

The Rainbow

By drs. J.A.Goris

'I love and adore this new book,' Lawrence wrote in a letter to Edward Garnett, his early mentor, in March 1913. 'I think it is great - so new, so really a stratum deeper than I think anybody has ever gone, in a novel ... It is all analytical - quite unlike *Sons and Lovers*, not a bit visualised'¹. Though he wrote this in the first month of its composition, Lawrence's intention for *The Rainbow* was clear from the start. It was to be a novel unlike the three he had written before. For this novel he would not draw from personal experience, as he did basically for both *Sons and Lovers* and *The White Peacock*, or from the experience of a friend, as *The Trespasser* derived from Helen Corke's affair. It would be concerned with the way in which modern English society had reached its contemporary state, and present a new departure for the form of the novel itself. Lawrence took nothing less than the evolution of man as his theme. It shocked him profoundly when *The Rainbow* was published in 1915 that it met with a disapproving reception and eventual banning on account of its supposed obscenity.

Lawrence conceived *The Rainbow* and *Women in Love* as one novel. Initially he intended calling this work *The Sisters* and subsequently he referred to it as *The Wedding Ring*. It was a particularly suitable title as the central subject of the book was to be the way in which a complete being might be realized, perfectly in union with a chosen partner and at one with a united society. The ring has traditionally been a symbol of union and perfection; in thinking of *The Wedding Ring* as a title for his new work Lawrence intimated his wish to write a novel about the potential perfectibility of man. The central figure was the girl Ursula: restless and intelligent and in search of a suitable partner, whom she was to find in Birkin. However, there was a need to provide the main character with some experience of life before she met him, and the material went through various stages of rehandling. The first stage of the book not only portrayed Ursula's development from girl to woman, but also produced a whole background of social history stretching back to well before her birth: the history of the Brangwen family. As Lawrence worked further on the novel he felt he could no longer sustain his vision in a single book. He thus split it into *The Rainbow* and *Women in Love*.

The structure of *Women in Love* is quite different from *The Rainbow*, which is basically a saga novel, with actions narrated developmentally in a sequence. However, it is

¹ See endnote vii, p.14

quite unlike contemporary saga novels such as John Galsworthy's *The Forsyte Saga* (1906-1921) or Arnold Bennett's *Clayhanger* (1910-1916) and it creates its own genre within English fiction. The links are with Norse sagas, with the Bible and with *Paradise Lost*, but the book is not seriously comparable with these: names and symbols allude to other literatures, some of the language sounds Hebraic, but Lawrence mainly uses his own imagination to express his vision. The novel spans three generations of the Brangwen family and proceeds in three parts: the life of Tom Brangwen, the marriage of his step-daughter Anna to her cousin Will, and the struggle of their daughter Ursula to find her place in the world. The story opens with a picture of the early Brangwens (p.523 ff.); the language goes back in style daringly to mediaeval alliterative verse. Close to nature, 'feeling the pulse and body of the soil' and with a look in their eyes as if they are expecting something unknown, the Brangwens are portrayed as healthy, 'fresh, blond, slow-speaking' people, hardworking and thrifty, living on rich land, on their own land, near a growing town. It is not for the money that they work, but 'because of the life that was in them.' This holds good for both men and women, who work the land together; however, the women are 'different': like Eve, their prototype, the early Brangwen women are not content with their settled existence. They want more out of life, they are not quite satisfied with the 'heated, blind intercourse of farm-life' and crave to achieve, if not for themselves, then for the children, a higher being, 'like that of the vicar', who impersonates the superiority of education and experience.

Tom Brangwen is the youngest son of Alfred Brangwen and his wife, 'a woman from Heanor', presented as two very separate beings, but vitally connected. They have four sons and two daughters; Tom is the last child and considerably younger than his brothers, and therefore his early years are influenced largely by his sisters (p.530 ff.). He is a delicate lad, sensitive to the atmosphere around him, 'in feeling he was developed', generous and honest, but with a low opinion of himself. Refined in instinct, easily confused, he is unlike other boys; he is 'a hopeless duffer at learning' and hates 'the mechanical stupidity' of most of the other children at school. Not surprisingly, seen in the light of female ambitions in the local women, it is because of his mother's aspirations that he is sent to the Grammar School at Derby; Tom's father would have given way to his dislike of mental activities.

