *fearfully* tired?"

"No, not so very. But I look a filthy sight, don't I?"

"No, you don't. You look almost perfectly fresh.—I like that fur cap *immensely!*"

She glanced over Ursula, who wore a big soft coat with a collar of deep, soft, blond fur, and a soft blond cap of fur.

"And you!" cried Ursula. "What do you think *you* look like!"

Gudrun assumed an unconcerned, expressionless face.

"Do you like it?" she said.

"It's *very* fine!" cried Ursula, perhaps with a touch of satire.

"Go up—or come down," said Birkin.

For there the sisters stood, Gudrun with her hand on Ursula's arm, on the turn of the stairs half way to the first landing, blocking the way, and affording full entertainment to the whole of the hall below, from the door porter to the plump Jew in black clothes.

The two young women slowly mounted, followed by Birkin and the porter.

"First floor?" asked Gudrun, looking back over her shoulder.

"Second madam—the lift—!" the porter replied, and he darted to the elevator, to forestall the two women. But they ignored him, as, chattering without heed, they set to mount the second flight. Rather chagrined, the porter followed.

It was curious, the delight of the sisters in each other, at this meeting. It was as if they met in exile, and united their solitary forces against all the world. Birkin looked on with some mistrust and wonder. (*WL*, pp. 392–3)

Trivial as it may seem, this typically–female display of mutual caring and appreciation has force because of its half–trembling, half–awkward theatricality. The sisters' excitement and over–emphatic expressions derive from the not hostile but jarring presence of a foreign mixed audience who do not understand the subtlety of their relationship. The jarring mixture hides the potentially conflicting elements of race, class, and sex, temporarily subdued and gathered in a small space. The sisters' superb gesture of ignoring the porter and others, while in reality they never forget them, heightens the dramatic element of their intimacy. It is Gudrun who always has to go through rituals and theatrical performances to lose (or almost lose) herself in ecstasy. But here Ursula seems to have as much need as Gudrun for this little scene which is created “half–way” between their original positions.

After leaving England behind as “desolate lights... as on the shores of nowhere... sinking smaller and smaller on the profound and living darkness” (p. 387), Ursula first feels in mid–Channel the triumph of “the sense of the unrealized world ahead” (p. 388), and Birkin, too, experiences “absolute peace... in this final transit out of life”. But during the train–journey on the Continent, she watches a man with a lantern come out of the farm and remembers half with nostalgia and half with relief the irrecoverable alienation from her childhood, to feel that now “she had no identity” (p. 390). Then she realizes with a renewed desolation (perhaps with a new hunger) that “this was an old world she was still journeying through, winter–heavy and dreary”, wishing, “Oh, if he were the world as well, if only the world were he! If only he could call a world into being, that should be their own world!” (p. 391). This painful sense of coming back to “an old world... winter–heavy and dreary” is strongly reminiscent of the view of Lowick which Dorothea has to come back to after her unsuccessful honeymoon to Italy, and yet the experience of love the other couple has just gone through is entirely different. The result is doubly ironic.

Even when Ursula feels romantic delight that “Innsbruck was wonderful, deep in snow, and evening” and the hotel with the golden light glowing “seemed like home” to the approaching guest, one gets the feeling that her pain is not going to be surpassed, that all her delight and excitement at the new place is somehow superficial and deceptive. The same is true of her excitement at the reunion with Gudrun, especially after Ursula's sudden announcement of her marriage (as if nobody else mattered) and her violent break with the family ties. Although it was primarily her father's “bullying” and “failure to love” and meet her that she had raged against, Gudrun also takes an equivocal position in the scene, resenting it that Ursula could not keep the formality of manners in caring for other members of the family but had to blurt out the clumsy cruel words, but also finding it “impossible” to bear her father's reaction. Such caring for forms—not necessarily conventional like Gerald's but more often distinct and striking—is typical of

Gudrun, and is part of her self-defense mechanism.

But here in Tirol, facing the double alienation from the historical world of her past and the much needed new world which she does not seem to have found elsewhere, Ursula unconsciously seeks out the glamour of the most foreign inhuman landscape, the unfamiliar atmosphere of the foreign hotel, and the highlighted coziness of half-fictional familiarity against such a background. The foreign hotel with the light in its porch, in the middle of the night and the snow, is both *not* home and *seems* like home, much sought after. The display of exaggerated affection and mutual care at the sisters' reunion is both *not* genuine and *seems* genuine as if they had come all the way to Tirol just to meet each other. Her unquenchable or renewed need for identity has moved her to seize the middle ground of fictionality for the moment because it allows her to be both free from it and attached to it.

