



D. H. LAWRENCE'S EXPRESSIONIST APPROACH TO TRAGEDY: AN ANALYSIS OF TOUCH AND GO

D.H. LAWRENCE'İN TRAJEDİYE DIŞAVURUMCU YAKLAŞIMI: TOUCH AND GO OYUNUNUN İNCELEMESİ

M. Ayça VURMAY

Dr. Öğr. Üyesi, Hatay Mustafa Kemal Üniversitesi,
Fen-Edebiyat Fakültesi, Batı Dilleri ve Edebiyatları Bölümü,
İngiliz Dili ve Edebiyatı Anabilim Dalı,
aycavurmaya@mku.edu.tr

Abstract

D. H. Lawrence conceives of tragedy as affirmative and criticizes the destructive or negative perception of it. To Lawrence, tragedy can be defeated through the resistant, creative will, which struggles for the regeneration of the spirit in a materialistic existence. Lawrence dramatizes the tragedy of modernism by looking at numerous types of conflict which are interwoven such as the conflict between labour and capital, generational conflict, gender conflict, the tragic condition of love, industrialism, and the tragedy of war. However, his affirmative vision of the tragic condition of modernity can be observed in each conflict. It can be argued that Lawrence offers the expressionist zeal for utopian reformation in society as a cure for modernist tragedy. The play *Touch and Go* illuminates Lawrence's reaction/resistance to tragedy in a creative, expressionist aspect. This paper argues that the play *Touch and Go* demonstrates Lawrence's idea of defiance of the "touch and go" condition of modernism and of industrialism, through expressionist resistance. The play contains the discussion and conflict between the opposite perceptions of the tragic, which Lawrence names "a mess" and "an art", the negative and the affirmative conceptions of tragedy. The conflict between the colliers and the owners is the main source of tragedy depicted in the play, which the text suggests, can be overcome through expressionist resistance. The expressionist search for a new self or order in an inhuman and confining society is central to the play. The concept of dehumanisation is treated in expressionist aspects such as the use of grotesque elements, allegorical characters and stereotypical language which reinforce the idea of the condition of industrial conflict as a muddle. Furthermore, artistic acts and elements function as an antidote to tragedy, with expressionist aspects.

Öz

D. H. Lawrence trajedi kavramına olumlu olarak yaklaşır ve yıkıcı ve olumsuz bakışı eleştirir. Lawrence trajedinin maddeci bir varoluş içinde insan ruhunun yeniden doğuşunu sağlamak için çabalayan dirençli, yaratıcı irade yoluyla üstesinden gelinebileceğini düşünür. Lawrence modernizmin trajedisini, emekle sermayenin, eskiyle yenin, cinsiyetlerin çatışması ile aşk, sanayileşme ve savaşın trajedileri gibi içiçe girmiş birçok çatışma türünü irdeleyerek dramatize eder. Ancak, her bir çatışma türünde onun modernliğin trajedisine olumlu bakışı gözlemlenebilir. Lawrence'ın toplumda ütopyacı bir reformasyon isteğini modernist trajediye bir çare olarak sunduğu öne sürülebilir. *Touch and Go* oyunu Lawrence'ın trajediye tepkisini/direncini yaratıcı ve dışavurumcu bir biçimde açıklar. Bu makale *Touch and Go* oyununun Lawrence'ın modernizmin ve sanayileşmenin "meçhul" durumuna dışavurumcu direniş yoluyla meydan okuma düşüncesini açıkladığını ileri sürer. Oyun, Lawrence'ın "karmaşa" ve "sanat" olarak adlandırdığı, olumsuz ve olumlu trajedi kavramlarını ifade eden, trajik olana zıt bakışların tartışmasını ve çatışmasını barındırır. Maden işçileriyle sahiplerinin çatışması oyunda ele alınan başlıca trajedi kaynağı olmakla birlikte, dışavurumcu direnişle üstesinden gelinebileceği metinde önerilir. İnsanlıktan yoksun ve kısıtlayıcı bir toplumda yeni bir benlik ya da düzen arayışı oyunun merkezinde yer alır. İnsanlıktan çıkma kavramı dışavurumcu bir biçimde, grotesk unsurların kullanılması, alegorik kişiler ve basmakalıp bir dil kullanımı aracılığıyla sanayi çatışmasının bir karmaşa olduğu düşüncesini pekiştirir. Oyunda, ayrıca, sanatsal eylem ve unsurlar dışavurumcu niteliğe sahip olarak, trajedinin panzehiri işlevine sahiptir.

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Introduction

D. H. Lawrence views modernist existence as a touch and go condition, which alternates between the tragic and the comic. Lawrentian drama views the tragic as a creative crisis which is affirmative, in keeping with the expressionist aim to bring about change and progress through the supremacy of the individual, creative will.