Growing up, Tom feels awkward about sexuality, like Paul Morel of *Sons and Lovers*. When, at nineteen, he is seduced by a prostitute, his world is upset by a startled tumult of emotions: fear, shame, anger and disappointment. Until then he has only known the refined type of woman, like his mother and sisters (p.531):

In the close intimacy of the farm kitchen, the woman occupied the supreme position. The men deferred to her in the house, on all household points, on all points of morality and behaviour. The woman was the symbol for that further life which comprised religion and love and morality. The men placed in her hands their own conscience, they said to her 'Be my conscience-keeper, be the angel at the doorway guarding my outgoing and my incoming.'..... Now when Tom Brangwen, at nineteen, a youth fresh like a plant, rooted in his mother and his sister, found that he had lain with a prostitute woman in a common public house, he was very much startled. For him there was until that time only one kind of woman - his mother and his sister.

He realizes that the 'loose' woman, with whom he can have sex out of 'inflamed necessity' cannot fulfil his life; he despises the 'paucity of experience'. To the respectable girls he courts he has inhibitions, 'he was incapable of pushing the desired development', he cannot think about them 'like that' (p.532). In Lawrence's days the attitude towards sexuality was still very much Victorian; in *The Rainbow* this gradually changes. Tom's thoughts get a new impulse when he meets 'the girl and the foreigner' (p.534 ff.). Their world of 'exquisite grace' and an entirely different attitude to women holds a promise of new, unknown experiences. In his heart Tom has a desire to reach beyond the secluded world of the Marsh, which is intensified by these strangers; 'they had set fire to the homestead of his nature', but he does not know how. Like earlier male characters in Lawrence's work, he seeks solace in alcohol, until he sees his yearning for new horizons fulfilled in the encounter with a foreign woman: 'her face was pale and clear... he saw her face clearly, as if by a light in the air'. It is the widow of the Polish doctor Lensky he happens to meet, and who strikes home to him (p.538 ff.): "'That's her," he said involuntarily ... It was coming, he knew, his fate.' She is a foreigner, full of the promise of the unknown, and different from any woman he knows. However, Lydia sees Tom as 'this strange man' (p.544), who has nothing to do with her; yet there is an invisible connection. Tom admires her as 'curiously self-sufficient' and realizes that 'with her, he would be real': she is to be his complement, his expansion.

His marriage proposal is presented as 'curiously matter-of-fact and level', Tom bluntly asserting the purpose of his visit: 'I came up to ask if you'd marry me. You are free, aren't you?' (p.548). Her response is distant, impersonal, wavering between yes and no at first, 'she had flinched from his advance, she had no will, no being.' Still, a passionate intensity draws them together in an embrace, however ambiguously: 'in his blue eyes, was something of himself concentrated. And in her eyes was a little smile upon a black void.' Their relationship is a struggle; at times there is a distant silence, then again a passionate connection. Lydia had become a passive person during her first marriage in Poland (p.553 ff.), always in her

husband's shadow, following him 'as if drugged'. After their two children had died a darkness came over her and once in England, the aloofness of her new surroundings fitted her mood, and she saw the English people as 'potent, cold, slightly hostile'. Only memories of her youth and forces of the Yorkshire nature are strong enough to revive her desire to live. She easily shrinks away from life, back into her darkness, where she remains for a long while 'blotted safely away from living'. Tom can restore Lydia to life, he is the man 'who had come nearest to her for her awakening', but he is uncertain and she easily slips back into her 'old unconsciousness and indifference' (p.557):

She remained attentive and instinctively expectant before him, unfolded, ready to receive him. He could not act, because of self-fear and because of his conception of honour towards her. So he remained in a state of chaos. And 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 unliving.

With their marriage a fact, things change for Lydia; she is 'not afraid'. Now that she has accepted him, she wants to take him; 'she belonged altogether to the hour, now.' 'No future, no past, only this, her hour' (p.558).

Tom is an insecure person, terrified of losing her. He realizes that they belong together in marriage, but the fact that she is still a stranger to him presents a threat: 'How could he close his arms round all this darkness and hold it to his breast and give himself to it?' He had hoped to possess her, feel 'her master', but she 'belonged elsewhere', and the marriage is 'not a real marriage'. The distance between them is intensified when she talks about her childhood, which makes him feel insecure, as if he has nothing to do with her. Then he sees her as 'cold' and only caring about herself, and grows into a 'raging fury' against her. It irritates Lydia that he cannot simply accept her as a person in her own right, which causes her to lapse into a 'sombre exclusion'. They both walk about for days, he stiff with resistance, she brooding and depressed. Communication is restored not by intellectual reasoning or 'having it out', but through their vital, intuitively sensuous bond. 'Out of nowhere' there is a connection again between them, brought about by the flame of sexuality, and it no longer matters if they know each other or not. They are 'ready to renew the game at the point where it was left off', and they 'both give themselves to the adventure'; the world is created afresh (p.562).

