

THE LOST BALANCE: A STUDY OF D. H. LAWRENCE'S CONCEPTION  
OF THE SELF AND THE LOVE RELATIONSHIP IN  
SONS AND LOVERS, THE RAINBOW, AND  
WOMEN IN LOVE

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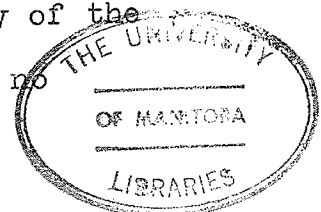
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by  
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## AN ABSTRACT

In the novels Sons and Lovers, The Rainbow, and Women in Love, Lawrence was primarily concerned with the individual and his possibilities for life and love. However, Lawrence's approach is singular. He firmly rejects orthodox religious tradition with its concentration on spirituality as man's salvation and hope for fulfillment. Instead, he conceives of a new system, which I have called a philosophy, in which sensuality is seen as the true basis of all natural life and expression; mankind being only one part of the unity of creation. Lawrence dignifies and changes the meaning of 'sensuality' by renaming it the 'phallic' or 'blood-consciousness' to contrast it with the 'mental consciousness' or intellect. The blood-consciousness man shares with all living creatures; it is the source of individuation, or 'selfhood.' The mental consciousness, on the other hand, is the purely human faculty, which when used correctly, gives the individual his awareness of selfhood and thereby, enlarged possibilities for fulfillment. Ideally, the individual should achieve a balance in his soul of both the mental and blood-consciousness, with life being lived from the latter and interpreted by the former. Men and women in a love relationship meet on the phallic level of selfhood; each as an independent being apprehends the mystery of the other's independence, or 'otherness'. As there is no



awareness at this level, there can be no 'knowing about', possession, or even 'love' in the traditional sense.

Lawrence believed that the failure of society and most individuals is in the unwillingness to recognize and live by the blood-consciousness. In the novels to be discussed, he explores this personal failure in the most intense human relationships and ruthlessly exposes the consequences of the resulting loss of meaning. It is Lawrence as critic and interpreter on which this paper concentrates. My thesis is that Lawrence keenly perceived the lost balance between the mental and blood-conscious levels in modern man. In the novels I have selected, Lawrence shows that this loss of balance results in man's inability to relate both to himself and to others in a vigorous, humanly meaningful manner. That it is a lost balance presupposes that balance has been known, and can be achieved again; this is the hope that Lawrence seems to conceive in an existentialist mode. It is this hope that establishes Lawrence as an optimist in the midst of his pessimism, and as a prose-poet of exuberant vitality in the midst of a wasteland of death and despair.

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## CHAPTER I

### LAWRENCE'S PHILOSOPHY OF THE SELF AND THE LOVE RELATIONSHIP

The purpose of this chapter is to come to a definition of terms. Words must convey exact meanings especially when they are being used in new ways. Lawrence's understanding of the fullest realization of human potential is different from the traditional one, but the words he must use to discuss it are the same as those that have acquired meaning in traditional usage. Such words as 'love', 'self', or even 'human' to Lawrence have different meanings, and to discuss Lawrence's philosophy as found in his art we must learn to appreciate this new usage. It is Lawrence's philosophy itself that determines the meanings he gives to words which describe the human condition, so that before an approach to his novels can be attempted, we must analyze in detail his conception of this condition.

Lawrence had a profound respect for the possibilities of human development, yet he also held that most people destroy their own chance for a full life by denying one half of their being. Lawrence formulated his conception of this neglected half of life in the following way:

Now I am convinced of what I believed when I was about twenty -- that there is another seat of consciousness than the brain and the nerve system; there is a

blood-consciousness which exists in us independently of the ordinary mental consciousness, which depends on the eye as its source or connector. There is the blood-consciousness, with the sexual connection holding the same relation as the eye, in seeing, holds to the mental consciousness. One lives, knows, and has one's being in the blood, without any reference to nerves and brain. This is one half of life, belonging to the darkness. And the tragedy of this our life, and of your life, is that the mental and nerve consciousness exerts a tyranny over the blood-consciousness and that your will has gone completely over to the mental consciousness and is engaged in the destruction of your blood-being or blood-consciousness, the final liberating of the one, which is only death in result. Plato was the same. Now it is necessary for us to realise that there is this other great half of our life active in the darkness, the blood-relationship. . . .<sup>1</sup>