Lawrence's plays, in the expressionist vein, can be read as a drama of protest, expressing anger and angst, and a satire on the ills of industrial life, including materialism, dehumanization, distortion of human spirit, and alienation. In this respect, Lawrence's drama anticipates the "Angry" Theatre in post-war Britain. Lawrence's plays can also be compared to German expressionist drama, dealing with the theme of the regeneration of humanity through the heroic battle of the individual, creative will, with the dehumanising and materialistic forces, mainly through humanitarian ways in modernist society. The tragedy of the conflict between Labour and Capital lies at the heart of Lawrence's drama. Lawrence's conception of personal and social tragedies and conflicts in modern life is inclined towards tragicomedy in its Nietzschean or expressionist affirmation. As Draper stresses, Lawrence's idea of tragedy involves a positive and heroic creative action rather than death or defeat: "*Tragic defeat has no place in this conception. Indeed, by traditional standards it is a view that seems more heroic than tragic*" (Draper 144). Lawrence's play *Touch and Go* (1920) stages the tragedy of various interwoven conflicts, including those between colliers and mine owners, parents and children, men and women, the old and the new, and the conflict within the individual. The play deals with self-expression, the search for identity and the desire for fulfilment in a tragic existence. This paper will argue that Lawrence offers the creative, affirmative response of the expressionist for fending off the tragedy of modernist existence, which is characterized by a precarious or "touch and go" condition. Lawrence's characters struggle with opposite conceptions of tragedy, namely, the affirmative and the negative. To transcend or transform the tragedy of existence through creative action is the motto they realize through their journey. The ambivalent aspect of modernism which partakes of the comic as well as the tragic is manifest in Lawrence's tragicomic treatment of his subject matter.

Lawrence's view of tragedy and the question whether his novels can be labelled as tragic have been discussed by many critics. The studies have revealed not only the difficulty in this effort but also the ambivalence and unfinalizability of his conception of tragedy. To Raymond Williams, Lawrence's tragic vision displayed an "ambivalence" since Lawrence regards "individuality" as a means of warding off tragedy while "*a break from society*" paradoxically means "*death in the aspiration to life*" (Williams 166). Williams considers Lawrence's idea of tragedy affirmative, arguing that Lawrence locates "*the weakness of modern tragedy*" in the idea that society's influence on fate is "*irrevocable*" (Williams 151). It is evident that Lawrence does not regard society as the ultimate unconquerable antagonist. However, the

attempt to promote the individual to the detriment of the social, Williams argues, is disillusionment with both society and individual, “*a loss of belief in the whole experience of life*” (167).

Discussing whether Lawrence’s fiction can be considered tragic as well as questioning the idea of a tragic novel, Paul Dean notes both the difficulties in categorizing Lawrence’s fiction as tragic and he also emphasizes the difficulties Lawrence encountered and overcame in integrating tragedy in his novels (Dean 207-208). Dean argues that Lawrence’s “*developing*” views “*led him gradually away from a philosophy of romantic pessimism towards an affirmation of the human potential for fullness and growth*” (207), which is “*beyond tragedy*” (221).

Lawrence’s ties with Modernism are integral to his conception of tragedy, as he explores the condition of modernist existence. To Michael Bell, Lawrence is the “*repressed conscience of modernism and of its postmodern avatars*” (Bell 194) being marginalized by his contemporary modernists, particularly due to “*his commitment to the life of feeling*” (Bell 193).

Lawrence’s expressionist conception of the tragedy of modernism can be seen in *Lady Chatterly’s Lover* (1928). In the opening paragraph of the novel, the narrator demonstrates the utopian zeal of the expressionist through creative action or resistance which refuses defeat and continually struggles to create anew: “*OURS is essentially a tragic age, so we refuse to take it tragically. The cataclysm has happened, we are among the ruins, we start to build up new little habitats, to have new little hopes*” (*Lady Chatterly’s Lover* 5). The novel also highlights the affirmative aspect of Lawrence’s view in a tragic existence: “*We’ve got to live, no matter how many skies have fallen.*” (*Lady Chatterly’s Lover* 5).

The blurring of the distinctions between illusion and reality depicts the dreamlike aspect of modernist life. The meta-theatrical aspect of Modernist drama as it is evident in the idea of “the world as a stage” and “life is a dream”, is connected with the notion of the “*transitoriness of life and the shallowness of human endeavour*” (Fletcher and McFarlane 505): “*The smile was juxtaposed with the tear to produce that characteristically Modernist phenomenon, the grimace of tragicomedy*” (566). Lawrence’s drama contains meta-theatrical elements, which blur the boundaries between reality and illusion, fact and fiction. As James Moran declares, “*Touch and Go is the most metatheatrical of Lawrence’s plays, with the characters pointing to the fact that they are creating a fiction*” (Moran 6).

The connections between Lawrence's works and expressionism has been investigated by some critics. Max Wildi considers Lawrence "*an important witness*" to Expressionist art as he argues his works share "*the spiritual attitude*" of Expressionism while they are "*irrespective of form*" and "*mannerisms*" of the Expressionists (Wildi 258-259). Henry Schvey explores the expressionist elements in Lawrence's works, mainly concentrating on his paintings. Schvey identifies the similarities between Lawrence's fiction and his German Expressionist contemporaries as "*the break with realism, the concern with the elemental in man resulting in the creation of archetype, and the conception of art as visionary or religious experience whose style is marked by intensity and concentration*" (Schvey 127).

Expressionism was a modernist movement which developed in the early twentieth century, mainly connected with drama, and which was also associated with German drama. It foregrounded expression as it aimed to convey reality through the "strong", "distorted", and "modified" thoughts and feelings of the subject. The expressionists denounced materialism and objective or external reality, as they valued human "soul", "spirit" and "vision". They offered the virtue of creating reality anew rather than represent it (Brockett and Findlay 269-270). Many works of expressionism had a mystic aspect, as they were concerned with the inner spirit. Expressionism had a destructive aspect as well, since it sought to create a new society, by destroying the old, confining order. Brockett and Findlay explains the aims and aspects of Expressionism as follows:

They [The expressionists] sought a world free from war, hypocrisy, and hate, where social justice and love would reign, where the artist might express himself without constraint, where the "new man" would be free from materialistic urges and would base his life on humanitarian principles. Such was the expressionist vision. (272).

