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Spatial Forms as Metaphors of Characters: Study Based on the Prose of D.H. Lawrence

Spatial forms in literature are textual entities signalled by linguistic signs. Their description is never completely elaborated, which makes them discontinuous, to be specific, dependent on the reception of a reader, who is free to fill the gaps in the elliptic fragments using his/her pre-existing knowledge. (Lotman 1977, Bachtin 1982). Further, according to Ronen (1986, 422), space can be identified by means of one object that belongs to a constructed space or is part of its boundary. Although it is impossible to label literary spatial forms as real, as they are part of literary fiction, they are often modelled to reflect and resemble reality. Spencer (1971, xvii-xviii) succinctly states that the perception of space has evolved throughout history, from the linear perspective in the Renaissance to a multi-dimensional view since the introduction of Einstein's theory of relativity. Lotman's categorisation of literary spatial forms (1977, 215) mirrors the stages in the historical evolution, as it assumes that the rudimentary concepts for modelling space in literature are point, line, plane and solid. Bachtin (1982, 278) complements the three-dimensions with the fourth one, that is time. Space is also implied in movement. Lotman (1977, 215) defines various ways in which characters move, such as along a line, or in different directions on a horizontal or vertical plane. There are also characters who travel from point to point and there is no emphasis put on the journey itself. Space can also be organised according to the principle of widening circles, which assumes exceeding its boundaries by means of moving beyond. The hereby analysis has been conducted within the framework of the ideas mentioned so far. The study has been carried out on two novels authored by David Herbert Lawrence, to be specific, *The Rainbow* (1915) and *Women in Love* (1920). In this paper, it is aimed to explicate how literary spatial forms are utilised, functioning as metaphors of characters and their relationships.

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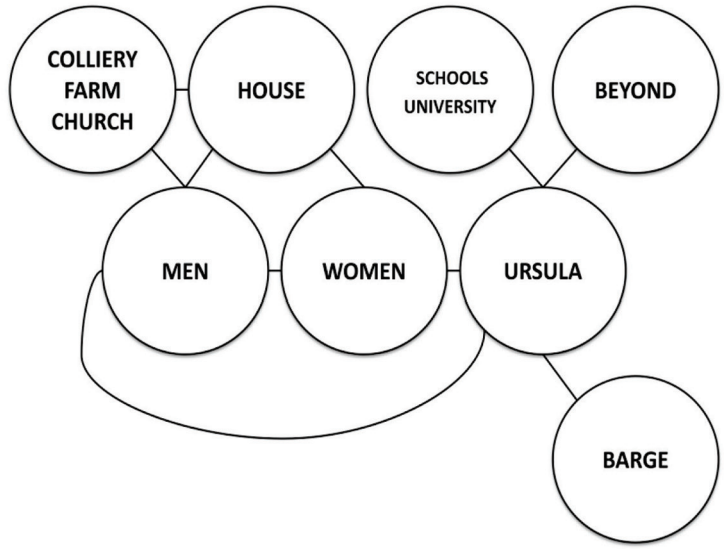


Fig. 1 Spaces/places and characters correlation pattern in *The Rainbow*.

The pattern illustrated in Fig. 1 features the correlation between spaces/places[1] and characters' worlds in *The Rainbow*. The novel describes generations of the Brangwen family, in which female characters are juxtaposed and contrasted with male ones:

> But the woman wanted another form of life than this, something that was not blood intimacy. Her house faced out from the farm buildings and fields, looked out to the road and the village with church and Hall and the world beyond. She stood to see the far-off world of cities and governments and the active scope of man, the magic land to her, where secrets were made known and desires fulfilled. She faced outwards to where men moved dominant and creative, having turned their back on the pulsing heat of creation, and with this behind them, were set out to discover what was beyond, to enlarge their scope and range and freedom; whereas the Brangwen men faced inwards to the teaming life of creation, which poured unresolved into their veins. (*The Rainbow* p. 7)

It is essential to note that "the woman" in the fragment does not refer to a single character but to all the novel's female characters. The phrase "her house" suggests that the Brangwen women, throughout generations, have been attached to the family mansion, a rule which is also confirmed by the figure of Tom Brangwen's mother, who is referred to as "centre to the house." It can also be concluded that the spatial form imposes limitation, at the same time overlooks the prospects for freedom. The fact that the Brangwen female characters are confined to the house space/place is