Although Lawrence calls the blood-consciousness one half of life, its significance in the individual is greater than such a designation would admit. Elsewhere, in other terms, he has explained how the two halves more usually operate:

Man has two selves: one unknown, vital, living from the roots: the other, the known self, like a picture in a mirror or the objects on a tray. People live from this latter. And this latter can only feel known feelings: and its only experience of liberation is in the experience of novelty, which is the clash of sensation and a katabolic process.<sup>2</sup>

Living from the known self is not fulfilled living, but rather only a prolonged series of sensations of known origin. There can be no surprise in such a life. Once this

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<sup>1</sup>Harry T. Moore (ed.), The Collected Letters of D. H. Lawrence (London: William Heineman Ltd., 1962), "To Bertrand Russell . . . 8 December 1915", I, 393.

<sup>2</sup>Frieda Lawrence, Not I, But The Wind . . . (Toronto: The Macmillan Co. of Canada Ltd., 1934), p. 192.

life has been experienced in all possible variations, forward motion ends and stagnation or perversion begins:

The ordinary Englishman of the educated class goes to a woman now to masturbate himself. Because he is not going for discovery or new connection or progression, but only to repeat upon himself a known reaction.

. . . . .

Sodomy only means that a man knows he is chained to a rock, so he will try to get the finest possible sensation out of himself.

. . . . .

Or, the best thing such a life can do, that knows it is confined, is to set-to to arrange and assort all the facts and knowledge of the contained life. Which is what Plato did. . . .<sup>3</sup>

Such people, whether they try to make meaning out of their half life as Plato did or merely sink into the perversion that a life lived for sensation will produce, have made a drastic error in their estimation of their human potential.

Lawrence called the intellect a 'bit and a bridle' because its power is exerted to prevent the soul from coming into full bloom. The intellect, either from ignorance or fear of the unknown half of life, forces man to live only through one conscious faculty. Tension is inevitable; the 'dark half' fights for recognition in the soul. The reactions are many. Sodomy is one reaction, cruelty another:

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<sup>3</sup>Moore, op. cit., "To Bertrand Russell . . . 12 February 1915", I, 316-18.

Cruelty is a form of perverted sex. . . . Priests in their celibacy get their sex lustful, then perverted, then insane, hence Inquisitions -- all sexual in origin. . . . And soldiers, being herded together, men without women, never being satisfied by a woman, as a man never is from a street affair, get their surplus sex and their frustration and dissatisfaction into the blood and love cruelty. It is sex lust fermented makes atrocity.<sup>4</sup>

Such expressions of repressed drives are at the end of human endurance of the tension, but nevertheless, all those who sublimate the expression of the blood-consciousness to that of the intellect feel some of the tension of a life torn from its roots. John Keats is at such a moment of tension in his "Ode to a Nightingale," according to Lawrence:

I am sure the sound of the nightingale never made any man in love with easeful death -- except by contrast. The contrast between the bright flame of positive self-perfection in the bird, and the uneasy flame of waning selflessness, for ever reaching out to be something not himself, in the poet!<sup>5</sup>

Thus, it is the pathos of human existence that the faculty which enables man to be aware of himself, and therefore, potentially more perfect, has been twisted into a position that makes it deny man's very self. Seen in these terms, untrammelled intellect can only be destructive, and it is all the more so because a life lived in this manner has traditionally been considered the ideal. It is Lawrence's aim to

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<sup>4</sup>Ibid., "To Edward Garnett . . . Autumn, 1912," I, 156.

<sup>5</sup>F. Lawrence, op. cit., quoting from "The Nightingale" by D. H. Lawrence, p. 205.

reestablish the lost balance between the two levels of consciousness. The blood-consciousness or phallic consciousness, as he called it in later life, is as much a source of truly human qualities as is the mental consciousness; when he speaks of it as 'non-human' he means as opposed to that part of life which is 'known' and labelled by the intellect. His aim amounts almost to a mission:

. . . I sincerely believe in restoring the other, the phallic consciousness, into our lives: because it is the source of all real beauty, and all real gentleness. And those are the two things, tenderness and beauty, which will save us from horrors. . . . And in my novel I work for them directly, and direct from the phallic consciousness, which, you understand, is not the cerebral sex-consciousness, but something really deeper, and the root of poetry, lived or sung.<sup>6</sup>