However, it is not Ursula's nature to stick to fictionality, and one would expect her to come out of the moment's truce and be restless for a further move out of deception. After the outburst of argument with Loerke, when Gudrun sides with him on the relationship between art and life, Ursula says:

I hate the snow, and the unnaturalness of it, the unnatural light it  
throws on everybody, the ghastly glamour, the unnatural feelings it  
makes everybody have. (WL, pp. 434–5)

That "everybody", even Ursula, cannot escape "the unnatural light" and the "glamour" which it produces—now and then when the human need is unbearable—is also part of her natural, relative self; and in order to let her other parts live, she has to move.

So the middle ground of fictionality is the product of tension between the need for freedom and the need for identity as far as Ursula is concerned. The same is true of Gudrun except that she has not achieved the moment of freedom either in art or the act of love. Whenever it looks *as if* she were free from all her bondage, stripping herself of her social and personal identity (which is hypersensitively defensive and contemptuous) in ecstasy, it is only within the fictional boundary of rituals that she can release herself. The release does not touch her real self which remains bound, "diffident", and oppressed, but it appears as a demonic displacement of the oppressed self—the glamorous negative vision of unreality. Her limitation stands fixed. However, there are also moments when she looks in envy and despair, as if from an enclosed dark cell up to the tip of the twig just visible through the small window, at another person who can "forget herself" and be natural for a moment. Her admiration and envy for Gerald in his ability to abandon himself in sleep is more tentative, because *she* has created the glamour into which he can plunge and lose himself, unheeding its demonic negativity. On the other hand, her admiration and, more strongly, envy for Ursula is clearer, though it is invariably mixed with a degree of reluctance, irritation, contempt or a sense of superiority.

Here in the Tirolean *gasthof*, though the sisters meet in an obviously theatrical situation in everybody's sight, it is probably one of Gudrun's most natural moments—expressing her admiration and longing for Ursula half-reluctantly, half-generously, "You look almost perfectly fresh." It is natural and true also because Ursula is *not* perfectly

fresh, having come out "stiff", though happy, from the ship which left England and travelled across the dark sea, having journeyed by train from one place to another restlessly through the dreary winter landscape. It is as if she came a step forward to pay Gudrun a tribute, condescending to her fictional world which, too, is the outcome of living pain and nausea against the humiliating imprisoning life in England—or the modern world or society at large, or their mining home town or even the London Bohemian community.

One must bear in mind that when Gudrun had walked with Birkin's letter out of the Pompadour cafe, she cried to Gerald, "I could have *killed* them!", that "she could not rest any longer in London", and that she said with emphasis:

I feel I could *never* see this *foul* town again—. I couldn't *bear* to come back to it. ( *WL*, p. 386)

Her means of achieving this, of "killing" the world, is to move into a semi-fictional or theatrical world, as in the act of walking out of the Bohemian group with the letter, but even this much contact with or dependency on the world (to be able to feel that she is out of it) becomes too much to bear in the end, so that *her* illusion of being completely out of England in the foreign country of snow gives her the opportunity for a more perfect sense of release.

Thus, though the sisters' experiences vary, their feeling and exhilaration at being *out of* England, out of the world, is peculiarly similar. Their problems come from a common root. In the middle of their self-emphasized alienation, their reunion is like coming back to harbour, and they need each other for confirmation and reassurance. But they are also aware that their ways are different and that probably they will never be able to understand each other ultimately. When Ursula admires Gudrun's glamorous clothes, the latter "assumed an unconcerned, expressionless face", but she is really hiding her dependence on the other. "It's *very* fine!" Ursula reassures her emphatically, sensing Gudrun's dependence, but not without a "touch of satire".

## (2) Point of Departure

The elements of satire, indignation, contempt and bitterness are to be found on both sides of the relationship with increasing explicitness as they move up to the higher region of the snow mountains and stay in a simple but comfortable wooden hostel, to meet Loerke and have a heated disagreement on art and life (or art and self, since Loerke claims they have nothing to do with each other). And the sisters have their final tête-à-tête, more bitter than sweet, after Ursula decides to leave the place with Birkin.

Gudrun came to Ursula's bedroom with three pairs of the coloured stockings for which she was notorious, and she threw them on the bed. . . . "I can't take them from you Prune," she [Ursula] cried. "I can't possibly deprive you of them—the jewels."

"*Aren't* they jewels!" cried Gudrun, eyeing her gifts with an envious eye. "*Aren't* they real lambs!"

"Yes, you *must* keep them," said Ursula.

"I don't *want* them, I've got three more pairs. I *want* you to keep them—I want you to have them—they're yours, there—."