Lydia's pregnancy is a particularly difficult time. She becomes more inward and no longer responds to her husband; he interprets this as the annulment of his existence. Once the

child is born he has feelings of jealousy because it absorbs Lydia's attention, and he realizes he has to find 'other things than her, other centres of living' (p.576). His great and chief source of solace is Lydia's daughter Anna, the child from her first marriage, and he shows a profound, genuine fatherly love for her. It is through the birth of Tom's own son that he comes to understand the strong and vital bond he has with Lydia: 'fundamental, he was with his wife in labour, the child was being brought forth out of their one flesh' (p.570). It is the natural tie of their joint creation of a new life: 'On her the blows fell, but the quiver ran through him, to his last fibre.' He sees how man and woman are destined by nature to be separate yet one: 'their flesh was one rock from which the life gushed, out of her who was smitten and rent, from him who quivered and yielded.' This insight makes him accept her 'otherness' as something 'impersonal', weakening the threat to his own being: 'his heart in torture was at peace'; they are separate in togetherness (p.575).

Their marriage has its ups and downs, but ultimately it is happy and stable. In Tom and Lydia's union Lawrence shows how conflicts between partners may be resolved and bring about a closer harmony. Always recurring is the 'perpetual wonder of the transfiguration' through the couple's ability to restore a vital and unspoken connection. As Niven puts it ²: 'Tom and Lydia live in struggle with each other but their marriage is ultimately a success in Lawrence's scheme, for it entails a creative kind of self-questioning and a constant move forward.' Tom retains his unrest at not having more challenges in life: 'he might, with risk, have done more with himself' (p.582); he remains 'a prisoner, sitting safe and easy and unadventurous', shrinking back from the unknown. And Lydia has to accept the limitations of being a farmer's wife at the Marsh, putting aside aspirations she had when she was young. Yet, in spite of the various imperfections of their lives both partners are content. Tom's wedding speech about angels expresses the sense of fulfillment he has in his own marriage. And after Tom's death Lydia looks back on her married life in gratitude. She feels that in her union with Tom she 'had come to her own self', whereas in her first marriage to Lensky she 'had not existed, except through him' (p.697).

Anna's childhood is happy enough in the safety of her parents' marriage (576 ff.). In Tom she has a loving and devoted father, and the somewhat anxious and tight bond with her mother is eased after the birth of her brother. Her soul is at peace; 'Gradually the child was freed'. She is her father's companion, and goes with him to cattle markets and the corn exchange. A free and assertive girl, she hates authority and does not care much for other

² See endnote ii, p.47

people. In her view they are part of a herd, 'they're bagatelle', she says. She has no friends and mistrusts intimacy, 'she hated people who came too near to her', for what she needs is a person with 'a real, separate being'. Her ideal is to be a proud lady, 'absolved from the petty ties' she sees around her (p.589). When she is eighteen there is a letter from Mrs Alfred Brangwen, Tom's sister-in-law from Nottingham, who is sending her son William over to Ilkeston to become an apprentice in a lace factory (p.593 ff.). William Brangwen, aged twenty, is a 'rather long, thin youth with a bright face' and a 'curious self-possession among his shyness, a native unawareness of what other people might be, since he was himself': by no means 'bagatelle' in Anna's view. Even though she feels antagonistic at first, she is taken by him: 'She loved the running flame that coursed through her as she listened to him' (p.597). There is 'something of the cavalier' about Will Brangwen; Anna is thrilled by his knowledge of church architecture: 'he talked of Gothic and Renaissance and Perpendicular', a refined world of taste and knowledge. He is so unlike the Brangwens she is used to, so unlike Tom, who, in his fixed manners, 'stood like a rock between her and the world'. Anna discovers a new independence, she wants to live beyond the old familiar world. The change in her causes her parents to feel irritated; Tom especially has difficulty letting her go, hanging on to his 'creative life with the girl', onto whom he has projected his own dreams. Lydia rejects her daughter's longing for a greater world; she dislikes seeing her 'so much under the spell' (p.598). Anna is growing up in modern times, and Lydia does not want her to be swept off her feet by the temptations of their changing society, which offers more possibilities, but also more confusion. As we will see, Anna's life is by no means happier or more fulfilled than that of the older generation.