In the blood-consciousness is found the center of existence; it is one half of human life, but it is the first half. From it the other half, the intellect, if it is to be a positive force, must grow. The intellect cannot deny the blood-being and exist in a vacuum without a hideous distortion of the self. Intellect struggling to sustain itself in sterility becomes what Lawrence calls the 'ego'; the self having lost touch with reality. It is inevitable, then, that the great intellectuals of history, by the very term we use to describe them, will have become the victims of their

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<sup>6</sup>Moore, op. cit., "To Harriet Monroe . . . 15 March 1928," II, 1046-7.

empty egos:

Your ideas of the grand perverts is excellent. . . . they all did the same thing, or tried to: to kick off, or to intellectualise and so utterly falsify the phallic consciousness, which is the basic consciousness, and the thing we mean, in the best sense, by common sense. . . . Goethe began millions of intimacies, and never got beyond the how-do-you-do stage, then fell off into his own boundless ego. He perverted himself into perfection and Godlikeness. . . . Back of all of them lies ineffable conceit.<sup>7</sup>

To Lawrence, this continual falsifying of the phallic consciousness into 'boundless ego' is the great crime committed by man against life. The basic struggle that the characters in his novels must face is against their own egos. Each one's personal fulfillment is measured by his realization of, and commitment to, the need to maintain the balance between his two conscious levels. To fail to do so means staggering personal defeat because all expression of a soul delivered over to the ego is twisted; there can be no self-respect, no friendship, no knowledge, and no love, only egotism. Even the sexual drives, whose relationship to the phallic consciousness Lawrence compared to the eye's relationship to the mental consciousness, have become divorced from their source and intellectualized. The result of this intellectualization he called 'sex in the head', or what Frieda Lawrence said was 'a theory of loving' and meant only

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<sup>7</sup>Ibid., "To Aldous Huxley . . . 27 March 1928," II, 1049.

egotism again:

But there's the trouble; men have most of them got their sex in the head nowadays, and nowhere else. They start all their deeper reactions in their heads, and work themselves from the top downwards, which of course brings disgust, because you're only having yourself all the time, no matter what other individual you take as machine-a-plaisir, you're only taking yourself all the time. . . . 'God enters from below,' said the Egyptians, and that's right.<sup>8</sup>

One cannot be too self-conscious without having become victim to the idea of one's self that is also called the ego. Any 'idea' of human nature is therefore wrong because of its very attempt to justify what it finds:

I could do with Dostoevsky if he did not make all men fallen angels. We are not angels. It is a tiresome conceit. Men want to be Sadists or they don't. If they do, well and good. There's no need to drag in the fallen angel touch to save ourselves in our own sight. I am most sick of this divinity-of-man business. People are not important. I insist on it.<sup>9</sup>

There are not two contradictory sides to human nature, with either one needing justification; human nature is a whole, a balance. There should be no tension in existence and there would not be if people could accept their created selves in their original wholeness. Then people would be no more self-conscious than an awareness of being presupposes; they would be more impersonal, and would stop "for ever fingering over

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid., "To Willard Johnson . . . ? 12 October 1922," II, 726.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., "To S. S. Koteliansky . . . 15 February 1916," I, 429.

their own souls," preferring instead to "create a new life, a new common life, a new complete tree of life from the roots that are within them."<sup>10</sup> Pride is only justified in these terms: "One's pride should be in one's wholeness, not in an intensification of one's own partiality.

. . . . .  
The great sin is the trying to destroy the living balance."<sup>11</sup>

Once man has severed himself from the roots of his being he becomes uncertain and, in the hope of finding mooring for his soul, grasps everywhere for security. The most harmful kind of reaching out for security is the compulsion to dominate, feel in control, and therefore secure. This is the 'will-to-power' that Lawrence represents in his novels. There are many manifestations of this 'will-to-power,' but its effects are always the same; the crushing out of all spontaneous life both in the victim and the perpetrator. The 'will-to-power' is found on the national as well as the personal level:

Everything in America goes by will. A great negative will seems to be turned against all spontaneous life--there seems to be no feeling at all--no genuine bowels of compassion and sympathy; all this gripped, iron,

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid., "To Katherine Mansfield . . . 12 December 1915," I, 395.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., "To Mabel Dodge Luhan . . . 10 February 1924," II, 778-9.

benevolent will, which in the end is diabolic.<sup>12</sup>

Domination can take many forms; it can even come disguised as love. In this most intimate of human relationships it can be the most destructive. In a love relationship two people are so closely bound together that the perversion of one partner will inevitably scar the other. If the ties also include the one of blood, in the name of love, the beloved's very soul can be extinguished. Lawrence reflects the anguish that such relationships can produce:

Muriel is the girl I have broken with. She loves me to madness and demands the soul of me. . . .