And with trembling, excited hands she put the coveted stockings under Ursula's pillow. ( *WL*, p. 436)

This is all very sweet, and one can sense almost a feeling of sacrifice on Gudrun's part. The gift is one-sided, and there is apparently no equally "trembling" (profound and disturbing) sentiments about those stockings on Ursula's part, though she is impressed not only by them but by Gudrun's lovingness "to part with such treasures". The emotions and images are again reminiscent of the opening scene of *Middlemarch* where the sisters distribute their mother's jewelry. Calling the stockings not only "jewels" but "lambs" inconspicuously stresses the sacrificial element in giving them up, which is present also in Dorothea's Puritanical renunciation of her mother's jewels and magnanimously offering them all to her sister:

In fact, they are all yours, dear. We need discuss them no longer.

There—take away your property. ( *M*, p. 6)

However, the roles of the sisters vary between the two scenes and so do the meanings of the images and emotions. To Dorothea, the religious meaning of the jewels (or rather, of her renouncing the jewels) is much more important than their personal meaning and their valuable and almost 'priceless' beauty (which only a minute later will take her by surprise, at a level deeper than she had imagined), and her assumption of unquestionable superiority in the spiritual action does not leave her sister any room for active participation. To Gudrun, in a way, the personal meaning of her stockings is the only thing that matters, though their cost does contribute to this personal value, in comparison to the money she earns. However, what elevates it to a level beyond the merely personal one, and beyond the mere price, is her hypersensitive ability to appreciate their beauty and to play on them for dramatic effects (by wearing them so as to shock people, for instance), for which she *needs* Ursula's recognition and confirmation. Although it is hard for Gudrun to part with those 'special' stockings, her need is even greater, so that the fate of all her emotions and hopes seems to hinge on Ursula's appreciation and keeping them by her side. No wonder she has another set of pairs because those stockings are part of Gudrun, her most precious self, and she *must* have Ursula *keep* them since she is leaving her behind to set out for a new world somewhere.

But the pathetic note turns into envy, argument, and skepticism.

"But spiritually, so to speak, you are going away from us all?"

Ursula quivered.

"I don't know a bit what is going to happen," she said. "I only know we are going somewhere."

Gudrun waited.

"And you are glad?" she asked.

Ursula meditated for a moment.

"I believe I am *very* glad," she replied.

But Gudrun read the unconscious brightness on her sister's face, rather than the uncertain tones of her speech.

"But don't you think you'll *want* the old connection with the world—Father and the rest of us, and all that it means, England and the world of thought—don't you think you'll *need* that, really to make a world? . . . One wants a new space to be in, I quite agree. . . . But *I* think that a new world is a development from this world, and that to isolate oneself with one other person, isn't to find a new world at all, but only to secure oneself in one's illusions."

. . . "Perhaps," she [Ursula] said, full of mistrust, of herself and everybody. "But," she added, "I do think that one can't have anything new whilst one cares for the old. . . . I know, one is tempted to stop with the world, just to fight it.—But then it isn't worth it."

Gudrun considered herself.

"Yes," she said. "In a way, one is of the world if one lives in it. But isn't it really an illusion, to think you can get out of it? . . . No, the only thing to do with the world, is to see it through."

Ursula looked away. She was so frightened of argument.

"But there *can* be something else, can't there?" she said. "One can see it through in one's soul, long enough before it sees itself through in actuality."

( *WL*, pp. 437–8)

"Uncertainty" is really their meeting ground, but Gudrun notices Ursula's "unconscious brightness" instead, which instantly alienates them from each other and sets the mood for argument. It is as if Gudrun is determined to detect and break any sort of illusion which envelops her sister and separates her from herself. Ursula is "frightened of argument" and "words" in general because "mere word-force could always make her believe what she did not believe". Her only certainty is that one must get out of the world, and even that has to be expressed after some meditation. All the other things are outside her and against her—even words, especially words. Words can make or destroy illusions, but they cannot grasp what has not yet come about.

Ursula has only moments of freedom and conviction, which she shares with Birkin, to guide her by instinct, but those moments have not found any ground, still less words, to relate to. Gudrun's argument that "to isolate oneself with one other person isn't to find a new world at all, but only to secure oneself in one's illusions" is both just and unjust. It precisely pinpoints the weakness and danger of Ursula's conviction; however, to say that she has not found another world to relate to does not mean that she has snugly secured herself in her illusions. Although it is difficult to distinguish between illusion and her conviction or foresight ("One can see it through in one's soul") at a glance, the latter holds its place because it has open possibilities and uncertainties. Certainly it is impossible to prove this conviction to another person—one who is still in the old world—and Ursula's retort ("But there *can* be something else, can't there?") is almost as much

a pleading entreaty as Gudrun's pathetic offer of her cherished stockings. The irony is that Gudrun who creates artistic illusions of being out of the world is here attacking Ursula for securing similar illusions. The criticism rather applies to herself, and she knows she has to constantly fight against herself even to keep an illusion convincingly 'alive' for herself.

