Lawrence's Quest in "The Rainbow"

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"Now you will find [Frieda] and me in the novel, I think, and the work is of both of us" (April 22, 1914; *Huxley*, p. 191)[1]

A major subject of much modern literature is the author's quest for self-definition. In particular, the search for moral and aesthetic values is central to the novels of Joyce, Proust, Woolf, Conrad, and Lawrence. Yet we have neglected how novels reveal their authors because much modern criticism has been uncomfortable with the expressive qualities of texts. Certainly, the New Criticism insisted that texts be examined as self-referential ontologies which are distinct from their authors' lives. Unwilling to commit the intentional fallacy, Anglo-American formalism ceded discussion of the author to biographers, psychoanalytic critics, and, more recently, to phenomonologists, structuralists, and their successors. Yet because the quest for values, form, and language is a central subject in much modern fiction, it must be discussed as a formal component within the text, separate and distinct from the narrator or implied author. To neglect the dialogue between the creative process and the subject matter of the story is to ignore a fundamental part of the novel's imagined world. Lawrence's struggle with his subject (his relationship with Frieda) is a major aspect of *The Rainbow*, just as *Sons and Lovers* dramatizes his struggle to come to terms with his relationship with Jessie Chambers and his mother. Moreover, the author's quest for self-understanding is central to other late nineteenth and early twentieth century British novelists: Conrad in the Marlow tales, Joyce in *A Portrait of the Artist* and *Ulysses*, and Woolf in *Mrs. Dalloway* and *To the Lighthouse*.

Lawrence's quest within *The Rainbow* for values and for the appropriate form is as important to the experience of reading

the novel as his polemic. Lawrence wanted to write about the passions of men and women in a new way. He also wanted to re-create himself and to urge his readers to re-create themselves. Lawrence felt that the novel is particularly suited in its spaciousness for proposing, testing, and discarding formulations as its author seeks truth.[2] *The Rainbow's* unfolding process presents a history of his struggle for fulfillment. Each phase of the Brangwens' history dramatizes a crucial episode in Lawrence's development. We must read *The Rainbow* with a pluralistic perspective that takes account of its prophetic and polemical impulses, but does not grant them an authority over the text. The reader must be attentive to the novel's oscillation between, on the one hand, its prophetic and mythic impulses and, on the other, its dramatization of Lawrence's own process of discovery. I shall argue that 1) *The Rainbow* dramatizes Lawrence's quest for the kind of fiction that is appropriate both for passionate sexual relationships between men and women and for the struggle within each man between, to use his terms, mind-consciousness and blood-consciousness. 2) *The Rainbow* enacts Lawrence's quest for self-realization. In one sense, each generation represents aspects of his psyche and is a means by which he uses the novel to discover his own individuality.

As with *Sons and Lovers*, the telling of *The Rainbow* is as crucial an agon as the tale.[3] Although the Ursula section was written first and the opening last, the book still roughly mimes the history of Lawrence's self-development. In the traditional novel narrated by an omniscient voice, one expects the voice to embody the values to which the characters evolve. But, in *The Rainbow*, the narrator's values evolve and grow just like his characters, and the standards by which he evaluates behavior become more subtle and more intricate as the novel progresses. What is good for Tom and Lydia would not necessarily be sufficient for Ursula, or even Anna and Will. Each generation must go beyond its predecessor to sustain itself; Lawrence seeks to discover new standards as the family chronicle moves forward toward the time when Lawrence wrote the novel in the second decade of the twentieth century.

Lawrence sought to dramatize the importance of sexuality but he also sought to discover an aesthetic that would embody his ideas. Proposing a Newer Testament to replace the extant one is part of the dialectical struggle that is at the center of life. In life and in art, the best we can do is open up infinite possibilities. The climactic rainbow is not only for Ursula and for England, but represents an *enactment* of the aesthetic success achieved by writing the novel; Lawrence walks through the final arch to create anew in *Women in Love*. Like Ursula, his surrogate, he had to overcome dubiety and anxiety before he could go forward; hadn't he written in January, 1915, "My soul lay in the tomb — not dead, but with a flat stone over it, a corpse, become corpse-cold. . . . I don't feel so hopeless now I am risen. . . . We should all rise again from this grave. . . . I know we shall all come through, rise again and walk healed and whole and new in a big inheritance, here on earth" (Jan. 30, 1915; *Huxley*, p. 222). This pattern — a downward movement followed by an upward one — anticipates the closing scene when Ursula overcomes despair by rediscovering not only her biological self, but her potential to be alive passionately and sensually.

Lawrence wrote his novel to announce a credo to replace the Christian mythology and value system that dominated English life for several centuries. He conceived himself as prophet, seer, visionary, shaman, and Divine Messenger. Reduced to its simplest terms, his message is that mankind must rediscover the lost instinctive, biological passionate self that has become sacrificed to democracy, imperialism, industrialism, and urbanization. Lawrence adopts biblical tales, images, syntax, and diction for the purpose of expounding a doctrine that undermines the traditional reading of the Bible. Yet he uses the biblical material to confer the stature of a Holy Book upon his novel, which argues for the centrality not of God but of the relationship between man and woman.