The courtship of Anna and Will proceeds cautiously: 'they very rarely touched each other ... there was still a distance between them' (p.599). Frank Glover Smith, lecturer in the School of English and American Studies at the University of Sussex, describes how Lawrence subtly links the personal and the mythic realms by Will's carving of Eve and angels as his expressive response to Anna¹:

Will's role becomes mythic, that of unfallen Adam, a Son of God; Anna's is Eve, representing the Daughters of Men. The Biblical legend (Genesis, 6) becomes a major trope in the narrative - central and explicit in Ursula's story - crystallising the sacramental sense of the bond between man and woman.

The often quoted 'sheaves scene' (p.604) shows in symbolic qualities how in the reaped field the young lovers delight in their play of forming corn-stooks, turning it to love-play, sexual pursuit and capture. It is the prelude to Will and Anna's wedding, on a sunny Christmas day at the Marsh. In their love Anna is the more outgoing partner: "I love you, Will, I love you," she moaned, "I love you, Will." Will is more passive: 'He held her as though they were one, and was silent' (p.601). Further vital differences in nature become apparent during their honeymoon (p.618 ff.). Anna can give herself completely to their intimacy, to the idea that 'they were the only inhabitants of the visible earth' and 'a law unto themselves'. Will's mind is burdened with thoughts of his duties in the outside world: 'Wasn't there some duty outside, calling him and he did not come?' He spoils his happiness about their complete union by neurotic guilt about some supposed duty: 'The world was there, after all ... Was the morning gone, and he had lain with blinds drawn, let it pass by unnoticed?' Obsessively pining his mind, he tries to take Anna's example of a more relaxed attitude towards life (p.620):

If he had lost this day of his life, he had lost it. He gave it up. He was not going to count his losses. *She* did not care. *She* didn't care in the least. Then why should he? Should he be behind her in recklessness and independence? She was superb in her indifference. He wanted to be like her.

But the fact is he is not 'like her'; he is not, like Anna in natural harmony with inner feelings, but rigidly aware of law and order, having 'an orderly, conventional mind' (p.620 ff.). Even in their extreme happiness, both 'very glowing' like an open flower, it troubles Will that the established rules of things are gone: 'One ought to get up in the morning and wash oneself and be a decent social being.' When Anna is content and ready to enjoy her return to everyday life, ready 'to give a tea-party', the tables are turned: Will wants nothing to do with it. In his lack of flexibility he now needs to cling to the reversal of order: 'he wanted to have done with the outside world', wants to declare it 'finished forever'. He cannot accept Anna's freely indulging in whatever comes into her head, what he calls 'shallow anticipation and joy': 'Was she not forfeiting the reality, the one reality, for all that was shallow and worthless?' Petty jealousy prevents him from enjoying their social life together; the fact that Anna prefers having 'other artificial women to tea; when she might have been perfect with him' is a burden on his mind.

It drives a wedge between them and spoils their happiness; Will and Anna become opposites (p.631 ff.): 'dread, and desire for her to stay with him, and shame at his own dependence on her drove him to anger.' Driven into a state of angry helplessness, almost of 'imbecility', he wanders about the house aimlessly. His 'hovering near her and wanting her

nearness' like a child tied to his mother's apron strings irritates Anna 'beyond bearing' and the wonder of their union is passing away. She tells him off with 'blind and destructive fury', while in him, 'dark storms' arise: 'he seemed a dark, almost evil thing, pursuing her, hanging on to her, burdening her; their relationship becomes destructive. Anna feels her old, anguished, childish desolation return when he ignores her attempt at reconciliation and can hardly control her grief over what she has lost. The 'perfume of love' of their honeymoon has very quickly turned into hatred: 'How she hated to hear him! How he hated her! How his hatred was like blows upon her!'