J. L. Styan summarizes German expressionist theatre as a drama of protest that championed creative will in a Nietzschean sense:

Ideologically, expressionism in the German theatre was at first a drama of protest, reacting against the pre-war authority of the family and community, the rigid lines of the social order and eventually the industrialization of society and the mechanization of life. It was a violent drama of youth against age, freedom against authority. Following Nietzsche, it glorified the individual and idealized the creative personality. (Styan 3).

Expressionist drama was concerned with the search for identity, spiritual fulfilment and regeneration in a mechanical society, mainly with the sacrificial hero/ine's victimization in an inhuman and nightmarish world (Brockett and Findlay 272). The Expressionists regarded modern bourgeois society as mechanical, sterile and devoid of soul. Hence, many expressionist plays satirized the materialistic bourgeois society through generic or allegorical characters, telegraphic or staccato language, extended monologues, dreamlike or magical scenes, and through binary opposites (272). Many expressionist plays focused on the relationship between the sexes and staged the violent and destructive relationships between men and women (273). Generational conflict is another common motif in expressionist drama as it deals with the conflict between the old and the new (274).

Expressionism attacked materialism and industrialism on the grounds that they led to dehumanisation through the "distort"ion of the human soul (Brockett 187). Motifs such as distorted human beings, puppets, robots, identical people, dehumanization or humans reduced to animals, and imprisonment in a hostile environment recur in expressionist plays. Characters in an industrialized existence, as depicted in expressionist drama, are like "*cogs in the industrial machine*" (191). The search for identity and fulfilment, therefore, is a central motif in Expressionism (187). As a reaction to repressive and materialistic society, the characters in expressionist plays harbour a utopian vision to bring about social change and "*the regeneration of man*" (187). Expressionist drama is thus considered a theatre of social protest.

Wassily Kandinsky, in "The Problem of Form" (1912), dealing with Expressionism, maintains that "The Creative Spirit" or the "Abstract Spirit" is "evolution"ary, "positive" and "creative" (Kandinsky 270-275). The binary opposites of materialism and spiritualism, and of the 19th and 20th centuries are central to Expressionism, as Kandinsky identifies the two conflicting modes as "*the disintegration of the soulless, materialistic life of the nineteenth century*" and the "*creation of the spiritual and intellectual life of the twentieth century*" and concludes that the modern era manifested "*strong, expressive and well-defined forms*" (275).

Expressionism can be defined as "*the attempt to create a visionary world, liberated from the language, values and patterns of bourgeois society, expressive of the deepest levels of the personality (Geist, variously understood), and utilizing symbols derived from the modern industrial world*" (Sheppard 279). As Sheppard states, "*The Expressionist artist inclined to see himself as a prophetic visionary who*

was called to explode conventional reality, to break through the crust that had formed around men's psyches in order to give uninhibited expression to the energies there imprisoned" (277). The "creative power of the artist" is common to the Vorticists and the Expressionists. Language in Expressionism values the "expressive" aspect over the "referential" one (278). The ambivalent aspect of Expressionist mind, Sheppard suggests, is due to the contrary elements of order and anarchy, as in the Dionysian "anarchic and self-regulating energy" in Nietzschean sense (279).

Lawrence's drama shares the Vorticists's interest in expressions, creativity, dynamism and individuality. Lawrence, like Wyndham Lewis, is opposed to the idea of "the people" and champions the individual. In his modernist manifesto of Vorticism published in the *BLAST* (1914), Lewis defines Vorticism and his view of modernism as a predominantly expressionistic movement which promotes the "energy" of life and the creative individual rather than "the People": "*We are against the glorification of "the People," as we are against snobbery. [...] Blast presents an art of Individuals*" (Lewis 291-292). Art redeems life through the creative, personal and dynamic reaction or expression.

Lawrence, like the Expressionists and the Vorticists, believe in the virtue of "creativity". In *Touch and Go*, the expressionist aim to create the new man is manifest in Gerald and Anabel's desire to become a new being (*Plays* 403).

Lawrence's idea of "A People's Theatre" can be read as an expressionist manifesto for the theatre. The theatre Lawrence pleads for is that of the individual. Lawrence's expressionist zeal can also be seen in his choice of drama as his medium, which serves his revolutionary purpose to transform society and incite action regarding the problem of industrial conflict in particular. Lawrence dealt with the industrial relationships in the north of England, specifically in Eastwood, his home-town, where he had a first-hand knowledge and experience about the conflicts and problems in the mining industry. Lawrence's activist aspect is also seen in his interest in politics and "*industrial action in the north of England to bring the war to an end*" (Schwarze and Worthen xlvi). It is evident that Lawrence was very enthusiastic and hopeful about having his play performed on stage, as he wrote to J. B. Pinker, his agent, in November 1918, "*One day it will be acted*" (in Schwarze and Worthen xlviii). His letter to Lady Cynthia Asquith demonstrates Lawrence's utopian optimism and the strong, ardent vision of the expressionist: "*I have written a play out of my deep and earnest self, fired by my last sparks of hope*

in the world, as it were, and cried out like a Balaam's ass" (in Schwarze and Worthen xlv).