Given Lawrence's evangelical background, it was essential to his psyche that he come to terms with rather than reject the Bible. For Lawrence, the Bible itself was the prototypical novel because of its prophetic message. It has as its acknowledged purpose to announce God's Law, and to show by its dramatic

incidents how man correctly and incorrectly should behave.[4] Influenced undoubtedly by Frazer's *The Golden Bough* and the turn-of-the-century's interest in ethnology, Lawrence understood that the Bible embodied the ethical archetypes of European civilization. As with Hardy, the shape and intensity of Lawrence's unorthodox beliefs are only possible because he had once been a believer. *The Rainbow* reflects the needs of Lawrence's Puritan conscience (which he owed to his mother's fastidious piety) to atone for the sacrilege of allowing his imagination to supplant faith and reason. Lawrence sought to create myths that would be more true to his generation than the ones it inherited.[5]

The Rainbow is Lawrence's quest to rediscover mankind's instinctive, libidinous, biological potential which he believed lay underneath the trappings of the social self that civilization has produced and required to play acceptable roles. While each novel contains its own genesis with its own physical and moral geography, few novels take us into such an extraordinary world as *The Rainbow* does. What Lawrence must do in his early chapters is nothing less than re-educate the reader to a new grammar of motives where the value of a character's behavior is understood according to the degree it is true to its inner essence. Readers of *The Rainbow* are often baffled by what happens because the terms with which Lawrence describes behavior are so strange. Often they read the novel in an undergraduate course after a series of English novels in which manners and morals are stressed. Just as the episodes of Genesis provide us with the standards — the grammar of motives — to measure the rest of the Old Testament, the purpose of *The Rainbow's* early chapters is to provide a grammar of passions so that in later chapters we will understand and recognize the deeper self beneath the conscious self.

Lawrence argues that passionate sexual relationships are not only beyond man's understanding, but beyond man's conscious control. That in *The Rainbow* Lawrence meant to propose a strikingly different kind of novel is clear from his oft quoted letter about characterization: "I don't so much care about what the woman *feels* — in the ordinary usage of the word. That

presumes an *ego* to feel with. I only care about what the woman *is* — what she IS — inhumanely, physiologically, materially . . ." (June 5, 1914; *Huxley*, p. 200). But as he writes the novel, the characterization becomes increasingly complex until he does show us something of Ursula's feelings and ego.

The Rainbow shows how a writer's exploration of the potential of a genre can itself become part of his subject. Writing of an early draft of the then nameless book, he remarked: "It is all crude as yet . . . most cumbersome and foundering . . . so new, so really a stratum deeper than I think anybody has ever gone in a novel" (March 11, 1913; *Huxley*, p. 113). He wished to write about "*the* problem of today, the establishment of a new relation, or the readjustment of the old one, between men and women" (April 17, 1913; *Huxley*, p. 120). Lawrence deliberately tries to reinvent the genre to address the passions of men and women. He writes of the unconscious life that he believed had escaped articulation by his predecessors and eschews, for the most part, the world of manners and morals that had provided the principal subject of the English novel. His prophetic voice displaces the ironic gentility of the traditional omniscient narrator of Victorian fiction. Nor does Lawrence adhere to the linear chronology of the realistic novel; he ignores references to the characters' ages and dates, and moves backwards and forward when he chooses. Highlighting certain episodes and details while overlooking others not only aligns him with the biblical tradition but also with cubism and post-impressionism, both of which had immense influence in England from the time of the major exhibitions in the period 1910-1912.[6]

The structure and aesthetic of *The Rainbow* reflect his evolving relationship with Frieda who, in fact, gave the novel its title.[7] *The Rainbow* is part of his effort to destroy the old within him and to build a new self based on but not limited by his passionate marriage. Writing the novel became inextricably related to loving Frieda: "I am going through a transition stage myself. . . . But I must write to live. . . . It is not so easy for one to be married. In marriage one must become something else. And I am changing, one way or the other" (Jan. 29, 1914; *Huxley*, p. 180). For all the certainty of the prophetic voice, his love for

Frieda created new anxiety and uncertainty: "I seem to spend half my days having revulsions and convulsions from myself" (April 3, 1914; *Huxley*, p. 188). The concept of the novel as process and movement derives from Lawrence's personal needs. In the famous letter to Garnett in which he rejected the old concept of character, he commented scathingly of novelists' using a "moral scheme into which all the characters fit;" he wrote of *The Rainbow* (which, in this letter, he still called by the earlier title *The Wedding Ring*): "Don't look for the development of the novel to follow the lines of certain characters: the characters fall into the form of some other rhythmic form" (June 5, 1914; *Huxley*, pp. 20-201).

Thus *The Rainbow* is a personal novel, even at those moments when it is most prophetic. The novel dramatizes Lawrence's quest for the myth of the passionate Elect. It is also an outlet for his frustrated messianic impulses, impulses that neither his wife nor friends took very seriously. Emile Delavenay speaks of Lawrence's "constant search for disciples, which goes with the sense of a divine mission, of being predestined to make some revelation to mankind."[8] No less than his romantic predecessors — Blake, Shelley, and Wordsworth — Lawrence sought refuge from the stress of life in the comfort of his fictions. The opening pages of *The Rainbow* express his fantasy of men who live purposeful, proud, sexually fulfilled lives and who are not inhibited by artificial social restraints. Each Brangwen generation 1) corresponds to an historical period, 2) to stages of growth in the passionate Elect, 3) to an historical phase of England's development — from rural (Tom and Lydia) to village (Will and Anna) to urban, industrial society (Ursula) and, 4) to important phases of Lawrence's relationship with Frieda. The process of mythmaking, the reaching out for biblical archetypes, is part of Lawrence's effort to cleanse and to refresh himself. Each generation of Brangwens registers a partial recovery of freshness for Lawrence.

In the very first pages, the anonymous pre-verbal Brangwens represent the reaffirmation of the primitive instinctive origins of man. They dominate the space they inhabit as if they were twenty times or fifty times the size of normal men. They are

giants of the earth bestriding their land like Colossi (p. 2). For Lawrence this generation represents mythic forbears whose example still has meaning for modern man. Even as the opening renders the energy within nature and the men who are inseparable from nature, it announces the hyperbole, myth, and process that are central to the novel's aesthetic. After the canal and the railroad are introduced, the familial, agrarian life is no longer possible. Thus within Lawrence's myth of the Giants of the earth, the Nephelim version of the creation myth, he also proposes a fortunate fall. The women are not content to live in "the drowse of blood intimacy"[9] (p. 2). They feel that their world is anachronistic once industrialism touches it. They begin a quest for a richer life, for a life that contains an awareness of oneself and the world beyond the farm.