Anna has come to scorn her husband's 'blind attachments' to religious belief; she herself wants religion to be meaningful to her spiritual development, to find connections with her own individual values so that she can grow. Will shows a mystic, almost sect-like dotting on the Church and adherence to the religious rule of 'doing one's best'. He never integrates Christian beliefs with his life: he has 'two worlds', the weekday world of daily work and the Sunday world of the Church. Anna and he cannot share spiritual experiences and growth, and she uses this to attack him without mercy: 'she jeered at his soul' (p.637 ff.). She feels superior to him in her egocentric attitude to life, 'fulfilled and separate and sufficient in her half of the world', a thing he finds very hard to accept. He 'went on trying to steer the ship of their dual life', demanding to be the captain, forcing his will upon her. However, Anna is not small like a doll, not like 'a little marionette', and she does not stoop to the arrogance of men, to the Adam being 'as big as God'. Appropriately, the chapter is called 'Anna Victrix'. In their battle of wills she is getting her own back at him, asserting her power by her moonlight dance, dancing 'his nullification'. She becomes a Magna Mater, big with child, denying the male his right to be there, 'she felt his presence a violation.' There is no shared joy, no room for the father of the child. Will is not 'nullified', but develops a personality in its own right, away from her. He is forced to grow up, unsupported. His process to come to an 'absolute self' is described in psychoanalytical terms in his self-questioning (p.648 ff.): 'Why, if Anna left him ever for a week, did he seem to be clinging like a madman to the edge of reality?' Lawrence portrays him as the child that never really grew up: 'In his soul, he was desolate as a child, he was so helpless. Like a child on its mother he depended on her for his living'. He gains an insight in himself, sees his limitations; he realizes a grown-up man must be able to be alone and make choices in society. This insight leads to change: 'He was born for a second time, born at last unto himself', leaving his old self behind. He now has a separate identity and is able to exist alone, but he is at a loss, unable to find answers in his life: 'And what more? ...What did he live for, then?' He seems to have gained little and lost much. Anna, looking

from her Pisgah Mountain beyond Cossethay like Moses at the Promised Land, like Lydia would have liked and like Ursula will do successfully, sees a rainbow that holds the promise of a new life, but only a faintly coloured one. She will not find meaning in this new world, and not have a happy marriage like that of her parents; all she can do is leave this to the next generation, and seek refuge in motherhood, like Lettie in *The White Peacock*.

In *Sons and Lovers* Lawrence introduced the idea of a more 'detached' love in Paul's unsatisfactory and short-lived relationship with Clara, basically a case history of the 'sexual problem' in a 'modern' relationship. In *The Rainbow* Will and Anna are negative examples of a marriage between such 'separate beings'. In the Cathedral Chapter that follows (p.655 ff.) their marriage develops into a hard and sexually cold union. The aristocracy of the Skrebenskys make Anna 'aware of another, freer element, in which each person was detached and isolated. Was not this her natural element? Was not the close Brangwen life stifling her?' (p.657). She wants her own life and thinks the 'intrinsic being' of Skrebensky would leave her more room for this than Will's insufficient personality. She becomes hard and destructive. She hardens towards her husband and is drawn to the Baron's 'hard', 'deathlike', 'cruel' traits. The couple's drifting more and more into separate worlds is further stressed during their visit to the cathedral. Anna, like Will, is 'overcome with wonder and awe' but they are unable to share their feelings (p.658 ff.). Again Anna's ruthlessness gets the upper hand; she becomes 'the serpent in his Eden'. Her husband's religious adoration annoys her and she wants to destroy what is dearest to him, which hurts him deeply: 'his soul was wretched and homeless'. Lawrence modelled Anna as a destructive female on Sue Bridehead from Hardy's *Jude the Obscure*, and will continue his exploration with Gudrun in *Women in Love*. We will see how Gudrun's relationship with Gerald becomes downright sadistic, and in Anna and Will's marriage the reader is given a preview of their hard and unfeeling union. Will experiences 'maddening sensuous lust for discovery' of his wife, which sets 'another man' free in him (p.683), 'he was the sensual male seeking his pleasure, she was the female ready to take hers: but in her own way' (p.681). Both turn into 'free lance' partners, not adhering to the moral world, and eventually self-centred parents, no longer guiding their children but 'absorbed in their own living' (p.683). Will's voluptuous attack of the girl Jennie triggers off his developing sadistic traits, which will eventually turn out to be destructive to his daughter.