. . . . .

Nobody can have the soul of me. My mother has had it, and nobody can have it again. Nobody can come into my very self again, and breathe me like an atmosphere. . . . Louie . . . would never demand to drink me up and have me. . . . She will never plunge her hands through my blood and feel for my soul and make me set my teeth and shiver and fight away.<sup>13</sup>

Relationships in which one partner attempts to 'possess' the other in the name of love are self-destructive. Either the 'possessed' partner shrinks to nonentity or, in struggling against being enveloped, breaks the bond. In both cases the would-be 'possessor' is left destitute having achieved only death by his 'love'. Clearly, love is in no way a

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<sup>12</sup>Ibid., "To Else Jaffe . . . 27 September 1922," II, 721.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., "To Rachel Annand Taylor . . . 3 December 1910, I, 70.

'possession' in Lawrence's terms.

To Lawrence, only two complete human beings, satisfied and confident in their own 'being' can come together in a true love relationship. They must have the courage to face the mystery of life in profound respect for its infinite variation. On the human level they must be willing to submit to the acceptance of their own uniqueness and that of their beloved. Each is whole in himself, perfect in his creation, yet with a need to 'know' in full contact and relation with other complete beings. Lawrence often spoke of this kind of knowledge in which a fully balanced soul can apprehend life. In the same way as all true knowledge, these truths enter 'from below'. He held this idea all his life:

Somehow, I think we come into knowledge (unconscious) of the most vital parts of the cosmos through touching things.<sup>14</sup>

But what we all want, madly, is human contact. That I find more and more--not ideas;--transference of feeling--human contact.<sup>15</sup>

And much later, his view is only more refined:

After all, we shall never again know the heavens as we know the clock. . . . It's life that matters--and the big thing we've lost out of life needs to be recovered, livingly. . . . I know that no knowledge is knowledge unless it has its direct emotional-passional

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<sup>14</sup>Ibid., "To Blanche Jennings . . . 15 December 1908," I, 40.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., "To Blanche Jennings . . . 28 January 1910," I, 60.

reference. Scientific truth is an illusion.<sup>16</sup>

The confidence that comes of self-possession and an awe held for all that is not one's self results in a new kind of perception that will yield this more meaningful knowledge.

Frieda Lawrence describes this process of learning as Lawrence himself experienced it:

When Lawrence first found a gentian, a big single blue one, I remember feeling as if he had a strange communion with it, as if the gentian yielded up its blueness, its very essence, to him. Everything he met had the newness of a creation just that moment come into being.<sup>17</sup>

Each individual, then, must maintain a balance in his soul between the mental and blood-conscious levels and live from the latter upward, so to speak. The security of such a life lived by the natural order will eliminate both the tension of the need to justify oneself and the need to control both one's own soul and those of others. The individual will simply 'be'. From this center he will be free to look outward to meaningful relationships and knowledge without any sacrifice of 'self'. However, it is essential that one take pride in one's own uniqueness. One must know one's self to its depths and take pride in this knowledge of that which separates one from the rest of creation. If this is

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid., "To Frederick Carter . . . 26 July 1923," II, 748-9.

<sup>17</sup> F. Lawrence, op. cit., p. 35.

not a natural process it must be learned and, as Frieda Lawrence admits, this is not easy to do:

Being born and reborn is no joke, and being born into your own intrinsic self, that separates and singles you out from all the rest -- it's a painful process.<sup>18</sup>

Frieda believed that Lawrence himself exhibited this state of 'selfhood' that he conceived of as the ideal:

Another thing I understood: there was no 'God-Almightiness' about him, like the universal 'I-am-everlasting' feeling of Goethe, for instance. He knew 'I am D. H. Lawrence from my head to my toes, and there I begin and there I end and my soul lives inside me. All else is not me, but I can have a relationship with all that is not me in the world, and the more I realize the otherness of other things around me, the richer I am.'<sup>19</sup>

The perception of, and respect for, the 'otherness of other things' is essential to Lawrence's understanding of the self in interaction. For the man, this means a recognition of the fundamental difference between himself as a male and the woman as a female, beyond personal differences. Lawrence often wrote to his friends of this difference:

There is another quality in woman that you do not know, so you can't estimate it. You don't know that a woman is not a man with different sex. She is a different world. You do not understand that enough. Your world is all of one hemisphere.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid., p. 3.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., p. 75.