Lawrence is ambivalent towards the women's quest for knowledge and their turning away from a way of life where language and the life of the mind are secondary. Part of him wishes to return to the innocence of pre-history. But, as the novel evolves, he acknowledges that this existence may obliterate distinctions among men, prevent the growth of the individual, and limit people's possibilities to contribute to the community. On the one hand, a nostalgic Lawrence eulogizes a world that had never really been and longs for what that past represents. On the other hand, Lawrence, the contentious polemicist, wishes to change the world through his fiction and assumes the prophetic mantle to speak for the religion of the body.

Although, interestingly, she bears the first name of Lawrence's mother, Lydia, the experienced foreign woman, is a version of Frieda; Tom, the man aroused to his sexual and instinctual potential, is Lawrence's fantasy version of himself as a deeply passionate, intellectually unsophisticated figure. Their instinctive relationship corresponds to Lawrence's sense of the early stage of his relationship with Frieda. Their climactic consummation is a paradigm for the surrender of ego and rebirth that Lawrence sought. Tom's hesitant steps outward to acknowledge and fulfill his deepest needs, followed by his subsequent immersion in a passionate, sensual embrace, represent the kind of unconscious life flow that man must rediscover. *Sons*

and Lovers left Lawrence with some residual effects of his mother-love and the frigid relationship with Jessie Chambers. Tom, I believe, represents another attempt to get things right sexually. (Nor should we forget, if we understand the personal nature of this novel, that variations on Lawrence's own Oedipal problems are central to Anna's relationship with her stepfather and Ursula's with her father.)

Tom and Lydia provide the first principle of Lawrence's grammar of passion. Lawrence uses the relationship between Tom and Lydia to show that *passionate* attraction takes place beneath the conscious level and disarms the intellect and the will. Lydia is roused to life despite her intention to withdraw from passionate attachments after the death of her husband. In Lawrence's Bible, passionate sexual attraction is akin to discovering Christ. On the basis of the most superficial acquaintance, of a few scant words between them, Tom feels her influence upon him: "There was an inner reality, a logic of the soul, which connected her with him" (p. 36). Tom is "nothingness" until he is completed and fulfilled by Lydia's acknowledgment. Stressing the impersonal physiological nature of this attraction, Lawrence uses pronouns which are adrift from their antecedents to describe the scenes of passionate interaction. Thus when Tom comes to announce his intention, she responds to his eyes:

> The expression of his eyes changed, become less impersonal, as if he were looking almost at her, for the truth of her steady and intent and eternal they were, as if they would never change. They seemed to fix and to resolve her. She quivered, feeling herself created, will-less, lapsing into him, into a common will with him. (p. 40)

The scene is a deliberate parody of the traditional Victorian courtship scene where a man asks for the hand of the woman. Not only is the father absent, and the woman a widow with child; not only has the man's announcement preceded any social relationship; but the amenities and conventions of English proper behavior are flouted at every turn. Lawrence's audience would have hardly been accustomed to the following dialogue in a relationship that took place in the 1860s:

"You want me?" she said . . . .
"Yes," he said . . . .
"No," she said, not of herself. "No, I don't know." (p. 40)

Nor did it conform to conventions of 1915. Such a scene could serve as Lawrence's epigraph, if not epitaph, to the novel of manners and morals that continued to be England's dominant genre, despite the recent work of Joyce, an exiled Irishman, and Conrad, a Polish emigré.

As we read *The Rainbow* we experience Lawrence's search for the appropriate language with which to convey unconscious, physiological states. When the voice speaks in biblical diction, he provides a benedi tion for his characters; echoing Genesis to describe Tom's and Lydia's first passionate kiss, he implies that a new beginning is something that is continually possible for every individual soul. "[Tom] returned gradually, but newly created, as after a gestation, a new birth, in the womb of darkness . . . . And the dawn blazed in them, their new life came to pass, it was beyond all conceiving good, it was so good that it was almost a passing-away, a trespass"(p. 41).

Lawrence goes beyond *Sons and Lovers* in the use of nature imagery to confer value on his characters' sexual responses and to make human sexuality a microcosm of the natural cycle of the cosmos. In a realistic novel, the following sentence, describing Lydia's response to Tom, would not mean much: "But she would wake in the morning one day and feel her blood running, feel herself lying open like a flower unsheathed in the sun, insistent and potent with demand" (p. 50). The gathering sexual energy of such words as "running", "open", "female", "unsheathed", "insistent", "potent", and "demand" charges the sentence with implication and power independent of its syntactical meaning. Furthermore, "blood", "flower", and "sun" place the urgent sexuality in the context of nature's rhythms. The sentence's one metaphor, "open like a flower", suggests that the opening of the woman for sex is akin to the receptiveness of the flower to the fertilizing bee. Beginning with the first use of "feel", moving to "blood", and continuing through "potent" and "demand", the heavily stressed prose (suggestive of Hopkin's poetry) gathers to a crescendo the sentence's power and urgency. As if to mime

the arousing of her unconscious self, "running" carries Lydia's awakened instincts through to "potent" and "demand". The onomatopoeia of "running" stands in a phonic tension with the slow, stately power of "potent with demand". Within the sentence the sexual act is encapsulated. Not only does the male sperm "run" to the awaiting female, but the male, who feels incomplete, turns to the eternal female. And this is exactly what happens in the action of the novel. While it might be objected that the sentence describes only Lydia's awakening, the sentence is proleptic of the sexual act which her arousal makes possible. Once Lydia becomes awakened in her instincts and passion, she stands in readiness for the male. Lydia's awakening becomes a standard, albeit not the only one, by which Lawrence measures the more complex psyches of Anna and Ursula. Lydia is representative of immersion in sexuality and family, immersion that becomes increasingly difficult as England moves from agrarian to industrial society. The purity and simplicity of analogies with nature in the above passage disappear from the novel when the sexuality of later generations is described. Yet even Lydia's life is a quantum jump in complexity from the anonymity of the opening pages. Each of the four phases of Brangwen life takes Lawrence more time to describe because changing external conditions introduce new complexities into man's quest to realize his being.