Again, there is a surprisingly similar train of thought to Ursula's, in Gudrun when she watches Gerald asleep "in the subjection of his own health and defeat" and "was overcome by a sincere regard for him". Then she realizes his potentiality as "an instrument" which "only needed to be hitched on".

He was unaware of it, but she knew. ( *WL*, p. 417)

This is a conviction. But, in order to relate this conviction to actual life, for which really his "instrumentality" or "faculty of making order out of confusion" exists, she must set up an illusion, which ironically starts crumbling as soon as she starts building it.

She would marry him, he would go into Parliament in the Conservative interest, he would clear up the great muddle of labour and industry. He was so superbly fearless, masterful, he knew that every problem could be worked out, in life as in geometry. And he would care neither about himself nor about anything but the pure working out of the problem. . . . He would be a Napoleon of peace, or a Bismarck—and she the woman behind him. . . . But even as she lay in fictitious transport, bathed in the strange, false sunshine of hope in life, something seemed to snap in her, and a terrible cynicism began to gain upon her, blowing in like a wind. . . . the ironical question: "What for?" She thought of the colliers' wives, with their linoleum and their lace curtains and their little girls in high-laced boots. She thought of the wives and daughters of the pit-managers, their tennis-parties, and their terrible struggles to be superior each to the other, in the social scale. There was Shortlands. . . . There was London, the House of Commons, the extant social world. My God! . . . The whole coinage of valuation was spurious. Yet of course, her cynicism knew well enough that, in a world where spurious coin was current, a bad sovereign was better than a bad farthing. But rich and poor, she despised both alike.

Already she mocked at herself for her dreams. . . . What did she care, that Gerald had created a richly-paying industry out of an old worn-out concern? . . . Yet of course, she cared a great deal, outwardly—and outwardly was all that mattered, for inwardly was a bad joke. . . . She learned over Gerald and said in her heart with compassion:

"Oh, my dear, my dear, the game isn't worth even you. You are a fine thing really—why should you be used on such a poor show!"

. . . At any rate, we'll spare ourselves the nausea of stirring the old broth any more. You be beautiful, my Gerald, and reckless. There *are* perfect moments, oh convince me, I need it.

He opened his eyes, and looked at her. She greeted him with a mocking, enigmatic smile in which was a poignant gaiety. Over his face went the reflection of the smile, he smiled too, purely unconsciously. . . . "You've done it," she said.

"What?" he asked, dazed.

"Convinced me." (*WL*, pp. 417–9)

In Lawrence's first novel, *The White Peacock*, there is another picture of a MP which brings a feeling of barrenness to his woman. But even more than Lettie's half-hearted and unfruitful marriage to Leslie Tempest, Gudrun's 'fantasy' of Gerald as a MP and her immediate cynicism over the fantasy is an ironic and negative projection from the story of Dorothea and Ladislav at the end of *Middlemarch*. Ladislav's "ardent" public passion and his final 'success' in returning to Parliament is presented positively, but not without a sense of hollowness or cynicism in view of subsequent history:

. . . working well in those times when reforms were begun with a young hopefulness of immediate good which has been much checked in our days. . . . (*M*, p. 576)

Similarly, though as the combined result of her natural and irresistible passion towards her lover and of her selfless goodness towards those around her, Dorothea's marriage to Ladislav is presented as a happy one, its success is also rendered as partial and limiting, given her "full nature", which could have taken a more fruitful and historic course of life:

Her full nature, like that river of which Cyrus broke the strength, spent itself in channels which had no great name on the earth. (*M*, p. 578)

With George Eliot, however, what finally winds up this half-dismal picture is the moral note which preaches individual *sacrifice* to the socially acceptable norm of action (what she rather deceptively calls living "faithfully a hidden life") through which they struggle and hope to contribute to "the growing good of the world". Even though Ladislav's "young hopefulness of immediate good" is viewed in a cynical light, Eliot does not reject her belief (or need for belief) in such "growing good of the world" as would cast a ray of consolation and elation on the "unhistoric acts" whose barrenness keeps creeping into her mind. This *could* be a form of sentimental heroism. The pertinent question which Lawrence puts forward in Gudrun's more total cynicism is: What for? To put it in Eliot's terms: What *is* the growing good of the world?