Arthur Waterman examines the connections between Lawrence's plays and his other work and concludes that Lawrence's plays enable him to reorganize and reflect his ideas: "*The plays are the hedgings of the other forms. [...] Second, the plays are different because their dramatic nature demanded changes in ideas as well as form*" (Waterman 357). Referring to *Touch and Go*, Waterman argues the two main conflicts, namely, the conflict between capital and labour, and the conflict between Anabel and Gerald are interrelated, and solved through the tragic catharsis of "mutual understanding" and "creative struggle" (354-355).

The influences on Lawrence's drama, as James Moran points out, may include Shakespeare, Italian puppet drama or marionettes, Eastwood travelling theatre, eurhythmics, Chekhov, Synge, Yeats, Strindberg, Hauptmann, Maeterlinck, Ibsen, and Native American ritual (Moran 1-36). Lawrence's plays also prefigured later drama such as kitchen-sink drama, Brechtian theatre and Beckettian drama (Moran 7-13). Lawrence's drama, his portrayal of working class life and dialogue in particular, was praised by playwrights such as Sean O'Casey and George Bernard Shaw (Moran 3). One can also note connections between Lawrence's plays and Artaud's theatre, the theatre of cruelty (Moran 29-33).

Lawrence's plays can be considered experimental. As James Moran argues, his drama moves from realism to avant-gardism (Moran 9). Moran writes, "*Lawrence in fact remained aware of theatrical innovation throughout his writing career, and from his earliest dramatic work an experimentalist current was a fundamental part of his realism*" (Moran 2). Moran also observes that theatrical experiment shapes not only Lawrence's plays but his other works as well (Moran 2).

Expressionist Resistance to Tragedy in *Touch and Go*

Touch and Go was first published in 1920. Lawrence's *Preface*¹ to the play is as important as the play, since it reflects Lawrence's expressionist outlook with a view to tragedy as well as his manifesto for the theatre. The play is composed of

¹ Lawrence initially intended to publish *Touch and Go* under the series title "Plays for a People's Theatre", and stage it as the inaugural play of the "People's Theatre Society", which was established by Douglas Goldring "for the production of contemporary left-wing and revolutionary plays" (*Plays* xlix). Therefore, Lawrence wrote a special Preface to *Touch and Go* as the first play of the series in June 1919, which includes his idea of "A People's Theatre" (*Plays* l). For further information on *Touch and Go*, see the *Introduction* (Schwarze, Hans-Wilhelm and John Worthen xlv-lviii) and the *Preface* (*Plays* 361-368).

three acts. There is a parallelism between the first and the last acts. Locale is crucial to meaning in the play, which begins and ends at the market-place, which is a public space, where a man addresses a crowd of colliers. The market place is central to the relationship between colliers and mine owners and the industrial conflict. Being a dialogic locale, it mainly signifies the expressionist will which is a key to creative change necessary for overcoming social tragedy. The circularity of the opening and closing scenes also accentuates the “touch and go” or precarious aspect of the condition of labour and capital and the necessity for creative action as a solution to the tragedy of industrialism and of modernism.

Some of the characters in the play are exaggerated and grotesque figures as in expressionist drama. They are stereotypical in that they represent social types such as the collier, the owner, the union leader, which represent the conflict between men and masters, generational conflict and gender conflict. The anonymous Voice, which belongs to the crowd of miners, not only represents colliers but it also stresses and thereby criticizes the mechanical and inhuman aspects of the workers.

The tragic situation in *Touch and Go* concerns the struggle between Labour and Capital, and the strike situation. Lawrence mainly emphasizes the individual aspect of the tragic as the tragic hero must be an individual, having a “*resistant, integral soul*” (*Plays* 365). Tragedy, as Lawrence puts it, is an inner struggle rather than an external conflict since the individual figures out some urgent emotional problem creatively: “*Tragedy is the working out of some immediate passion problem, within the soul of man. [...] There must be a supreme struggle*” (365-366).

In keeping with the expressionist aim, Lawrence envisions an affirmative conception of tragedy, which is based on the reaction of the individual to their tragic plight with a strong, dedicated will and the desire to bring about reform. Lawrence’s emphasis on the creation of a “new being”, “a new life”, and the “creative” struggle is in tune with the expressionist struggle and the ideal of “the new man” and the new order, as he elaborates on it in his “Preface” to *Touch and Go*:

If we really could know what we are fighting for, if we could deeply believe in what we were fighting for, then the struggle might have dignity, beauty, satisfaction for us. If it were a profound struggle for something that we were convinced would bring us to a new freedom, a new life, then it would be a creative activity, a creative activity in

which death is a climax in the progression towards new being. And this is tragedy. (*Plays* 367).

Tragedy, in Lawrentian perspective, functions as the conscious, free and persistent expression of human spirit. In other words, tragedy is the manifestation of perseverance amidst moments of great suffering or crisis. Therefore one can claim that Lawrence offers his idea of creative or expressive tragedy as a cure for modernist crisis, which accords with the utopian desire of the expressionist. His notion of "A People's Theatre" can thus be considered a cure for modernist tragedy which cherishes the notion of human soul in opposition to dehumanising effects of modernist existence. Lawrence articulates his theory of tragedy and his notion of "a people's theatre" as a modernist manifesto in his Preface to *Touch and Go*:

The essence of tragedy, which is creative crisis, is that a man should go through with his fate, and not dodge it and go bumping into an accident. And the whole business of life, at the great critical periods of mankind, is that men should accept and be one with their tragedy. Therefore we should open our hearts. For one thing, we should have a People's Theatre. (*Plays* 368).