A major difficulty in Lawrence's quest for form is that he wished to dramatize the continuing flux of passions for what he called an "external stillness that lies under all movement, under all life, like a source, incorruptible and inexhaustible."[10] He found this stillness in myth. *The Rainbow* depends on a tension between the movement of the narrative and the stasis of myth, which by its nature implies iteration of human experience. In the climax of the story of each generation, myth displaces process. The result is more like an elaborate rococo painting than a linear episode.

In the climax of the Tom and Lydia section Lawrence proposes a parallel to the apocalyptic wedding in *Revelation*; Lydia as the Holy City comes down from Heaven as a bride adorned for her husband, Tom, who has heretofore held something of himself

back and not fully accepted her otherness. Tom and Lydia surrender their egos and give themselves over to their passionate embrace, but something seems to be missing. Their victory comes at the expense of separateness and individuality. Part of the problem is the religious context: "He relinquished himself . . . losing himself to find her, to find himself in her" (p. 90). The very terms of the victory make us aware of the limitations of the biblical parallel. While the Bible moves toward apocalypse and the suspension of time, the displacement of *chronos* by *kairos*, the regenerate soul never comes to rest. It is always seeking but never finding *kairos* except during the sex act.[11] By definition, apocalypse implies that all become one in the kingdom of heaven, and distinctions will no longer be possible. But Tom and Lydia must return to the everyday temporal world.

Thus while they are born into another life, there is something unsatisfactory about their kind of union. On one hand, it provides a shelter for the children, or, at least Anna, in whom the Brangwens' passionate heritage resides, although she was not born a Brangwen. But, on the other hand, the children of blood-intimacy do not develop their full potential, as if there was something stifling to the growth of the soul in the marriage of Tom and Lydia. Their sexual passion creates a "richness" of physiological energy at the expense of mental activity and awareness of the world (p. 100). Anna finally lapses into such a condition and Ursula is tempted by it when she is pregnant. While one part of Lawrence longed for this, another knew that such a life placed a constraint upon further development.

Lawrence is ambivalent towards Tom's and Lydia's victory, because their embrace *excludes* that part of him that must take part in the world of community and utterance. He moves on to the next generation in part because once he establishes the quality of Tom's and Lydia's passionate embrace, he is no longer interested in Tom and can no longer identify with him. Tom, who once had the need to explore new and strange experiences, lapses into the blood-intimacy of his forebears. Gradually, almost reluctantly, the voice acknowledges that Tom's achievement comes at the expense of giving up his quest into the unknown. Lawrence needs to extricate himself from his immer-

sion in Tom because he is no longer an appropriate model for his own quest to resolve blood-consciousness and mind-consciousness. Tom has been the means of dramatizing one aspect of Lawrence to the exclusion of others. But Lawrence resists easy answers in defining his grammar of passions, and that resistance, that refusal to allow his myth to triumph over his own insights, is part of the novel's aesthetic, its meaning, and ultimately, its greatness. Competing for Lawrence's attention with the prophetic impulse is the nominalistic impulse which insists on making distinctions and undermining the simplifications of polemics.

Lydia articulates Lawrence's basic premise in the novel: "Between two people, the love itself is the important thing, and that is neither you nor him. It is a third thing you must create" (p. 172). But neither the novel's opening dumb-show nor the story of Tom and Lydia speaks to the problem between Anna and Will. In his impulse to lose himself either in sexuality or religious mystery, Will is trying to go back to a simpler world. His effort to reconcile his aesthetic impulse with passionate embrace mimes Lawrence's. Except when they come together in passion, Anna and Will must inevitably remain separate; nor do they have, like Tom and Lydia, the teeming richness of the farm to sustain them.

The Anna and Will section corresponds to the passionate struggle that raged between Lawrence and Frieda while he wrote the novel. In the Will-Anna relationship, Lawrence explores the second principle of the grammar of passions: each person must bring an independent existence to marriage. The sheaf-gathering scene defines the essential problem between Will and Anna. Like Hardy, who uses the May-dance in *Tess*, he knew that within rural life vestiges of primitive rites survived in England. Lawrence implies that the way forward may be to reach back to man's anthropological origins when man was one with nature. Anna is defined in terms of extended space and of nature ("she called . . . from afar . . . like a bird unseen in the night" [p. 119]), but Will is restricted by something within him that keeps him from fully participating in the pagan sexual dance. Will cannot lapse out of consciousness; his name defines

the quality that holds him back: will. By will, Lawrence means an active need to assert one's consciousness upon the world, a need he recognized in himself.