Let us look more closely at the passage above. The question "What for?" is the question Gerald never asks until his father's death, and probably never faces directly until his death in the snow. But Gudrun recognizes him as the "purest" instrument of action—selfless and unflinching in adjusting to the social trend of action which carries people along regardless, though causing gaps of adjustment and ability, jealousy, greed, and reactions, in its over-all machinery. The irony which Gudrun discovers here is that

the strength of his “pure” instrumentality is the very weakness which will eventually swallow him into the meaningless void, for all the time he disregards the human element in himself as well as in others which will not adjust to the blind social purpose. It is blind because, except for money and social position, the causes for greed, which do not make Gerald personally interested or happy, it has no personal meaning to himself or to others. Though Gerald may work out a problem in life *as if* it were a problem in geometry, life is *not* geometry. Creating a richly-paying industry out of an old worn-out concern involves contact with the miners’ lives, their families’ lives, his own life, and his family’s lives. Although he acts *as if* his work, the machinery of the work, did not concern his or their personal life (and the miners take their cue from him), his and their neglected personal life reacts negatively, demonically to whatever force is put upon them—the force of meaninglessness. “What for?” is a question they cannot afford to ask.

Gerald comes to depend on Gudrun because she, like a priestess, assumes a mysterious power over him, provokes him and appreciates the beauty of his “pure” sensual activity, even in reaction, while allowing him to close his eyes to the sense of void spreading inside. Her position is ambiguous. Like a sharp blade, it seems able to yield either healing surgery or death. Gudrun, who dreams she can “hitch on” his machinery to marvelous ends, adjusting her artistic sensitivity to his “as if”, cannot but immediately destroy her own fantasy by asking: What for?

The question, though cynical, shows the directness of her perception, and her compassion for Gerald is genuine for the moment. “Oh, my dear, my dear, the game isn’t worth even you”—the cry is a sign of health and is close to Ursula’s own retort, “But then it isn’t worth it”. When all the cards fall from her hands, what remains for Gudrun is the “beauty” and “recklessness” of Gerald and the “perfect moments” between them. When she says to herself, “. . . we’ll spare ourselves the nausea of stirring the old broth”, she is resigning all illusions and finds the last flicker of untainted life in the unconscious, beautiful, reckless child living in the man. What are the “perfect moments”? What is her conviction? It is this touching moment when Gudrun, feeling old and cynical, divests herself of all her make-believe and stoops to the child Gerald “with a mocking, enigmatic smile in which was a poignant gaiety”, there to find the confirmation of her ‘stooping’ in the reflected smile on Gerald’s newly-awakened face. It is difficult to find a word for this ‘stooping’, but it is a pure gesture in its own right—the ultimate self-divesting experience of the make-believer.

But the difference between Ursula and Gudrun is that the latter never stops being a make-believer, an artist. The ever-present over-conscious wakefulness, which makes her feel her hair has turned white, will not let her believe in a real escape even for a moment, even with the conviction that there is an untainted, vulnerable, purely irresponsible and beautiful self at the bottom of one’s soul. She says to Ursula, “But isn’t it really an illusion to think you can get out of it?” To Gudrun, the child’s game is the child’s game: it is still *inside* the man’s game (or show). She can never forget she is an adult who “cared a great deal, outwardly”, and that is why she says, “No, the only thing to do with the world, is to see it through.” Even when she sees it through, one would surmise, she

will still be in the empty shell, the world. And the only alternative would be to define the child's game as a *mere* child's game, which has nothing to do with the adult's life, and plunge into the fantasy, knowing all the while it is a pure fantasy. That is what she does with Loerke. They both *know* it is a game of pretence, and the "esoteric" release they get is nothing genuine, nothing conclusive but "half-suggestive", meaningless, lamently toying with an abnormal and limited sexuality.

In the course of the argument between the sisters, during which Ursula is uncertain and Gudrun is mercilessly stripping away illusions, Ursula "suddenly straightened herself".

"Yes," She said, "Yes—one knows. One has no more connections here. One has a sort of other self, that belongs to a new planet, not to this.—You've got to hop off."

Gudrun reflected for a few moments. Then a smile of ridicule, almost of contempt, came over her face.

"And what will happen when you find yourself in space?" she cried in derision. "After all, the great ideas of the world are the same there. You above everybody can't get away from the fact that love, for instance, is the supreme thing, in space as well as on earth."

"No," said Ursula, "it isn't. Love is too human and little. I believe in something inhuman, of which love is only a little part. I believe what we must fulfill comes out of the Unknown to us, and it is something infinitely more than love. It isn't so merely *human*."

Gudrun looked at Ursula with steady, balancing eyes. She admired and despised her sister so much, both. Then suddenly she averted her face, saying coldly, uglily:

"Well, I've got no further than love, yet."

Over Ursula's mind flashed the thought: "Because you never *have* loved, you can't get beyond it." (*WL*, p. 438)

So it all comes back to the question of "love" as the title of the novel shows. But it is a question of different meanings of love. Gudrun's love for Gerald, at least her compassion for him, is genuine and deep in its own right. But it is limited. Ursula, following Birkin, is here speaking almost like Birkin himself, and believes in the possibility of going one step beyond love—the "human" love limited by all the social and personal contact that it involves. Her belief, definitely pronounced, is grounded on her personal experience of love, but in it she is convinced that she can forget everything, including the question of love, and be natural and proud *in spite of* everything that is against it. Apparently, the difference seems small between Gerald's disregard for the human element and Ursula's hope of going *beyond* the human and most personal experience which she has lived through, but the difference is there between the two experiences of love.