<sup>20</sup> Moore, op. cit., "To S. S. Koteliansky . . . ? 4 December, 1914," I, 295.

He challenges Edward Garnett in his artistic conception of women:

No I don't think you have a high opinion of women. They have each got an internal form, an internal self which remains firm and individual whatever love they may be subject to. It's the positivity of women you seem to deny -- make them sort of instrumental. There is in women such a big sufficiency unto themselves, more than in men. You really study the conflict and struggles of men over women: the women themselves are inactive and merely subject. That seems queer.<sup>21</sup>

In fact, Frieda Lawrence believed that his respect for women amounted almost to fear:

In his heart of hearts I think he always dreaded women, felt that they were in the end more powerful than men. Woman is so absolute and undeniable. Man moves, his spirit flies here and there but you can't go beyond a woman. From her, man is born and to her he returns for his ultimate need of body and soul. She is like earth and death to which all return.<sup>22</sup>

Certainly, some of Lawrence's most powerful characters are women, and their importance both as individuals and as the 'female' is a constant theme in his novels.

The male must receive of the special female quality to maintain the balance of the positive soul:

Because life tends to take two streams, male and female, and only some female influence (not necessarily woman, but most obviously woman) can fertilise the soul of man to vision or being. Then the vision we're after, I don't know what it is -- but it is something that contains awe and dread and submission, not pride or

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid., "To Edward Garnett . . . Autumn, 1912," I, 157.

<sup>22</sup> F. Lawrence, op. cit., p. 57.

sensuous egotism and assertion.<sup>23</sup>

The man must be willing to accept the new knowledge of himself that will come when the 'female' comes into his life; to submit in these terms is not to give up any true part of one's self but only, if need be, to give up the egotistical idea of one's self for an even greater fulfillment. Thus, he says:

To love, you have to learn to understand the other, more than she understands herself, and to submit to her understanding of you. It is damnably difficult and painful, but it is the only thing which endures.<sup>24</sup>

Of course the process is the same in reverse. The woman must receive the male spirit from the man who must be willing to assert it.

Because human relationships are so intimate and intense, the balance is often toppled over. People fear the self-revelation, personal confidence, and courage needed to meet another in a firm relationship and often will retreat. The soul, having dropped the challenge, becomes perverse:

Beware of it -- this mother-incest idea can become an obsession. But it seems to me that there is this much truth in it: that at certain periods the man has a desire and a tendency to return into the woman, make her his goal and end, find his justification in her. In this way, he casts himself as it were, into her womb, and she,

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<sup>23</sup> Moore, op. cit., "To Gordon Campbell . . . 21 September 1914," I, 290.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., "To Sir Thomas Dacre Dunlop . . . 7 July 1914," I, 285.

the Magna Mater, receives him with gratification. This is a kind of incest. . . . I do think a woman must yield some sort of precedence to the man and he must take this precedence.<sup>25</sup>

Homosexuality can have the same basis. Lawrence says:

I believe a man projects his own image on another man, like on a mirror. But from a woman he wants himself re-born, re-constructed. So he can always get satisfaction from a man, but it is the hardest thing in life to get one's soul and body satisfied from a woman, so that one is free from oneself. And one is kept by all tradition and instinct from loving men, or a man -- for it means just extinction of all the purposive influences. And one doesn't believe in one's power to find and to form the woman in whom one can be free -- and one shoots oneself if one is vital and feels powerfully and down to the core.<sup>26</sup>

Lawrence's philosophy of life, therefore, as this study of his letters and life would indicate, is most complex. In his novels, through the artistic representation of this philosophy, his didactic purpose becomes clear. After this study of his philosophy we can respect the sincerity and depth of insight with which he approached his goal:

I can only write what I feel pretty strongly about; and that, at present, is the relationship between men and women. After all, it is the problem of today, the establishment of a new relation, or the readjustment of the old one, between men and women.<sup>27</sup>

For those of his time who could not understand what

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid., "To Katherine Mansfield . . . ? 21 November 1918," I, 565.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., "To Henry Savage . . . 2 December 1913," I, 251-2.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., "To Edward Garnett . . . ? 18 April 1913," I, 200.

he meant and for those of our time who misread him, Lawrence has been accused of sensationalizing and otherwise misrepresenting sex. As we have seen, nothing could be farther from the truth. Frieda Lawrence called him a 'real puritan' who hated all lewdness,<sup>28</sup> and certainly he was only interested in reestablishing what he considered was the lost balance.