The chapter entitled "Anna Victrix" defines the problem of man and woman after they have awakened to self-consciousness and are no longer in rhythm with nature in a pastoral world. Now that he has introduced new social and economic conditions, Lawrence must redefine the terms with which to describe physiological, passionate needs. Lawrence opens "Anna Victrix" with a passage suggesting that Anna's and Will's marriage resembles both the expulsion from Paradise and the family of Noah after the old world has been destroyed (p. 140). But since Anna and Will do not fulfill the Brangwen promise, Lawrence discards these parallels and does not perceive them in terms of a consistent biblical pattern. Because their separation from the rest of the world mimes the dislocation caused by his own relationship to Frieda, there are passages in which the language strains to the point of breaking down. We feel Lawrence's excruciating pain embodied in the voice's narration of the difficulties between Anna and Will.[12] Will has the potential either to become alive passionately or to lapse into a kind of passional anomie, when, despite his sexual satisfaction with Anna, he does not fulfill himself and his passionate energy becomes corrupted. Deprived of his male pride and lacking an independent identity, Will's destructive passion is not so dissimilar from Uncle Tom's or from Gerald's in *Women in Love*. For a time the couple succeed in creating a timeless world within the diurnal world. As if to stress the parallel between generations, Lawrence echoes the earlier biblical language ("They were unalterably glad"). But the struggle between them is different and more complex. Will must come to terms with an industrial world that Tom and Lydia can virtually shut out. Will's dark intensity is a function of his need to believe in something more than the relationship between man and woman. He believes in the miracle of Cana and "loved the Church" (p. 168); in defense, Anna, "almost against herself, clung to the worship of the human knowledge" (p. 169). They never discover an equilibrium in which their separate selves

enrich one another to form a union, a third entity stronger than the other. Rather each often becomes the other's emotional antithesis. As the passionate needs of one define contrary impulses in the other, the tension creates a destructive emotional friction that is never quite resolved.

Thus "Anna Victrix" is an ironic title. By winning Anna loses. Anna is indifferent to the outside world, but like Lawrence she needs to find a balance between mind-consciousness and blood-consciousness. Just like Lawrence, Will requires his life in the world beyond; like Frieda, Anna is oblivious to these needs, and thus must share with Will the blame for the couple's problems. She needs to defeat him in body and spirit. She defeats him by despising his job, depriving him of his spiritual life, and taking away his pride. Will may be more the average sensual man than any other male figure, but he also objectifies Lawrence's fear that sexual passion will deprive him of his creativity. By abandoning his wood-carving of Adam and Eve, Will submits to the routine of the everyday world. In an ironic echo of the sheaf-gathering scene, during her pregnancy Anna dances alone in her search for the something that her life lacks: at an unconscious level, she is trying to "annul" him by means of the primitive and atavistic dance. Anna's victory is not only Will's defeat, but ultimately her own.

Corresponding to the medieval period, the period between an agrarian and industrial society, the period in which villages and crafts dominate life in England, the Anna-Will section is the one in which religion is explored in its most personal form. Lawrence's evangelical conscience required that he explore the Church as a putative source of values. At the center of the novel is the very short chapter entitled "Cathedral". The cathedral, like the novel itself, is a man-made artifice that reconciles opposing dualities. But, to use Lawrence's terms, the cathedral, like Raphael's painting, arrests motion while Lawrence's form, like the painting of Botticelli, is in motion.[13] In "Cathedral", Lawrence shows the constraints that Christianity has placed upon man's efforts to realize fully his potential. Lawrence stresses how the Church denies process and movement and reduces everything to oneness. The Romanesque arch is a false

rainbow because it reduces the variety of life to itself, something that Lawrence believed Christianity does by imposing arbitrary shibboleths ("Only the poor will get to heaven;" "The meek shall inherit the earth").

The Cathedral represents a historical phase that man must put behind him if he is to continue the journey to fulfillment. Moreover, its geometric *resolution* is reductive. In Laurentian terms, the arch denies the Two-in-One and represents nullifying fusion, rather than union between two strong, contending souls that are independent in themselves. Like the blood-intimacy of the early Brangwens, it is another form of the dominance of what Lawrence called the Will-to-Inertia.[14] For Anna, as for Lawrence, God is something within and beyond one's self, but not within the Church. We may regard Anna as a Moses figure who has viewed the Promised Land, but will not enter. Before Anna lapses into child-bearing she carries on the Brangwen promise by refusing to submit her individuality to the church. Anna resists submission to "the neutrality, the perfect, swooning consummation, the timeless ecstasy" of the Romanesque arches (p.199). When she responds to the separateness of the gargoyles, she is compared to Eve. She seduces Will to a knowledge that he would deny; for him the church can no longer be a "world within a world" (p. 202). Her resistance is described in terms of a bird taking flight, a striking image because it suggests the natural world that, Lawrence felt, was absent from the Cathedral and that has been shut out by the man-made rainbow (p. 200). Her desire to rise anticipates that of Ursula in the section when she assumes the mantle of Christ; her refusal to be fixed anticipates Ursula's refusal to submit to Skrebensky. The bird has freedom of movement in contrast to the Church's insistence on one direction. Anna's victory over Will's desire to use the Church as a spiritual womb to which they both might return is a significant step towards defining the Brangwens' values and creating Lawrence's consciousness.

Lawrence proposes as the third principle of his grammar of passions that certain elect souls can struggle by themselves to fulfillment, and can reconcile blood-consciousness and mind-consciousness, if they are true to their own impulses and if they

avoid submitting to lesser beings and social conventions. Choosing a female as his surrogate enabled Lawrence to achieve distance and objectivity. Like Lawrence, Ursula is torn, on the one hand, between the female "secret riches" of the body and, on the other, the "man's world" of work, duty, and community (p. 333). When Lawrence's chronicle reaches the turn of the century, the Brangwen quest for symbols becomes more urgent because it mimes his own central concerns. Lawrence's surrogate, Ursula, seeks for the symbols that will make her life whole. Her discovery of the appropriate one in the figure of Christ reborn to the life of the body parallels Lawrence's discovery of biblical archetypes as mythic analogues for his fictive characters. As the vessel of substantive insight, she becomes the central prophetic figure, just as Birkin is in *Women in Love*. Her quest is Lawrence's and that quest is enacted in the rushing, urgent form of the novel as well as in specific episodes such as Ursula's confrontation with the horses. Ursula's crises, defeats, and final victory mime Lawrence's own. Capable of growth and passion, she is Lawrence's ideal. Her role is not unlike that of Christ in the New Testament. She is the paradigmatic figure of Lawrence's secular scripture.