[1] Mitchell (1980: 544) states that the reception of space in a piece of literature heavily depends on its decoding. The very basic way of creating space in a text is the introducing of places into the presented world, for example by means of proper names of continents, regions, cities etc. However, the existence of space is also implied when it comes to characters, objects and their movement. (Spencer 1971: xviii)

complemented by the limited space where they move: "She was like walking in the Underworld,"[2] The character Lydia Lensky, in figurative terms, is moving downwards on a lateral axis. Moreover, as a result of the synonymic equivalence between Lydia Lensky and an under-surface space, the spatial form starts to function as denoting isolation and coldness. In comparison, the character Anna Brangwen, who is bound by synonymic equivalence with the family house, is moving upwards on a lateral axis:

> Anna loved the child very much, oh very much. Yet still she was not quite fulfilled. She had a slight expectant feeling, as of a door half opened. Here she was, safe and still in Cossethay. But she felt as if she were not in Cossethay at all. She was straining her eyes to something beyond. And from her Pisgah mount, which she had attained , what could she see? A faint, gleaming horizon, a long way off, and a rainbow like an archway, a shadow door with faintly coloured coping above it. Must she be moving tither? (*The Rainbow* p. 180)

The character is moving upwards, which is suggested by the phrase "her Pisagah mount, which she had attained". However, at the same time, she is not moving forward, which is linked with the notion of "not being quite fulfilled", implying the existence of a better state, than the one she finds herself in.

Juxtaposed with female characters are Brangwen men, who are parallel to the Marsh Farm. The open space of the Brangwens' farm is infringed by a church tower, which is a limitation from above: "Whenever one of the Brangwens in the fields lifted his head from his work, he saw the church – tower at Ilkeston in the empty sky. So that as he turned again to the horizontal land, he was aware of something standing above him and beyond him in the distance."[3] Moreover, the farm has been secluded from the rest of the world by a colliery:

> About 1840, a canal was constructed across the meadows of the Marsh Farm, connecting the newly-opened collieries of the Erewash Valley. A high embankment travelled along the fields to carry the canal, which passed close to the homestead, and, reaching the road, went over the bridge. So the Marsh was shut off from Ilkeston, and enclosed in the small valley bed , which ended in a bushy hill and the village of Cossethay. (*The Rainbow* p. 9)

The open space of the farm has been closed, which highlights the isolation of the character Tom Brangwen: "He felt a prisoner, sitting safe and easy and unadventurous. He might, with risk, have done more with himself"[4]. The open space of the farm has been closed not only by the colliery but also the church tower. As a result, the synonymic equivalence between Brangwen male characters and the farm has been extended to the colliery and church. The connections are also true for the character Will Brangwen: "And in the gloom and the mystery of the Church his soul lived and ran free, like some strange, underground thing, abstract"[5].

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2 In Lawrence, David Herbert. *The Rainbow*. London: Everyman Publishers plc, 1993, p. 46.

3 Ibidem, p. 5.

4 Ibidem, p. 83.

5 Ibidem, p. 147.

Synonymic equivalence has been established between male characters, the church and the colliery, which are furthermore, set together, by means of antonymic equivalence with female characters: "His passion in the cathedral at first awed her, then made her angry. After all, there was the sky outside...."[6] The church space/place is closed and opposed to the open space of the sky, which is bound by synonymic equivalence with female characters. Further, the relationships between men and women in *The Rainbow* are described by means of an under-surface space:

> After a few days, gradually she closed again, away from him, was sheathed over, impervious to him, oblivious. Then a black, bottomless despair became real to him, he knew what he had lost. He felt he had lost it for good, he knew what it was to have been in communication with her, and to be cast off again. In misery, his heart like a heavy stone, he went about unloving. (*The Rainbow* p. 51)

The phrase "bottomless despair," which clearly pertains to an under-surface space, is used to talk about the marriage between Tom Brangwen and Lydia Lensky. Generally, marriage is always described in terms of an under-surface space, which is parallel to all male characters: "She'll be married again directly. One man or another – it does not matter very much. They are all colliers."[7] The rule that there is no freedom in marriage is confirmed throughout the generations of the Brangwen family and is highlighted by the reference to the closed space of the colliery: "The next day, he was with her, as remote from the world as if the two of them were buried like a seed in darkness."[8] Within the synonymic equivalence between the characters' worlds and the closed space of the colliery, the latter starts to denote seclusion and darkness. Generally, relationships between men and women in *The Rainbow*, in the wake of their equivalence with the colliery space/place produce a variety of implications:

> She was sure to come at last, and touch him. Then he burst into flame for her, and lost himself. They looked at each other, a deep laugh at the bottom of their eyes, and he went to take of her again, wholesale, mad to revel in the exhaustible wealth of her, to bury himself in the depths of her in an inexhaustible exploration, she all the while revelling in that he revelled in her, tossed all her secrets aside and plunged to that which was secret to her as well, whilst she quivered with fear and the last anguish of delight. What did it matter who they were, whilst she quivered with fear and the last anguish of delight. The hour passed away again, there was severance between them, and rage and misery and bereavement for her, and deposition and toiling at the mill with slaves for him. But no matter. They had had their hour, and should it chime again, they were ready for it, ready to renew the game at the point where it was left off, on the edge of the outer darkness, when the secrets within the woman are game for the man, hunted doggedly, when the secrets of the woman are the man's adventure, and they both give themselves to the adventure. (*The Rainbow* pp. 56-57)

6 Ibidem, p. 187.

7 Ibidem, p. 323.

8 Ibidem, p. 134.

Words like "deep," "depths," and "bottom" are clearly related to the under-surface space, because they are directly connected with the spatial organisation of the place. However, they are, in the first place, used to describe the characters and their relationship, not the colliery. The same is with other concepts like "wealth," "exploration," "secret," "darkness," and "adventure," which can also be, through characters' worlds, ascribed to the semantic field of the colliery space/place.

So far, the notions of confinement and isolation have been highlighted by means of the concept marriage being parallel to an under-surface space, or a character being attached to a closed space and thus limited in movement. It is the character Ursula Brangwen who has been used to highlight the concept of liberation, which is shown as a process. Like other female characters, Ursula is bound by means of equivalence with the family house:

> How she leaned in her bedroom window with her black, rough hair on her shoulders, and her warm face all rapt, and gazed across at the churchyard and the little church, which was a turreted castle, whence Launcelot would ride just now, would wave to her as he rode by, his scarlet cloak passing behind the dark yew trees and between the open space: whilst she, Ah she, would remain the lonely maid high up and isolated in the tower, polishing the terrible shield, weaving it a covering with a true device, and waiting, waiting always remote and high. At which point there would be a faint scuffle on the stairs, a light-pitched whispering outside the door, and a creaking of the latch: then Billy, excited, whispering: 'It's locked – it's locked.' ... 'Mother, she won't answer,' came the yell. 'She's dead.' (*The Rainbow* p. 246)

Here, Ursula Brangwen is attached to the place of the house and is, metaphorically, up on a lateral axis, and both the facts are connected with the notions of "death" and "isolation." Later, the character Ursula becomes linked with other spaces/places, namely schools and finally university. In each case, there takes place a transformation of the type of equivalence between the character and an educational institution. First, the relationship is positive: "The big college built of stone, standing in the quiet street, with a rim of grass and lime trees all so peaceful: she felt it remote, a magic land." Next, the synonymic equivalence between Ursula Brangwen and the college transforms into antonymic one: "College was barren, cheap, a temple converted to the most vulgar petty commerce. ... Her violent hatred of the Ilkeston School was nothing compared with the sterile degradation of college."[9] When the character Ursula is leaves Ilkeston school and starts to attend Grammar School in Nottingham, the situation entails notions like escape and release. The same pattern is repeated when Ursula leaves Grammar School and enters college. Generally, synonymic equivalence between the character Ursula Brangwen and a school changes into antonymic and is followed by a synonymic connection with another educational institution.

Ursula is a character who travels from place to place, however there is no emphasis put on the journey itself:

[9] Ibidem, p. 404.

> No matter! Every hill-top was a little different, every valley was somehow new. Cossethay and her childhood with her father; the Marsh, and her grandmother and her uncles; the High School at Nottingham and Anton Skrebensky; Anton Skrebensky and the dance in the moonlight between the fires; then the time she could not think of without being blasted, Winifred Inger, and the months before becoming a school-teacher; then the horrors of Brinsley Street, lapsing into comparative peacefulness, Maggie, and Maggie's brother, whose influence she could feel in her veins, when she conjured him up; then college, and Dorothy Russell, who was now in France, then the next move into the world again! (*The Rainbow* p. 445)

The character Ursula becomes attached and detached from one character to the next. She is moving from one place to another, which is yet different than living on a barge, suggested as an alternative to her lifestyle: "I did want to see. Isn't it lovely living on a barge? asked Ursula."[10] Travelling is utilised as a metaphor of liberating oneself, which is shown in the novel as a process.