In his Letter to A. W. McLeod, 6 October 1912, his critique on Bennett's novel, Lawrence expresses his view of tragedy and criticizes not only Bennett but the entire corpus of modernist fiction. It is clear that Lawrence views tragedy as a reaction which is creative, expressive and affirmative. One can also note Lawrence's anger and dissatisfaction with as well as his expressionist desire to transform modern English society:

I hate Bennett's resignation. Tragedy ought really to be a great kick at misery. But *Anna of the Five Towns* seems like an acceptance - so does all the modern stuff since Flaubert. I hate it. I want to wash again quick, wash off England, the oldness and grubbiness and despair." (Lawrence, *The Selected Letters...* 47).

The idea of the modernist "vortex" and the impact of the war are also articulated by Lawrence in his *Kangaroo*. The following quotation not only demonstrates a sense of destruction, anxiety, fear and disillusionment pursuing the War but it also suggests the need to induce some drastic changes and to create, construct, to be hopeful and to be affirmative:

It was in 1915 the old world ended. In the winter of 1915-1916 the spirit of the old London collapsed; the city, in some way, perished, perished from being the heart of the world, and became a vortex of broken passions, lusts, hopes, fears, and horrors (*Kangaroo* 216).

The ways in which one resists tragedy is through transcending pessimism. In *The Birth of Tragedy* (1872), Nietzsche shuns “pessimistic tragedy” and expresses his view of an affirmative or creative tragedy through the example of Aeschylus’s Prometheus, whose double aspect of Apollonian and Dionysian elements, exhibits the “heroic urge of the individual” (Nietzsche 891). Nietzsche’s tragicomic vision regards the interplay of suffering and joy, dissonance and harmony through the creative will, as “[...] tragic myth in particular must convince us that even the ugly and disharmonious is an artistic game which the Will, in the eternal fullness of delight, plays with itself” (Nietzsche 893).

Regarding the tragedy of the conflict between Labour and Capital, Lawrence distinguishes between a tragic condition and a “disaster” or “mess” in that tragedy requires the strong, passionate, creative resistance of the individual will: “*There’s a choice between a mess and a tragedy*” (*Plays* 367). Lawrence’s reference to the conflict between labour and capital and his emphasis on the strike situation in British society through his use of expressionist devices as distortion, dehumanisation, and generic or allegorical types underlines his indictment of modern bourgeois society and illustrates his vision of resistance to tragedy, which he thinks his present society lacks. Lawrence allegorizes the lack of resistance to the tragedy of industrialism and its consequences through the binary opposites of “*that old bull-dog, the British capitalist*”, who appears to be “*all head and arrogance*” and “[*T*]hat unsatisfied mongrel, Plebs, the proletariat”, who seems to be “*all paws and grudge*” (*Plays* 366). Lawrence criticizes the mechanical or dehumanized industrial society and promotes the spiritual, human, resistant and reformative aspect of the individual as well as the society:

He [The tragic hero] may be killed but the resistant, integral soul in him is not destroyed. He goes through with his fate though death swallows him. And it is in this facing of fate, this going right through with it, that tragedy lies. Tragedy is not a disaster. It is a disaster when a cart-wheel goes over a frog, but it is not a tragedy. (*Plays* 365).

The expressionist treatment of the themes of dehumanization with the advent of industrialisation and modernism, and the critique of materialism can be seen in Lawrence's indictment of the inhumanity of bourgeois society. The plight of the miners is paralleled to a kind of slavery in the play. The miners are like cogs in the industrial machine, or Masses, stripped of their humanity, distorted and transformed into grotesque figures. In the opening scene of the play, where a man addresses a group of colliers, the condition of the colliers is likened to the slaves in the concentration camps in South Africa. Houghton criticizes the colliers for their "self-complacency" and lack of struggle for freedom, and regards their condition as dehumanizing:

What's the matter with you folks, as I've told you before, and as I shall keep on telling you every now and again, though it doesn't make a bit of difference, is that you've got no idea of freedom whatsoever. [...] You're stuck in a sort of mud of contentment, and you feel yourselves sinking, but you make no efforts to get out.

I'll tell you what'll happen to you chaps. I'll give you a little picture of what you'll be like, in the future. —Barlow and Walsalls'll make a number of compounds, such as they keep niggers in South Africa, and there you'll be kept [...] And you'll go from the compound to the pit, and from the pit back again to the compound. [...] — But you won't be men. You won't even be animals. You'll go from number one to number three thousand, a lot of numbered slaves—a new sort of slaves— (*Plays* 371-372).

The sense of dehumanization and mechanization in mining industry is further expressed through the emphasis on the anonymity of the addressee, namely the "Voice". It is as if the workers were controlled, dominated and possessed by the industry or the pits. A virtue offered in the face of tragedy is the expressionist aim to redeem one's "soul". The binary opposites of soul and skin underlines the significance of the spiritual or human aspect. As Houghton says to the colliers: "*But you'll have the soul taken out of you—every one of you. And I'd rather lose my skin than my soul, any day*" (*Plays* 372). The inhumanity of the colliers is further stressed by referring to their lack of soul. As Willie says to the colliers, "*You Barlow and Walsalls men you haven't a soul to call your own*" (*Plays* 373). The mechanical and dehumanized aspect of the colliers is accentuated through their identification with the pit, becoming a part of the machine: "*Couldn't you contrive that the pits belonged to you, instead of you belonging to the pits [...]*" (*Plays* 373). Improvement

in the colliers' condition is only possible through the expressionist struggle for change through creative ways, as Willie Houghton says to the colliers and criticizes their lack of action and thought: "*Do you stand there and ask me what about it, and haven't the sense to alter it. Couldn't you set up a proper government tomorrow, if you liked? [...] If only you'd learn to think, I'd respect you*" (Plays 373). Houghton thinks the miners are in love with their own disaster which is far from tragic since they do not exert any struggle or powerful will. Willie Houghton's words to the group of colliers recalls Lawrence's idea of the tragic as a kind of enjoyment of defeat, his treatment of tragedy in *Pansies*: "*Tragedy looks to me like man/ in love with his own defeat*" (Lawrence, *Delphi Complete Works...* 6697).