Ursula embodies both Lawrence's quest for a mental knowledge besides the knowledge of passionate embrace and his need to reconcile that quest with his marriage. Lawrence was not satisfied to fulfill himself apart from other men. He oscillated between the hope that he could transform England and the desire to subtract himself and a small number of the Elect into an enclave. Ursula's certainty that the mythical sons of God would have taken her for a wife expresses Lawrence's wish for a passionate Elect. She dramatizes Lawrence's own desire to leave behind the pedestrian life of modern England; she needs to go beyond the village life of her ancestors and existence as a provincial schoolteacher. Like Lawrence, she becomes increasingly iconoclastic about manners, morals, and social pressures. Like Lawrence, Ursula lives in a world of hyperbole. In a sense, "the wave which cannot halt" (p. 2) defines Lawrence's growth; the telling of the Brangwen saga gave the necessary energy, vitality, and confidence to transcend the limited world in which he found himself.

As Ursula imagines Christ speaking for the Law of the Body in the diction of the Bible, Lawrence's voice subsumes Ursula's. In the climax of Lawrence's quest for a new credo, Lawrence insists that Christ's return must be in the body and that man be reborn in the body:

> The Resurrection is to life, not to death. Shall I not see those who have risen again walk here among men perfect in body and spirit, whole and glad in the flesh, living in the flesh, loving in the flesh, begetting children in the flesh arrived at last to wholeness . . . ? (p. 280)

This is the moment when Lawrence, at the center of the novel, ascends his rhetorical Pisgah and looks to the future. As he speaks with urgency and intensity, we realize that the prophetic voice is a major character in the novel, that he is not only the teller but an essential character in the tale. Thus the chapter in which the above passage appears (and the first of two with that title), "The Widening Circle", describes not only Ursula's expanding range of experience, but that of the voice. He has progressed from rendering the impersonal and anonymous life in the opening to creating an individualized life where personal values and attitudes are important. Just as the Brangwens lose their anonymity and their individual quests become important, so Lawrence affirms through his intrusive, prophetic, idiosyncratic voice the value of a self-aware, unique personality. This is a value that was unknown to the early Brangwens, but is crucial to Ursula as she seeks her own identity even while responding to the demands of her body.

That her first love affair with Skrebensky is prolonged, unsatisfactory, and inhibiting reflects Lawrence's own view of his relationship with Jessie. At twenty-one, Ursula has experienced the kind of philosophical and psychological development Lawrence had achieved in his late twenties when he was creating her. He takes pleasure in Ursula's unconventional attitudes towards Christianity and in her flouting of traditional standards as, for example, when she argues for making love in a Cathedral. Her feelings of superiority and iconoclasm are Lawrence's as he sought to define a new aristocracy of passionate Elect. Election should be understood not only in terms of Evangelical theory that there are men and Men, damned souls

and saved souls, but also in terms of Lawrence's snobbery and iconoclasm. The Brangwens, like Lawrence, have a pathological fear of being undifferentiated from the mass of people.

Yet if Lawrence is Ursula, he is also Skrebensky. Skrebensky embodies Lawrence's fear that he will not be able to fulfill Frieda. Skrebensky is unformed and lacks the potential for growth and fulfillment. In their first love-making under the moon, he needs to "enclose" and "overcome her" (p. 320). He lacks the passionate energy that she requires: "What was this nothingness she felt? The nothingness was Skrebensky" (p. 320). Whereas Will has a problem of unconsciously restraining and thus corrupting his passionate potential, Skrebensky is inherently defective. While Will struggles towards a kind of limited fulfillment, Skrebensky becomes a factotum for the social system, a soldier who mindlessly fights for the nation's political goals.

Ursula's oscillation between the demands of the conscious self and the passional self continues in an upward spiral to the novel's final pages as she moves toward the unreachable goal of what Lawrence calls "full achievement" of herself (*Phoenix*, p. 403). (It is Lawrence's version of Zeno's paradox that this goal recedes as it is approached, for there are always further levels of self-realization beyond the one that has been reached.) We recall in the Cathedral her mother's desire to take flight in order to escape Will's confinement. But Skrebensky holds her back. Because Skrebensky exists "in her own desire only," she did not "live completely" (p. 331); her first love baptizes her into "shame" (the title of the ensuing chapter), as Lawrence believed Jessie had done to him.

Like her Brangwen forebears, Ursula is at ease in nature and open to experience. But at this point she does not have the independence that she will later have and desperately searches for someone to complete her. Yet her failure with Skrebensky, like Lawrence's own with Jessie Chambers, intensifies her quest. She turns her passion to a beautiful and proud young teacher, Winifred Inger. At first, Winifred seems to Ursula an example of one who has combined the best of female and male: "She was proud and free as man, yet exquisite as a woman" (p.