As far as Ursula's relationships with male characters are concerned, she is bound by means of synonymic equivalence with her father: "But still her heart clamoured after her father, for him to be right, in his dark, sensuous underworld."[11] Their relationship is described in terms of the under-surface space:

> He leapt and down they went. The crash of the water as they went under struck through the child's small body, with a sort of unconsciousness. But she remained fixed. And when they came up again, and when they went to the bank, and when they sat on the grass side by side, he laughed and said it was fine. And the dark-dilated eyes of the child looked at him wonderingly, darkly, wondering from the stock, yet reserved and unfathomable, so he laughed almost with a sob. In a moment she was clinging safely on his back again, and he was swimming in deep water. She was used to his nakedness, and to her mother's nakedness, ever since she was born. They were clinging to each other, and making up to each other for the strange blow that had been struck at them. Yet still, on other days, he would leap again with her from the bridge, daringly almost wickedly. Till at length, as he leapt, once, she dropped forward on to his head, and nearly broke his neck, so that they fell into the water in a heap, and fought for a few moments with death. He saved her, and sat on the bank, quivering. But his eyes were full of the blackness of death, it was as if death had cut between their lives and separated them. (*The Rainbow* p. 208)

Meanings which are originally ascribed to the bond between Ursula and her father are transferred onto the semantic field of the under-surface space and there are created implications like under-surface stands for darkness, death and unconsciousness. Similarly, the relationship between Ursula and Anton Skrebensky is described in terms of an under-surface space: "His hand was so wonderful, intent as a living creature skilfully pushing and manipulating in the dark underworld, removing her glove and laying bare her palm, her fingers."[12] Since marriage has been parallel to the idea

[10] Ibidem, p. 289.

[11] Ibidem, p. 202.

[12] Ibidem, p. 275.

of confinement, the fact that Ursula Brangwen refuses to marry Anton Skrebensky can be interpreted as a sort freedom. Moreover, in the novel there has been suggested another way to highlight Ursula's liberation:

> Repeatedly, in an ache of utter weariness she repeated: 'I have no father nor mother nor lover, I have no allocated place in the world of things, I do not belong to Beldover nor to Nottigham nor to England nor to this world, they none of them exist, I am trammelled and entangled in them , but they are all unreal. I must break out of it, like a nut from its shell which is an unreality.' (*The Rainbow* p. 457)

The character Ursula Brangwen would be ultimately liberated if her world was detached from all the other characters and spaces/places in the novel. It is presumed, however not clearly stated, that in this kind of situation the character would be able to move unrestrained in all directions. Ursula's movement will be better defined in the sequel to *The Rainbow*:

> This was a whole life! Sometimes she had periods of tight horror, when it seemed to her that life would pass away and be gone, without having been more than this,. But she never really accepted it. Her spirit was active, her life like shoot that is growing steadily, but which has not yet come above the ground. (*Women in Love* p. 68)

The fragment provides information about the shape of the under-surface space, namely a lateral line over which there is a plane where the character could move unrestrained in all directions. In *Women in Love*, it has been clearly stated that the character Ursula Brangwen is moving upwards to get out from the under-surface space, which, in figurative terms, highlights her liberation.