Gudrun's contempt and ridicule is partly justified, because Ursula has to draw on the images of "a new planet" and "space" to cover the uncertainties and unpredictability of

what has not come about, but uncertainty and unpredictability is precisely her stronghold. As long as she can risk herself in the conviction of this uncertainty, she has the chance of "getting beyond" and fulfilling "what... comes out of the unknown to us". 'The conviction of uncertainty' is a contradiction in terms, and yet it is the ultimate knowledge reached through Ursula's experience. When it is put against Gudrun's "thought of the mechanical succession of day following day, day following day, *ad infinitum*", its meaning becomes clearer. It is the release from the mere repetition of what is already known, which is the opening Gudrun is not able to find. Hence her admiration for Ursula. And yet the opening for what? Hence her contempt for Ursula.

The meaning of Ursula's momentary release and conviction of 'uncertainties' becomes clearer *when* it is set against Gudrun's sense of permanent enclosure in acting her role *in* the world. On the other hand, Gudrun's *painful* awareness of this enclosure becomes meaningful *when* it recognizes the beauty of the most vulnerable genuine self, subjected to sleep and coming awake, *inside* the shell of the socially and personally bound self. Therefore, the sisters' positions and convictions depend for their meaning on each other. Yet they have the tension of always moving apart. The real drama of this tension ends when Ursula and Birkin leave the others behind in Tirol, and what happens after that is only the consequence of the loss of meaning.

### (3) Anti-Climax

As a search for a meaning, what follows the parting between the sisters is only an anti-climax, though it is the most dramatic and tragic part of the action.

Gudrun flaunts her grotesquely suggestive (but only suggestive and nonsensical) game with Loerke in front of Gerald, ignores and despises his manhood, and repeatedly makes a point of telling him that he is *not* able to 'love' her and that he could *not* make her 'love' him. The last of these attacks blames him not only for his *inability* to make her *forget* herself in love, which is primarily her own problem, but for his *ability* to *forget* himself without consideration for her as mere 'childishness' rather than as the genuine naturalness of a child. In answer to Gudrun's charge that he cannot love, Gerald's "And you?" is a legitimate retort. But by twisting the phrase to "I couldn't love *you*", she is again pretending, creating a fictional superiority of her own potentiality *as if* it would take only a man of equal potentiality with hers, which Gerald is not, to make it flower. The problem is that Gerald is vulnerable to this twist because he is provoked by and believes in Gudrun's glamorous potentiality as a woman, while he is not able to recognize and respect her talent as an artist, an actress or enchantress.

When she finds her fictional release by exposing herself to the beauty of the sunset against the snow, he tries to put her down by saying, "Why do you grovel before it?" When, in turn, she brutalizes him by defining him as a mere obstacle, a barbarian who "can't see" its beauty but does "try to debar" her who *can* see it, he says softly and ominously:

One day... I shall destroy you as you stand looking at the sunset;

because you are such a liar. (*WL*, p. 447)

In his silent fury and stubborn insensitivity, he has the satisfaction of degrading the artist as "a liar". He is right in sensing her ecstasy as 'fictional', but, by calling her "a liar", he is also disclosing his vulnerability to it which binds and upbraids him. The very ring of the word "liar" and the thought of "destroying" her give him a vengeful and masochistic satisfaction. He is bound because he still believes in the beauty of the "liar", unwilling to forfeit his exposure to it which alone can give release to his hitherto unawakened vulnerable self.

Though she treated him with contempt, repeated rebuffs and denials, still he would never be gone, since in being near her, even he felt the quickening, the going forth in him, the release, the knowledge of his own limitation and the magic of the promise, as well as the mystery of his own destruction and annihilation. (*WL*, p. 446)

This is a beautifully accurate account of his limitation risking its own destruction for further release, while at the same time he is seething with humiliation and revenge.

When Ursula and Birkin leave, Gudrun and Gerald lack the respect for each other's different potentiality, and their attraction to each other becomes a death to each of them. Even though they both seek to destroy each other, neither tries to leave the other finally. Then this process becomes the "eternal see-saw" of being destroyed or destroying the other, the dead-end. Gudrun gets "bored" to death with his limitation and seriousness.