The dreamlike aspect of modern life, obscuring the distinctions between reality and illusion, is manifest in meta-theatrical elements such as the idea of life as an expression, performance or play, where people perform roles. As Oliver says to Anabel and Gerald, "*After all, we are making a scene in the market-place*" (Plays 377).

The conscious and dedicated resistance to tragedy or the attempt to triumph over tragedy which is essential to Lawrence's idea of tragedy, is emphasized through the motif of "coming back". The idea of "return" is integrated with the aim to resist tragedy in order to affirm life, which accounts for the regenerative aspect of returning back or working through as a "hope" for life. The triangular relationship involving Gerald, Anabel and Oliver, dating from their past manifests a personal tragedy, namely, the tragedy of love. This conflict involves dehumanisation and needs to be creatively resolved. "*We were a vicious triangle*" (Plays 383), Anabel says to Oliver. It is revealed that, in the present, the characters strive to overcome their tragic conflict. Anabel's return to England or home, to her old friends and family is a sign of the expressionist will. She comes back mainly to work through her tragic love relationship, that is, her conflict with Gerald. As Anabel says to Oliver, her return was her only "hope": "*I came back because my only hope in life was in coming back*" (384). The virtue of coming back as a necessity for life is further emphasized in Oliver's response to Anabel: "*if ever there is to be life-hope-then you had to come back*" (384). The expressionist notion of overcoming tragedy through creative change is observed in the conversation between Anabel and Oliver, where Anabel expresses the necessity for transforming the inhuman conflict and passion between Gerald and herself into an affirmative, new relationship: "*You don't realise how*

awful passion can be, when it never resolves, when it never becomes anything else” (382).

The reactions to individual and social conflicts are divided into affirmative and negative outlooks in the play. While Anabel, Gerald and Oliver try to compensate for their past, troubled relationship, the miners and their employers find difficulty in compromising with each other as the ending of the play reveals. Whereas Mrs Barlow's view is pessimistic and fatalistic, as she thinks there is no way out of tragedy, Oliver believes in the opposite. This belief is in accord with the idea of uncertainty or touch and go aspect of human life:

Mrs Barlow: [...] My family is born with a black fate—they all inherit it-

Oliver: I believe one is master of one's fate sometimes, Mrs Barlow.

There are moments of pure choice.

[...]

Oliver: Well, better than a blue-blooded fatalism.

Mrs Barlow: The fate is in the blood: you can't change the blood (385).

The tragic conflict between Labour and Capital, colliers and owners, as Mr Barlow, one of the representatives of Capital, states is *“a radical, if unspoken opposition between masters and men”* (Plays 394). Mr Barlow emphasizes inhuman aspect of industrial conflict: *“To my men I was an oppressor, a representative of injustice and greed. [...] But the master stands before the human being, and the condition of war overrides individuals”* (394).

Dehumanisation is manifest in both personal and social relationships in the play, which can be seen in the conflicts between Anabel and Gerald, colliers and owners, colliers and their fellow workers, and parents and children. The text reveals the need to creatively transcend dehumanization in modernist society through mutual understanding and humanity.

Tragedy is mitigated and defeated through expressionist acts of creativity in the play. Moods of gloom and joy, gravity and lightness alternate like Apollonian and Dionysian moments in the life of the characters, as they try to relieve the tragic gravity of their existence through artistic means. Human acts like "making a scene in the market place" and making "a model in clay", that is, the act of making or creating, is in keeping with the expressionistic virtue of creativity, which is an

antidote to the tragedy of modernism. The second scene of Act One is set in a studio, which is a symbol of creativity and expression. Winifred and Anabel's act of sculpting is an image of creativity. The image of touch reinforces the importance of creativity and expression, as it is a major means of human expression. In the conversation between Anabel and Winifred at the studio, Anabel's desire to have "something I can touch" and Winifred's answer "isn't it wonderful, when things are substantial" agree with the expressionist aim (*Plays* 380).

It can be argued that creative activities such as music, dance and art, serve as a tool of resisting and transcending tragedy as well as a modernist shelter in the play. Likewise, as Atayurt-Fenge puts it, the act of cooking or the kitchen "functions as a way to ease tension" (77) in Lawrence's plays as his "characters tend to take refuge in a culinary activity (either by cooking or eating) to soothe their excessive emotions" (77).

The colliery and the studio can be seen as binary opposites in the play. Sculpture, for instance, is a way of resisting tragedy in the play, as Anabel and Winifred demonstrate. The studio is the embodiment of the creative response to the tragic condition of humankind, as it is a "retreat" from suffering. It serves as a shelter from the ills of modernism, and from the war. The significance of this place, as Mr Barlow says, is a shelter beyond the world: "It [the studio] is a sanctum the world cannot invade—unlike all other sanctuaries [...]" (*Plays* 386).