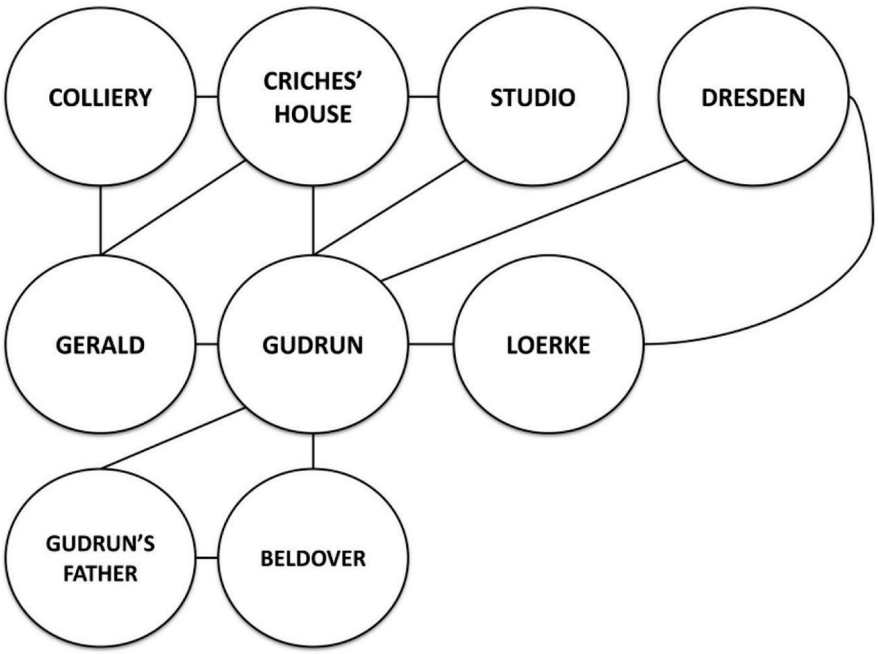


Fig. 2 A spaces/places and characters correlation pattern from *Women in Love*.

Fig. 2 features an extract from the characters and spaces/places correlation pattern in the novel *Women in Love*, in which the protagonist Gudrun Brangwen is intially bound with the father's house: "I think my coming back home was just *reculer pour mieux sauter*."[13] The French expression, which could be translated into English as 'to run back in order to give a better jump forwards,' reveals the trajectory on which Gudrun has been moving, namely the character has come back to a point where has already been. The house is located in Beldover, a colliery town, which occupies a closed under-surface space:

> The two girls were soon walking swiftly down the main road of Beldover, a wide street, part shops, part dwelling houses, utterly formless and sordid, without poverty. Gudrun, new from her life in Chelsea and Sussex, shrank cruelly from this amorphous ugliness of a small colliery town in the Midlands. ... 'It is like a country in an underworld,' said Gudrun. (*Women in Love* pp. 23-24)

The colliery town is described as 'formless,' 'sordid,' and 'amorphous,' qualities which will be later used to describe other spaces/places or characters. Moreover, the under-surface space is also associated with characters moving downwards:

> Turning, they passed down the high road, that went between high banks towards the church. There in the lowest bend of the road, low under the trees, stood a little group of expectant people, waiting to see the wedding. The daughter of the chief mine-owner district, Thomas Crich, was getting married to a naval officer. (*Women in Love* p. 25)

To witness 'the chief mine-owner Thomas Crich' getting married, Ursula and Gudrun are moving downwards, which is expressed by phrases like "down the high road," "in the lowest bend of the road," and "low under the trees." Furthermore, the character Gudrun is associated with another movement, namely from one point in space to another, as she is first attached to the space/place of the family house, then she becomes attached to the space/place of the Criches' house, which was, at first, described in positive terms: "the house had a charm of its own."[14] The Criches' house is shown as occupying a peaceful, natural space imitating openness, however, in the background, there is a colliery, which constitutes a certain boundary. The synonymic equivalence between Gudrun and Criches' house is transformed into an antonymic one, which results in the fact that Gudrun becomes detached from the place and finds shelter in the nearby studio:

> She and Gudrun resumed work as usual in the isolation of the studio, and this seemed immeasurable happiness, a pure world of freedom, after the aimlessness and misery of the house. Gudrun stayed on till evening. She and Winfred had dinner brought up to the studio, where they ate in freedom, away from all the people in the house. (*Women in Love* p. 383)

Like the character Ursula in *The Rainbow*, Gudrun is moving from one point to another, however there is no emphasis put on the journey itself. Generally, synonymic

[13] In Lawrence, David Herbert. *Women in Love*. London, New York, Ringwood, Victoria, Toronto, Ontario, Auckland, Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin books, 1996, p. 19.

[14] Ibidem, p. 37.

equivalence between the character and the house changes into antonymic and is followed by a synonymic connection with another place.