When the end comes, it is not so much a climax as an anti-climax. Gudrun and Loerke are laughing in the snow because "he in his mockery was even more absurd than she in her extravagancies" (p. 469), and Gerald comes "like a ghost" to them, wishing to have Loerke (the absurd artist) "removed" as a mere obstacle to his desire. Gerald's blows, unheeding Loerke's mocking appraisal of his 'performance' ("Well done!", "C'est le sport", "Vive le héros" . . .), come like hammers and "sent him aside like a broken straw", ridiculously insignificant. Gerald's last desire, which is to "strangle" Gudrun, is about to be fulfilled, with her beautiful face turning swollen and "ugly", the last "struggle" of life in his hands giving him "the frenzy of delight", and finally the crisis is reached and "her movement became softer", when Loerke cries in his thin voice:

Monsieur! . . . Quand vous aurez fini—

"When you have finished. . ."—the idea which never came to Gerald's mind up to then—has become insignificant and hollow. It is all part of the absurd play, and while he behaves as if he were blindly and savagely fighting against its tyranny, he is acting his 'part' as a victim to itself.

Ah, what was he doing, to what depths was he letting himself go! As if he cared about her enough to kill her, to have her life on his hands! . . . "I didn't want it, really," was the last confession of disgust in his soul, as he drifted up the slope, weak, finished, only sheering off unconsciously from any further contact. "I've had enough—I want to go to sleep. I've had enough." (*WL*, p. 472)

The truth is that he does not care enough either about himself or any other person. He

has just blindly fought his way through without recognizing, and so he has wasted, his free untainted self and her artistic gift which could have helped him. The "sleep" this time is "only sheering off... from any further contact", which is death without meaning either to himself or to the world.

The same with Gudrun, except that she physically revives and will carry on her life after Gerald leaves and dies alone, frozen in the snow. Her observation after the recovery of his body has striking parallels (with a sharp contrast) to Creon's in front of his son's and wife's bodies at the end of *Antigone*.

She looked at him [Loerke]. He sat crushed and frustrated for the time being, quite as emotionless and barren as herself. My God! this was a barren tragedy, barren, barren. (*WL*, pp. 475–6)

*Ōmoi moi*, this can never be removed from my guilt and assigned to any other man. It was I, it was I who killed you. I, truth to tell, *Io*, servants, lead me with all speed, lead me out of sight, a man whose existence is nothing. (*Antigone*, ll. 1317–25)

In the second quotation, Creon faces the deaths of his son and his wife as a consequence of his relentless action against Antigone. There the sense of futility is embedded in the sense of his guilt, from which he never turns his eyes away. Gudrun, after locking herself in her room and finding no tears, comes out to give an oblique glance at Loerke who is partly responsible, as if to see how he is taking it. In him, she sees her own futility of emotion as reflected on a mirror.

In *Howards End*, too, there is a parallel. Helen Schlegel, pondering on her dead lover, speaks both of her emotional futility and of her sense of guilt.

I ought to remember Leonard as my lover... I tempted him, and killed him, and it is surely the least I can do. I would like to throw out all my heart to Leonard on such an afternoon as this. But I cannot. It is no good pretending. I am forgetting him. (*HE*, p. 335)

Helen's regret falls somewhere between Gudrun's ironic nihilism and Creon's tortuous sense of loss and guilt; and, between the two, it seems less significant, more superficial. This impression becomes stronger when Margaret spares Helen from blaming herself any further, saying:

It is only that people are far more different than is pretended. All over the world men and women are worrying because they cannot develop as they are supposed to develop... Develop what you have; love your child. (*Ibid.*)

Margaret's realism and generosity to failings in human nature, while saving people from "fretting" over their emotional futility, also limits or resigns the scope for human development. Gudrun is not spared. Her emotional barrenness is too nakedly presented and realized by herself, and beneath this nakedness we can observe the fierceness of her nature which aspires to something greater than the merely human and limited.

Gudrun's sense of barrenness has another parallel in Antigone herself when she is forced to face the corruptive reality of death. For Antigone, too, the real drama ends when the clash between her and Creon ends with the sentence that she be put into her family's grave, to die or for nature to kill her, so that Creon is not directly responsible for her death. The battle which ended was, within herself, the battle between the attachment to her blood and the attachment to society—dramatized in the battle between the passion-possessed Antigone and the socially-bound Ismene. When Creon's initiative is withdrawn, the tension withers, and Antigone sees the emptiness of the blood-relationship she dedicated herself to.

And the participation of the third party, Creon's son, who strangles Antigone for her (and kills himself), is a mere contingency as far as she is concerned, which has a striking and ironic parallel in Loerke's participation in the scene of Gerald attempting to strangle Gudrun.