They call their first child Ursula, after a saint. As a toddler Ursula is a busy child, always amusing herself, needing little attention from others. She is the centre of her father's life. Will is fond of her, but as a parent he cuts a poor figure; his behaviour towards the child is inconsistent and unreliable (p.666 ff.). Anna has got the better of him; she is the fair parent

with natural authority. And the child knows it: her mother is right. Yet her heart is with her father; she wants her father to be the one who is right. She is very sensitive to his presence, to his moods. When he is there, she feels full and warm, even when he scolds her; when he is gone, she is vague and forgetful: 'He was her strength and her greater self.' Will does not live up to this. He is irritable and shouts and makes the household unhappy; it is not within a child's power to alter anything. It gives Ursula the feeling that she is not enough, that she cannot be important to him, no matter how she tries. Her father loves her, she is his favourite, but he treats her cruelly and heartlessly when it suits him. At times he shows almost sadistic pleasure in his dealings with the child, as in the instance of the swing boats, shocking even to onlookers (p.674). His cruel behaviour causes a breach inside Ursula, which isolates her from the people around her (p.673): 'She became shut off and senseless, a little fixed creature whose soul had gone hard and unresponsive.'

Ursula develops an attitude of superiority, similar to that of Anna when she was younger, seeing others as 'bagatelle', unable to live up to her expectations. Again it is through the ambitions of the mother, as in the example of Tom - and, more obviously, William and Paul in *Sons and Lovers* - that she and her sister Gudrun, three years her junior, are given the chance to study (p.704 ff.). Passionately wanting to get away from the belittling circumstances in Cossethay Ursula expects much of the Grammar School in Nottingham, a superior 'hill of learning', with real, proud people like herself. Sadly, she cannot relate to others: 'She existed for herself alone; if she gave herself away she would be lost, destroyed'. Quick at learning, intelligent, instinctive, attentive and keen, she is still vulnerable and insecure about her personality (p.705/6):

Wherever she was, at school, among friends, in the street, she instinctively made herself smaller, feigned to be less than she was, for fear that her undiscovered self should be seen, pounced upon, attacked by the brutish resentment of the commonplace, the average Self.

Hiding behind her pride and superiority, she shows 'a fierce, animal arrogance'. Her youth is a flight into dreams and illusions. Grandmother Lydia, with her Polish decent and noble connections with a 'greater past' appeals to Ursula's inner wish for development; her wisdom and view of life are supportive to the young girl (p.694): 'The little girl and the musing fragile woman of sixty seemed to understand the same language'. Ursula does not want to be mediocre, and is passionately searching for her own identity. The 'strong, dark soul' of her father fascinates and terrifies her (p.701) and in her turning to religion she incorporates his

ideas (p.706 ff.): 'Only the Sunday world existed', and Ursula's spirit can 'wander in dreams, unassailed' for a while. However, unlike her father, she is looking for spiritual growth, and the elation soon wears off. She is torn between illusion and reality; the myth of the Sons of God who take to wife the Daughters of Men. At one time her mother would have made a valuable companion in her quest, but Anna is absorbed in motherhood, showing 'a practical indifference' (p.708).

Ursula becomes the centre of the novel, she is Lawrence's first budding 'New Woman', in whom he portrays changes of his day and age. She is intelligent, sensitive, and not satisfied with the obvious as she passes 'from girlhood towards womanhood'. Ursula feels 'she must become something' (p.715). When she is sixteen her first love, Anton Skrebensky, comes into her life. He is twenty-one, a soldier on leave from the Army, 'half a Pole, and a Baron, too' (p.726). Ursula is attracted by 'the sense of fatality' in him (p.719):

He seemed simply acquiescent in the fact of his own being, as if he were beyond any change or question. He was himself. There was a sense of fatality about him that fascinated her. He made no effort to prove himself to other people. Let it be accepted for what it was, his own being. In its isolation it made no excuse or explanation to itself.

His self-assuredness is in fact what is missing in Ursula, who is wrestling 'through her dark days of confusion, soulless, uncreated, unformed' (p.717). She rejects the people around her as unsure people, who swim with the tide, offering her no hold or security. In Anton she sees the possibilities of a new life, new ideas of herself, similar to what Tom first saw in Lydia (p.721): 'She was thrilled with a new life. For the first time she was in love with a vision of herself: she saw as it were a fine reflection of herself in his eyes.' In his alien background she sees a connection with the noble past of her grandmother, and she credits him with status: 'In England he is equivalent to a Lord' (p.726). Nevertheless, his 'lazy' and 'floppy' personality, his 'languorous indifference' and spirit of *laissez-aller* soon irritate the girl. Right from the start their contact is aggressively sexual and initiated by Ursula, reflecting a desire to prove her power over him. In her struggle to find balance she wants to assert herself as a proud female, revelling in the 'positive attraction' she has on Anton. However, one can also see her as imitating her parents in her flight into 'passions and lawlessness', looking for contact in 'another, harder, more beautiful, less personal world.' In a way she is taking revenge on her father for his neglect of her through her lover: 'Ursula rejoiced to see her father retreating into himself against the young man' (p.727).