Music and dance, being primary means of expression, function as ways of resisting tragedy. The cheerful, festive song and the dance enjoyed by the characters, in Act One, Scene Two, illustrates the Nietzschean creative resistance to tragedy. The scene also manifests the tragicomic aspect of modernist temperament. The song Oliver, Winifred and Anabel sing, the French folksong "Plantons La Vigne" or "Le Cycle Du Vin" (Let's Plant the Vine), which concerns the story of the cycle of wine (Schwartz 5) and the accompanying dance *vigni-vignons*, are highly Dionysian. The creative acts of music and dance result in a cathartic effect on the characters as they sing and dance, "till they are out of breath" (*Plays* 382) in a Dionysian ecstasy of life. The dance further produces an affirmative outlet for the tension between Anabel and Oliver, which dates from the past. This scene is mainly significant in showing Lawrence's tragicomic vision, that is, the double aspect of existence, comprising the tragic as well as the comic, the serious and the light, Apollonian and Dionysian simultaneously.

The gathering at Lilley Close, in Act Two, is an example of not only the coexistence of the serious and the light, bitter and sweet moments, the tragicomic mood of modernism but also the expressionist cure for tragedy. The tragedy of industrialism is alleviated temporarily through moments of creative expression such as singing and dancing. Mr Barlow, Gerald, Winifred, Anabel and Oliver converse about not only grave subjects such as tragedy, death, poverty and despair, but they also have brief moments of festivity and joy. In other words, the scene partakes of both Dionysian rapture and Apollonian sobriety. The conversation begins with an account of the history of industrialization and its effects as they relate to Lincolnshire and the Barlow family, as Mr Barlow talks about the influence of mining industry on their life, emphasizing the prosperity it brought to his family. However, he feels nostalgia for their life before the change brought about by coal industry. He also laments the absence of his two children, Bertie and Elinor. The solemn mode of the talk is followed by the contrary atmosphere of joyful dance and singing, by Mr Barlow's request. The characters first sing "Lincolnshire Poacher", which they consider "jolly" (*Plays* 390). The song is a traditional English folk song about the joys of poaching (*Lincolnshire Poacher*). The mingling of bliss and sorrow or the ghostly presence of tragedy amidst happiness is also manifest in the ambivalent reception of the song. "Lincolnshire Poacher" focuses on the joys of poaching, a primary means of financial subsistence though it was illegal. The song also expresses the wish for success for the poachers and bad luck for the game keepers. The ambivalent sense of the song is also apparent in its contrary functions as a regimental march affirming authority and a revolutionary or counteractive expression of the poverty of poachers and the economic gap between poachers and gamekeepers which is expressed through the criminal or illegal act of poaching. Thus the joyful song has the haunting dialogic overtones of misery and protest. It is remarkable that the song is replaced by Mr Barlow's account of tragedy of the battle between the colliers and the owners, masters and men through his personal experience of this conflict and the ensuing discussion by the characters on the war fought between labour and capital and the tragedy arising from this conflict, as the subject of industrial conflict has the sense of social inequality, poverty and social protest in common with the issue of poaching. The song may suggest an analogy between poachers and colliers, gamekeepers and owners, recalling the industrial strike and "the great lock-out" (*Plays* 393), a crisis in the relationships between miners and owners, Labour and Capital. The song is followed by the dance to Mozart. The coexistence of happiness and gloom can further be seen in the

equivocal reception of Mozart, as "*the saddest musician in the world*" but "*the best to dance to*" (*Plays* 391) in Winifred's words. Thus, the songs in the play have the double tones of delight and reassurance and melancholy and despair. The scene of joyful dance and singing further shades into the gloomy tone of Mr Barlow's consequent narrative of the tragic loss of his two children, Bertie and Elinor. The personal tragedy of death is further connected with the social tragedy of industrialism, "*through a terrible accident*", "*through sudden and violent death*" associated with coal mines (*Plays* 392).

Gerald Barlow is the expressionist hero who believes tragedy can be defeated. He rejects his father's surrender to tragedy and considers him "tragic", as he says to Anabel: "*But one can get beyond tragedy, beyond the state of feeling tragical, I mean*" (*Plays* 396). Gerald's desire for a new way of life is also related to his "anger" against every aspect or relationship in his existence, including his family, Anabel, Oliver, the colliers, and himself. Gerald accounts for his psychology as "indifference" and his anger as a prevalent situation. The conversation between Anabel and Gerald shows not only the expressionist motive for a new order and self but also the magnitude of dissatisfaction with present society. Gerald's anger at everything can be compared to the angry young men of the post-war British drama like Jimmy Porter in *Look Back in Anger* (1957). The conversation further emphasizes the dehumanised aspect of the love relationship between Anabel and Gerald dating from the past, which they need to compensate for and begin anew:

Anabel: [...] I feel I want a new way of life-something more dignified, more religious, if you like-anyhow, something *positive*.

[...]

Anabel: Don't you think it was time I cleared out, when you became so violent, and really dangerous, really like a madman?

Gerald: Time or not time, you went-you disappeared and left us high and dry-and I am still angry. -But I'm not only angry about that. I'm angry with the colliers, with Labour, for its lowdown impudence-and I'm angry with father for being so ill-and I'm angry with mother for looking such a hopeless thing-and I'm angry with Oliver because he thinks so much-

Anabel: And what are you angry with yourself for?