336). But after a brief affair, lesbian love proves a dead end. (Lawrence, who endorsed Birkin's bisexuality, has a different standard for women.) While Ursula is associated with lions and later horses, Winifred is associated with moist clay and prehistoric lizards: "[Ursula] saw gross, ugly movements in her mistress, she saw a clayey, inert, unquickened flesh, that reminded her of the great prehistoric lizards" (p. 350). Lawrence is not above name-calling to denigrate characters who are unsuitable for his major figures. Winifred, and Uncle Tom are arbitrarily aligned with the corruption of Wiggiston, although Lawrence does not *dramatize* why. It is as if Lawrence needed to turn against part of his creation and to expel it from the heightened passionate world he has created for the Elect: "[Uncle Tom's and Winifred's] marshy, bitter-sweet corruption came sick and unwholesome in Ursula's nostrils. Anything to get out of the foetid air. She would leave them both forever, leave forever their strange, soft, half-corrupt element. Anything to get away" (p. 350). Within the Brangwen strain and Lawrence's psyche is a struggle between the living, represented by Ursula, and the dead, represented by Uncle Tom. That the Brangwens have a corrupt line creates within the novel a viable threat to Ursula's and Lawrence's own quest.

At the close Lawrence and Ursula are inseparable. When she agrees to marry Skrebensky, her capitulation to conventions mimes Lawrence's own fear that he lacked the strength to break free. But the horses represent the atavistic energy that he felt he needed to write *The Rainbow*. The painful activity of writing is mirrored by Ursula's terrible confrontation with an unacknowledged energy that must be expressed in spite of her conscious self. Just as Ursula must return from experiencing the "hard, urgent, massive fire" of the horses to "the ordered world of man" (pp. 487-88), so must Lawrence. After she decides not to marry Skrebensky, her declaration prior to the final vision is also Lawrence's:

> 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 Nottingham 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. (p. 492)

Very much like the dark night of the soul in traditional Christianity, this denial is a necessary prologue to her final vision. One must experience the Everlasting No on the road to the Everlasting Yea. Ursula is *enacting* the crucial prophetic passage where Lawrence has assumed the voice of Christ and imagined his own resurrection:

> [Ursula] slept in the confidence of her new reality. She slept breathing with her soul the new air of a new world. . . .
>
> When she woke at last it seemed as if a new day had come on the earth. How long, how long had she fought through the dust and obscurity, for this new dawn? (p. 492)

The "new dawn" and "new day" confirm the novel's insistence that the possibility of transfiguration is always present.

The final vision is not only Ursula's but Lawrence's. It is the moment to which the narrative and the narrator have moved. The novel has redefined God to be something remote, whose presence pervades nature but is indifferent to man's individual quest. (Ursula thinks: "What ever God was, He was, and there was no need to trouble about Him" [p. 324]). Yet God also becomes the name of each individual's fullest potential, the aspect of life that is immune to Dr. Frankstone's mechanism. ("I don't see why we should attribute some special mystery to life" [p. 440]). Thus Ursula is recognizing the God within her when she understands that "Self was a oneness with the infinite. To be oneself was a supreme, gleaming triumph of infinity" (p. 441). Such an insight is an essential prelude to the ending. Although Genesis is her favorite book, and her grandfather's death in a Flood established him as a Noah figure, she mocks God's command to Noah: "be ye fruitful and multiply" (p. 323). Ursula must discover what Lawrence sees as the meaning of that myth — as a figuration of death followed by rebirth, despair by hope — if she is to carry out the Brangwen promise. Her vision of the rainbow is the fulfillment of God's Covenant that he will never destroy the things of the earth:

> And the rainbow stood on the earth. She knew that the sordid people who crept hard-scaled and separate on the face of the world's corruption were living still, that the rainbow was arched in their blood and would quiver to life in their spirit, that they would cast off their horny cover-

> ing of disintegration, that new, clean, naked bodies would issue to a new germination, to a new growth, rising to the light and the wind and the clean rain of heaven. She saw in the rainbow the earth's new architecture, the old, brittle corruption of houses and factories swept away, the world built up in a living fabric of Truth, fitting to the over-arching heaven.(p. 495)

Here the narrator and Lawrence are like a suspended series of intersecting circles. Her vision is the fulfillment for Lawrence of the urgent quest that produced both *Study of Thomas Hardy* and *The Rainbow*; it signifies the continuing possibility of transfiguration for all men. Lawrence takes the worst case — the men of Wiggiston — and imagines them bursting forth, like the red poppy in *Study of Thomas Hardy*, with new life.[15] Lawrence's novel is the equivalent to Ursula's final vision, the rainbow that follows the terrible task of creation. If we recall Lawrence's denial of life after death, we see that heaven means, parodoxically, a transformed life on earth where men will be alive passionately. Each man must discover the God within himself, or in different terms, rewrite the Bible for himself.

However, the ending presents some difficulties. *The Rainbow* announces itself as an alternative to the novel of manners and morals. At the end of *The Rainbow* Ursula has cleaned herself of inhibiting manners and morals, but she has not formed any attachments on which the kind of community Lawrence desired could be based.[16] What precedes belies the final vision. Furthermore, the vision is an epiphany for Lawrence and Ursula of the possibility of transfiguration, but it does not dramatize a future. His novel does not prepare his readers for a new community and offers no more than the vaguest hope that such a community can occur within England. And *Women in Love*, by showing the world in disintegration, takes back the hope of a transfigured community that is offered by the ending of *The Rainbow*.

Like Hardy, Lawrence proposes a cosmology other than the traditional Christian one that dominates the English novel.[17] Lawrence appropriates the Christian myth stretching from Eden to the Apocalypse to define his passionate Bible. But does that myth also appropriate Lawrence's plot? What distinguishes Hardy is the fulfillment of a malevolent pattern. As if

Lawrence could not sustain the implication of his insights, he imposes an apocalyptic ending on his material. Lawrence's ending undercuts and discards the novel's dramatization of the pervasive growth of a destructive strand of human life, represented by Skrebensky, Winifred, Uncle Tom, and Dr. Frankstone. His prophecy and his testimony are at odds. One cannot quite believe in the utopian simplification of Ursula's transorming vision because it is contradicted by the cumulative power of Lawrence's dramatic evidence. Within the novel, her triumph is hers alone. Lawrence's myth contradicts the novel's unfolding process. Moreover, by relying on the Judaic-Christian mythology for his epiphanies, Lawrence inadvertently restores some credibility to the very system that he is criticizing as anachronistic.