The encounter with the people inhabiting the barge *Annabel*, the Ruth family from Loughborough, presents a concrete and strong sense of real people in a nation. This is what everyday life is about, for Ursula something to measure her own beliefs against. The discussion she has about them with Anton opens her eyes to his soulless being and the defective nature of her relationship with him (p.735 ff.). When she gives the newborn girl her own, valuable necklace as a celebration gift for naming the child Ursula, after herself, Anton objects because of its cost. The symbolic, spiritual meaning, the personal warmth to those involved is entirely beyond him, and Ursula feels her lover to have created 'a deadness around her, a sterility, as if the world were ashes' (p.737). This becomes clear to her even more during their church visit. The sermon about Noah brings about a storm of questions and emotions in Ursula, but to Anton it is no more than a 'voice of law and order' (p.744), which reminds us of the way in which Will experiences religion. Anton's superficiality does not stop at religious incomprehension. His view of society is mechanical, too. Being a soldier, he considers the defense of 'the good of the greatest number' his duty (p.745), but he has no sense of belief or fulfillment in what he is doing. He fails to see how an individual matters personally in a community, and his ideas of the 'highest good' are materialistic (p.746):

we know what the community wants; it wants something solid, it wants good wages, equal opportunities, good conditions of living, that's what the community wants. It doesn't want anything subtle or difficult. Duty is very plain - keep in mind the material, the immediate welfare of every man, that's all.

To Ursula his 'nullity' is murderous, and so is the coldness of their relationship. Her lover leaves to fight in South Africa, but without emotions for her, behaves 'as if he were an affable, usual acquaintance' (p.746).

The cold emptiness left behind in Ursula's heart makes her hesitant to take the risk of contact with another man (p.749 ff.). Turning to a woman instead, she finds comfort in her love for Winifred Inger, Ursula's lesbian class mistress, who feels 'a hot delight' at Ursula's presence. Winifred relieves the girl's 'dark void' of having no connection with other people; moreover, Ursula has a female role model in the emancipated young schoolmistress. She 'adheres' to Winifred, but does not derive a lasting satisfaction out of their intimacy; she experiences a 'sort of nausea' at their physical contact and an aversion of the other woman's body, 'her ugly, clayey' forms and 'big and earthy' female hips (p. 756). Her lesbian affair is a stage in her development, like her love affair with Skrebensky. Ursula is searching

passionately for her own identity, her own being. It is the struggle of the adolescent assuming several roles to see which ones are suitable: but nothing suits her. Not the world of religion, which brings intolerable confusion. Not the world of love and sex; she is neither Skrebensky's lover nor Winifred Inger's. Not the family: her siblings are a burden to her; her parents fail to provide a safe anchorage. There is her father, who claims to love her but only brings her down again and again. There is her mother with her domesticity, utterly fulfilled in her breeding: 'nothing had mattered but the bodies of her babies'. The sensitive, intelligent and educated daughter gets no support for her own life as a young woman in a changing world. She is alone and confused by the problems of this modern world; the life goes out of her studies, as she feels she only learns to 'have a higher commercial value later on' (p.819). The way in which emancipation of women is achieved seems unnatural to her; it makes her friend Dorothy 'so old and so relentless towards herself' (p.817). The marriage of her Uncle Tom and Winifred, two people she had once loved, is based on hypocrisy and self-deception; she cannot feel spontaneous joy at the birth of their first baby.