Gerald: I'm angry with myself for being myself. -I always was that. I was always a curse to myself.

[...]

Anabel: You see, Gerald, but there has to be a change. You'll have to change. (*Plays* 397-398).

The conflict between labour and capital parallels the conflict between father and son. The expressionist aim to overcome industrial tragedy is connected with the desire to resist the rule of the father. The conflict between father and son, which is a major theme in expressionist drama, is central to the play. The relationship between Gerald and Mr Barlow is almost allegorical, as Mr Barlow is referred as "Father" by his wife, underscoring the representative role of the father. Gerald, as the expressionist hero, has to defeat the old order represented by his father, and assert his own will and novel vision. The relation between father and son is reinforced through the Oedipus motif as well. As Richard Sheppard states in his article on Expressionism, "*the father symbolized all the forces of repressive and insensitive authority which had to be smashed if the son were to realize himself*" (Sheppard 277).

The industrial city is depicted as a modernist vortex. In the first scene of Act III, where Anabel and Gerald converses in front of the offices for the mining Company owned by the Barlows, which was converted from a Georgian hall, Gerald's and Anabel's remarks on the city recalls the nightmarish portrayal of London or the city in Lawrence's *Kangaroo*:

Gerald: [...] This is what happens to the stately homes of England [...] Stateliness is on its last legs.

Anabel: [...] I'm sure no age was as ugly as this, since the world began.

Gerald: [...] And I believe none has been so filthy to live in. (*Plays* 411).

Another means of resisting tragedy is expressive or authentic language, which opposes stereotypical phrases representing conventional ideas. The language used for the industrial situation and the relationships between Labour and Capital mirrors materialism and dehumanisation of society through mechanical, and obscure expressions. Gerald reacts against the ready-made language used by the people or the workers, which he considers dogmatic and inhuman. It is evident that he thinks tragic conflict between employers and workers can be transcended through meaningful, original ideas rather than preconceived phrases and views. The Labour leader, Job Arthur's speech to Gerald is infused with the repetition of

certain phrases characteristic of the workers' enmity to the employers, such as the phrase *"Every parish has its own vermin, it lies with every parish to destroy its own"* (Plays 420) and *"the obstacle to Labour is Capital"* (422). Job Arthur's ideas or discourse on the relationships between Labour and Capital are comprised of clichés rather than being original (422-423). He views the employers as a barrier or a virus thwarting the workers' prosperity. Gerald on the other hand, attacks Job Arthur on the grounds that he is *"another phrase-maker to lead the people"* (421). This conversation manifests not only submission to tragedy but also resistance and reaction to it (420-421).

The scene, where Gerald is attacked by the workers is highly expressionist in its grotesque depiction of the crowd of miners as Voice(s). Lawrence emphasizes the fear of the strike and the grotesque and inhuman consequences of the inhuman conflict between miners and employers through expressionist means:

VOICE: What's yer urry! (*Crowd sways and surges on the car. OLIVER is suddenly dragged out-GERALD stands up-he too is seized from behind-he wrestles-is torn out of his great-coat-then falls, disappears-loud cries-Hi-hoi-hoiee-all the while-the car shakes and presses uneasily.*)

VOICE: Stop the blazi' motor, somebody.

VOICE: Here y'are!-hold a minute- (*A man jumps in and stops the engine- he drops in the driver's seat.*) (Plays 424).

Tragedy is further repelled in the play through the struggle to bring about change. The utopian wish for social change as a remedy for the tragic condition of labour and capital is articulated by Gerald and Anabel, the expressionist hero and heroine. It is noteworthy that the play ends with the conflict and quarrel between the group of workers revolting against their employer, Gerald. Oliver's words to the colliers and Gerald, underline the need to construct a new order through human connection rather than a mess: *"We're all human beings after all. And why can't we try really to leave off haggling against one another, and set up, a new state of things?"* (429). Gerald's words to the inhuman Voice, namely the crowd of workers, emphasize the necessity to change the system through human means rather than savage ways:

Gerald: Yes, I'm going. - About this affair here we'll cry quits; no more said about it. - About a new way of life, a better way all round, I tell you I want it and need it as much as ever you do. I don't care about money really. But I'm never going to be bullied.

Voice: Who doesn't care about money-?

Gerald: I don't. I think we ought to be able to alter the whole system- but not by bullying, not because one lot wants what the other has got.

Voice: No, because you've got everything.

Gerald: Where's my coat? Now then, step out of the way- (*They move towards the car.*) (*Curtain*) (*Plays* 431).

The scene staging the conflict between the workers and the employer emphasizes the necessity for humanitarian ways to solve the tragedy of Labour and Capital. Lawrence makes the reader think about the tragedy of labour and capital and work out solutions in the conversation between Gerald and the workers, mainly through the open ending.

Conclusion

Having investigated various kinds of tragic conflict in Lawrence's *Touch and Go*, including the personal and the social, ranging from the tragedy of labour and capital, of love, to generational conflict, gender conflict, and the war, it is observed that the play stages a resistance to the tragedy of modernist existence through expressionist means of affirmative and creative acts. Lawrence's expressionist hero(ine)s, through creative and humanitarian ways seek fulfilment, sense of belonging, unity and harmony amidst destruction, death, misery, chaos and dehumanization. The play evinces that the tragic conflict between labour and capital can be beaten through the affirmative, creative will of the expressionist. It is revealed that expressionist acts function as a way of averting or moderating tragedy as Lawrence considers the creative will a panacea for the tragic condition of modernism.

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