The movement of *The Rainbow* reflects Lawrence's efforts to clarify his own ideas and feelings, and to search for the appropriate aesthetic. Reading Lawrence, we must be attentive to the authorial presence embodied within the text. Knowing something about Lawrence's life and beliefs is essential. While *The Rainbow* nominally has an omniscient voice, we gradually realize that Lawrence's self-dramatizing voice reveals his values, emotions, idiosyncracies, and conflicts. Straining the convention of omniscient narration to its breaking point, Lawrence desperately tries to create a prophetic form out of his personal needs.

When we read *The Rainbow*, we participate in Lawrence's struggle to define his values and his concept of the novel. Lawrence writes of his own passions and experiences even when he assigns them to invented characters. We respond to the process by which his subject is converted into art. Like Rodin in his sculptures, Lawrence never detaches himself from the medium in which he is working. But the novel is the more exciting for his involvement. This involvement is characteristic of other great innovators in British fiction in the period 1895-1941: Conrad, Joyce, and Woolf. In these authors, the reader experiences a dialogue between the author's avowed subject and his effort to discover an appropriate language and form. These writers, like Lawrence, wrote to define themselves. And, as we know from

the work of Picasso, Matisse, Pollock, and Rothko, the process of creation, the struggle to evaluate personal experience, and the quest for values become the characteristic concerns not only of modern literature but of modern painting and sculpture.

NOTES

[1]*The Letters of D. H. Lawrence*, ed. Aldous Huxley (New York: Viking, 1932).

[2]*Phoenix: The Posthumous Papers of D. H. Lawrence*, ed. Edward P. McDonald (New York: Viking, 1936), pp. 529, 532. Published in "Morality and the Novel" in *Calendar of Modern Letters*, December, 1925. Unless otherwise indicated, selections from *Phoenix* were unpublished in Lawrence's lifetime.

[3]See my "Speaking of Paul Morel: Voice, Unity, and Meaning in *Sons and Lovers*," *Studies in the Novel* 8 (Fall, 1976), 255-77.

[4]See *Phoenix*, p. 535.

[5]See *Phoenix*, p. 296.

[6]See Samuel Hynes, *The Edwardian Turn of Mind* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1968), pp.326-36.

[7]For a splendid discussion of the evolution of *The Rainbow* and *Women in Love*, see Mark Kinkead-Weekes, "The Marble and the Statue: The Exploratory Imagination of D.H. Lawrence," in *Imagined Worlds*, eds. Maynard Mack and Ian Gregor (London: Metheun, 1968), pp. 371-418.

[8]See Emile Delavenay, *D. H. Lawrence: The Man and his Work: The Formative Years 1885-1919*, trans. Katherine M. Delavenay (Carbonsdale and Edwardsville, Ill.: Southern Illinois University Press, 1972), p. 255.

[9]Page references in parentheses refer to D. H. Lawrence, *The Rainbow* (New York: Viking, 1962).

[10]Quoted in Kinkead-Weekes, p. 372, from an Autumn 1913 letter in *The Collected Letters of D. H. Lawrence*, 2 vols., ed. Harry Moore (New York; Viking, 1962), I., 241.

[11]For a fuller discussion of *Kairos* and *Chronos*, see Frank Kermode, *The Sense of an Ending: Studies in the Theory of Fiction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967).

[12]Reading this novel, like reading many of the great innovative twentieth century works such as *Ulysses*, *The Waste Land*, and *Absalom, Absolom*, means discovering the secret of what at first seems a partially closed semantic system. At times the correspondence of words to things and feelings is elusive. The text resists becoming part of the world of shared discourse and remains a lyrical overflow outside of recognized semantic codes. Yet even these passages have their own semantic logic. Take the one in "Anna Victrix" in which two consecutive paragraphs beginning "And ever and again" render Anna's and Will's perception of each other in rapidly changing images (p. 167). The essence of the passage is its movement. Lawrence is straining to invent the appropriate language to convey the passionate yet unconscious struggle between himself and Frieda. As important as the individual images is the process of metamorphosis, the rapid change in the vehicles of the metaphors. These images convey the

struggle between Lawrence and Frieda that was the catalyst for these scenes. That Lawrence does not quite succeed in detaching himself from the struggle, does not move from immersion to reflection, becomes part of the reading experience for the reader who knows something about Lawrence's life.

[13]See *Study of Thomas Hardy*, Phoenix, pp. 446-8.

[14]For discussion of how *Study of Thomas Hardy*, written to 1914 but unpublished until after Lawrence's death, is central to Lawrence, see H. M. Daleski's *The Forked Flame* (Evanston, Ill: Northwestern, 1965), pp. 18-41. For discussion of how *Study* specifically informs *The Rainbow*, see Daleski, pp. 74-125.

[15]In *Study*, Lawrence writes, "[the wild poppy] had . . . achieved its complete poppyself. . . . It has uncovered its red. Its light, itself, has risen and shone out, has run on the winds for a moment. It is splendid" (*Phoenix*, pp. 403-4).

[16]In a letter to Lady Ottoline Morrell, he wrote of his utopian ideal:

"I want you to form the nucleus of a new community which shall start a new life amongst us — a life in which the only riches is integrity of character. So that each one may fulfill his own nature and desires to the utmost, but wherein tho'. the ultimate satisfaction and joy is the completeness of us all as one" (Feb. 1, 1915; *Huxley*, p. 224).

[17]See my "Beginnings and Endings in Hardy's Major Fiction," in *Critical Approaches to Thomas Hardy*, ed. Dale Kramer, (London: Macmillan, 1979).