When Anton Skrebensky comes back to England Ursula desperately hopes that their love will get a new impulse, but she soon realizes that the thought of a future with him is 'delicious make-belief' (p.832). This is not only because their personalities are incompatible, but also because she cannot find meaning in the modern world. She is aware of the past world of nature where lovers could live in 'a close, living, pulsing world', but finds only the horror of the brick buildings in London, this 'ashen-dry, cold world of rigidity, dead walls and mechanical traffic, and creeping, spectre-like people' (p.834). After her return from Rouen with Anton she loses all hope of a fulfilled union with him; all they have together is a form of outward social life, and an unsatisfactory sexual affair. Ursula craves for the world beyond, the world of freedom and meaning; but as she watches the train going through the Downs, 'going nowhere' (p.839) she knows the old natural world will never be restored, and feels only grief. By the end of the novel the reader finds it increasingly clear that the affair with Skrebensky is degrading to Ursula's own morals, too. Instead of bringing out her better qualities, it makes her destructive and aggressive. She increasingly hardens against her lover and wants to 'destroy his being': 'her soul crystallized with triumph, and his soul was dissolved with agony and annihilation'. Their union is trapped in a downward spiral (p.838):

But it all contained a developing germ of death. After each contact her anguished desire for him or for that which she never had from him was stronger, her love was more hopeless. After each contact his

mad dependence on her was deepened, his hope of standing strong and taking her in his own strength was weakened. He felt himself a mere tribute of her.

The battle between them is ultimately decided by Ursula's refusal to go to India with him; he instantly marries someone else and becomes unavailable, even in the case of her supposed pregnancy. 'Ursula's final rejection of the possibility of marriage to Skrebensky, while conveyed in another situation, surely is a reworking of Charlotte Brontë's basic concept of a heroine finding her own identity and choice', says Dr. L. R. Leavis in his abstract 'D.H.Lawrence in Context' ⁱⁱ. He continues to explain that in her relationship with Anton she is shown to have violated her otherwise healthy instincts, becoming a power-monger. Ursula has repressed her intuition, her vital self. This becomes clear during the couple's ride in the taxi, where the power of the 'full-blooded' driver who 'seemed to have a league with her', scares her (p.842). She is relieved when he lets her go. But the horses that block her road later, symbolizing the same fierce, animal power that Ursula has denied do not let her off so lightly. In the end she cannot put off becoming herself.

Her first serious attempt to 'become something' lies in her efforts to make herself useful to society and be a good teacher, paying personal attention to her pupils, and hoping to be meaningful for them as an individual. She is not prepared for the 'man's world' (cpt.13) she finds in Mr.Harby's school, in which she has to deny her own personal self in order to apply a system of laws 'for the purpose of achieving a certain calculable result, the imparting of certain knowledge' (p.783). Instead of bringing herself closer to her own individual being she drifts away from it, submitting to the system: 'she did not want to be a person, to be herself any more' (p.792). She goes against her own feelings by caning the boy Williams: (p.794) 'Ursula felt as if something were going to break in her'. Her colleague Maggie Schofield is the only one who is different in her 'lovelier world' (p.780). However, the two young women hold vitally different views of society. Maggie lives by ideas of the women's movement, which to Ursula seem as limited as those of the mechanical 'man's world': Maggie must 'remain enclosed' in her form of life, whereas Ursula 'struggles against the confines of her life' (p.803). Ursula's world is more complex, she is looking for personal acknowledgement and must move on to find it, both in society and in a partner. Her brief affair with Anthony Schofield is another step towards development. Portrayed as the personification of erotic sensuality he is ultimately as stifling as the blind passion between Paul and Clara in *Sons and Lovers*. Ursula's heart 'flamed with sensation of him' (p.806) yet at the same time she realizes

her 'inconsolable sense of loneliness'; marrying Anthony is out of the question, just like marrying Skrebensky.

Ursula has a new chance in life, a chance to live in 'the earth's new architecture', to find 'a living fabric of Truth' (p.861). *The Rainbow* is a feminist novel, concerned with the victory of women. In spite of their differences, Lydia, Anna and Ursula are more spiritually refined and more advanced in their quest for a fulfilled life than their male partners. Lawrence is revising an important image of earlier fiction here, the woman at the window, who in Jane Austen, Elizabeth Gaskell and George Eliot looks beyond confinement and domesticity: the women in *The Rainbow* look beyond the fields and the house. In Ursula Brangwen the author has created a heroine recalling and developing the tragic but triumphant cases and careers of the earlier heroines. It will not be until his next novel, *Women in Love*, that the female protagonist fully develops her potentials as a New Woman.

ⁱ Frank Glover Smith: D.H.Lawrence:The Rainbow. (Edward Arnold, 1971) p.20 /24

ⁱⁱ L.R. Leavis: Neophilologus. (Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1999) p.489