"A pretty little sample of the eternal triangle!" And she turned ironically away, because she knew that the fight had been between Gerald and herself, and that the presence of the third party was a mere contingency—an inevitable contingency perhaps, but a contingency none the less. (*WL*, p. 477)

The core of irony lies in Gudrun's hypersensitive awareness of, and dependence on, the more general third party—the audience for her actions—despite her claim to superior knowledge. She is always conscious of how she looks to others. Antigone, too, becomes conscious of the crowd around her (the chorus) when she finds her death deprived of its original tragic meaning, and she laments over her barren, "unwedded" life as if to plead for their sympathy. But Gudrun's consciousness of her audience, actual or imagined, is more complicated and ironic. Instead of choosing to be blind to all her other bonds and possibilities as Antigone was, she has chosen to be exposed hypersensitively to the suppressed fears and desires of herself and the people she contacts, creating the half-fictional fearless world of her superior sensitivity. However, the glamour which provokes the admiration and hatred of others depends upon those suppressed fears and desires, and thus remains always in their enclosure—another kind of limitation imposed upon itself. Though sensitive to other things, she is reluctant to see this limitation. When fears and desires are withdrawn beyond the agony into the world of death and emptiness, she is left with nothing but the ghastly, too 'ordinary' view of the people who observe the fight between Gerald and herself. Antigone's passionate action achieved, if only for a moment, independence from her social ties; therefore, even when she faces the reality of a meaningless death, on a level no higher, even lower, than ordinary people's, the grandness of her action survives. She laments the *gap* between her passion and reality. She is still able to observe, and allows her audience to observe, both her passion and reality. For Gudrun whose superior values held out only in defiance of other people's views, all meaning is gone, and she is unable to offer anything but "a pretty little sample of the eternal triangle", scorning its vulgar triviality.

The esoteric world of suggestiveness between her and Loerke no longer holds

significance, since it existed only as an inconclusive antidote to the impasse of her agonizing contact with Gerald's passions. It was an "inevitable" next step, the result of a desperate search for an escape from the maddening dead end, but the real drama ended when she lost the middle ground between her artistic intelligence and Ursula's almost-crass optimism about the unpredictability of what may come through man's and woman's natural potentialities—the only ground that might have opened another possibility for her and Gerald.

That possibility is repeatedly denied:

"Are you regretting Ursula?" he [Gerald] asked.

"No, not at all," she said. Then, in a slow mood, she asked:

"How much do you love me?"

He stiffened himself further against her. . . .

"When you first came to me, I *had* to take pity on you. —But it was never love." . . .

"Why must you repeat it so often that there is no love?" he said in a voice strangled with rage.

"Well you don't *think* you love, do you?" she asked.

He was silent with cold passion of anger.

"You don't think you *can* love me, do you?" she repeated almost with a sneer.

"No," he said. (WL, p. 442)

She might open towards him, a long while hence, in her dreams, when she was a pure spirit. But now she was not to be violated and ruined. (WL, p. 446)

"Our attempt has been a failure," she said. "But we can try again, elsewhere." . . . "Attempt at what?" he asked.

"At being lovers, I suppose," she said, a little baffled, yet so trivial she made it all seem. . . . "Do you think it has been a success?"

Again the insult of the flippant question ran through his blood like a current of fire.

"It had some of the elements of success, our relationship," he replied. "It—might have come off."

But he paused before concluding the last phrase. Even as he began the sentence, he did not believe in what he was going to say. He knew it never could have been a success. (pp. 461 – 2)

She might be going to England with Gerald, she might be going to Dresden with Loerke, she might be going to Munich, to a girl-friend she had there. Anything might come to pass on the morrow. And today was the white, snowy, iridescent threshold of all possibility.

All possibility—that was the charm to her, the lovely, iridescent, indefinite charm—pure illusion. All possibility—because death was inevitable, and *nothing* was possible but death.

She did not want things to materialise, to take any definite shape.  
(p. 468)

As soon as Gudrun declares she does “not” regret Ursula’s departure “at all”, all the possibilities inside the frame of human “love” are denied. Not only that, all the possibilities outside that frame, too, seem denied. No sooner has she told Gerald that she will leave tomorrow than the indefiniteness of her destination (just like her flippant line with Loerke) turns this denial of all possibilities upside down into “all possibilities” in her “pure illusion”, and the meaning of the word “pure” itself has changed from the second quotation (“when she was a pure spirit”) to the fourth quotation above, from sublimation to deprivation. Although this indefiniteness has an ironic resemblance to the uncertain possibilities which Ursula believes in, below the surface there is nothing in common.

The same Gudrun who bitterly cried in the opening chapter, “*Nothing materialises!* Everything withers in the bud,” (p. 8) is here *not wanting* “things to materialise”. Here is the final twist of pessimism and optimism in the novel. Gudrun’s heart which has suffered over and struggled with the futility of modern experience seems to have died, in order to cease to suffer. There is a break in her—the loss of meaning both in art and life. But it does not follow that her original suffering or Ursula’s belief in nature’s unpredictable course has lost meaning. It is this point that readers and critics, in our readiness to accept pessimism, too often fail to notice.

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