Gudrun's equivalence with Criches' house is accompanied by her relationship with Gerald Crich, who is directly connected with an undersurface-space: "He discovered at last a real adventure in the coal-mines."[15] The connection between Gerald and the colliery creates the implication colliery denotes adventure. Moreover, his relationship with Gudrun is described by means of the attributes originally related to the colliery:

> Blind to her, thinking only of himself, he slipped his arm softly round her waist, and drew her to him. Her heart fainted, feeling herself taken. But then, his arm was so strong, she quailed under his powerful close grasp. She died a little death, and was drawn against him as they walked down the stormy darkness. ... But he and she were walking in perfect isolated darkness, outside the world. (*Women in Love* pp. 375-376)

Concepts initially ascribed to an under-surface space like power, darkness, and death are used to talk about Gerald and Gudrun's relationship. Their potential marriage is described by means of an under-surface space and related meanings:

> Marriage was like a doom to him. He was willing to condemn himself in marriage, to become like a convict condemned to the mines of the underworld, living no life in the sun, but having a dreadful subterranean activity. He was willing to accept this. And marriage was the seal of his condemnation. He was willing to be sealed thus in the underworld, like a soul damned but living for ever in damnation. But he would not make any pure relationship with Gudrun. It was a committing of himself into a relationship with Gudrun. (*Women in Love* p. 402)

Even from Gerald's point of view, marrying Gudrun is connected with the concept death suggested by the phrase "living no life" and the notion isolation, implied by the words "be sealed in the underworld." The situation changes when a new element is added to the total characters-spaces/places correlation pattern, namely the character Loerke, with whom Gudrun becomes bound on synonymic terms: "It was curious what a sense of elation and freedom Gudrun found in this communication. She felt established forever"[16].

Along with the change in the relationships between Gudrun and Gerlad: "She raised her clenched hand high, and brought it down, with a great downward stroke on to the face and on to the breast of Gerald.,"[17] the new situation is reflected by means of the metaphorical usage of the spatial forms. Gudrun has been detached from Gerald and under-surface spaces and she is free to be moved further:

> 'I mean one needn't go where one's ticket says.' That struck him. One might take a ticket , so as not to travel to the destination it indicated. One might break off,

15 Ibidem, p. 256.

16 Ibidem, p. 506.

17 Ibidem, pp. 531-532.

> and avoid the destination. A point located. That was an idea! ... 'You won't tell me where you will go? he asked. 'Really and truly,' she said, 'I don't know. It depends which way the wind blows.' (*Women in Love* p. 530)

The above fragment, which is about Gudrun, describes a situation in which a literary character does not move from place to place but can move "which way the wind blows," so in any direction on a flat surface. Similarly, in another fragment the character Gudrun is attributed with the idea of "going into nowhere," which could be interpreted as ultimate freedom due to not being attached to any place/space: "That's the place to get to – nowhere. One wants to wander away from the world's somewhere, into our own nowhere."[18] The idea of 'Gudrun going into nowhere' from the above fragment is similar to 'Paul in nothingness' in *Sons and Lovers* and 'Ursula allocated to no place' in *The Rainbow*. These situations are abstract, however well reflect the notion of ultimate liberation. In the end, Gudrun with Loerke move to another point in space, namely Dresden, which has not been described as parallel to an under-surface space.

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To conclude, literary spatial forms constitute metaphors explicating certain characters and their relationships. As a result of the correlation, spaces start to bear metaphorical meanings, for example closed, under-surface ones, in the context of female characters, become ascribed with such notions as confinement, death, social misery, darkness, weakness, independence. However, in relation to male characters, they can carry exactly opposite meanings, like freedom, life, social well-being, light, power, dependence, sub-consciousness, adventure, mystery, exploration. The concept freedom is metaphorically expressed by means of the characters unlimited moving in any direction. Absolute liberation has been defined as the characters breaking free of all spatial forms with which they had been associated before.[19]

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[18] Ibidem, p. 360.

[19] Vide: Cierach, Bartosz. Under-surface Spaces in the Context of Self-liberation: Study Based on the prose of D.H. Lawrence. In Paweł Schreiber, Joanna Malicka, Jakub Lipski (eds.) "The Central and the Peripheral Studies in Literature and Culture", Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2013.

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Abstract

The paper presents the results of the study conducted on two novels authored by David Herbert Lawrence, to be specific, *The Rainbow* and *Women in Love*. The paper shows the correlation between characters and literary spatial forms, which prove to be equivalent, on either synonymic or antonymic terms. As a result of the connections there emerge metaphorical meanings, which are transferred from the spaces onto the characters. The main set of meanings drawn from spatial forms and further defining the characters in the novels could be generally categorised as revolving around the concept freedom.

Keywords: spatial forms, metaphor, Lawrence, equivalence.