Frieda Lawrence stated what she believed to be one of Lawrence's main artistic themes as she speaks of their marriage:

There was the ordinary man and woman fight between us, to keep the balance, not to trespass, not to topple over. The balance in a human relationship was one of Lawrence's chief themes. He felt that each should keep intact his own integrity and isolation, yet at the same time preserve a mutual bond like the north and south poles which between them enclose the world.<sup>29</sup>

The thesis of this paper is to establish that, in the three novels to be discussed, Lawrence indeed considered balance essential to the full development of both the individual and his love relationships. There is no doubt that Lawrence had a deep respect for the possibilities of marriage wherein the long struggle between the partners may be fought and the balance finally established. Marriage is the commitment the self must make to achieve its final flowering.

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<sup>28</sup> F. Lawrence, op. cit., pp. 75-6.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., (foreword) pp. vi-vii.

Lawrence's own attitude before his marriage reveals the importance he attributed to that state:

. . . it is a great thing for me to marry you, not a quick, passionate coming together. I know in my heart 'here's my marriage'. It feels rather terrible because it is a great thing in my life -- it is my life -- I am a bit awe-inspired -- I want to get used to it. If you think it is fear and indecision, you wrong me. It is you who would hurry, who are undecided. It's the very strength and inevitability of the oncoming thing that makes me wait, to get in harmony with it.<sup>30</sup>

As Lawrence's understanding of the commitment and eternity of marriage deepened, he made less and less of the external expressions of the bond in the marriage. He came to suspect that what we call passion "is a very one-sided thing, based chiefly on hatred and Wille zur Macht,"<sup>31</sup> and even 'love' is not the basic need in marriage: "To the devil with love! Give me strength, battle-strength, weapon-strength, fighting-strength, give me this, you woman!"<sup>32</sup> It is the unconscious blood level that feeds and is nourished by the marriage bond; the conscious expression of the bond is unreliable at best, and ultimately not important.

As Lawrence believed in the balance between the conscious levels in the soul, and the balance between a man and

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid., p. 22.

<sup>31</sup> Moore, op. cit., "To Lady Ottoline Morrell . . . 27 December 1915," I, 404.

<sup>32</sup> F. Lawrence, op. cit., quoting D. H. Lawrence, p. 142-3.

woman in marriage, so he believed in a balance in all one's relationships. One cannot live wholly in and for the marriage bond, put all one's 'eggs in the same basket', so to speak; one must also look outward to other relationship commitments. One of his long-held hopes was to establish a community of friends, each whole in himself and dedicated to the commitment of friendship. Although he recognized that sexual love of a man for a man was a fear of one's own expanding self and therefore a perversion, he realized also that there was much to be learned through friendships with individuals of either sex. However, even as he states this belief we can see his growing disillusionment:

. . . I do believe in friendship. I believe tremendously in friendship between man and man, a pledging of men to each other inviolably. But I have not ever met or formed such friendship. Also, I believe the same way in friendship between men and women, and between women and women, sworn, pledged, eternal, as eternal as the marriage bond, and as deep. But I have not met or formed such friendship.<sup>33</sup>

Lawrence, however, consistent with his whole philosophy, finally came to suspect that the very urgency of the blood-consciousness will make it impossible to have a relationship that cannot be permitted to satisfy more than the mental half of consciousness. Human love is jealous, unwilling to share the beloved; the "instinct is always to

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<sup>33</sup> Moore, op. cit., "To Katherine Mansfield . . . ?  
21 November 1918," I, 565.

divide, to separate individuals and set them one against the other . . . Unite with the one against the other and it's no good."<sup>34</sup> Whether he most believed that human frailty prevented the realization of the ideal or that the balanced soul could never form a relationship without acknowledging its two halves, is not clear. Nevertheless, Lawrence, faced by this obstacle, abandoned his faith in friendship when it proved impossible:

And a word about friendship. Friendship between a man and a woman, as a thing of first importance to either, is impossible: and I know it. We are creatures of two halves, spiritual and sensual -- and each half is as important as the other. Any relation based on the one half -- say the delicate spiritual half alone -- inevitably brings revulsion and betrayal. . . .<sup>35</sup>

Having analyzed Lawrence's philosophy of life as he expressed it through letters, we may now turn to the novels themselves with an understanding of the terms and struggles we will meet. It is now possible to concentrate on the artistic creation of the human relationships without needing to refer constantly to an explanation of Lawrence's beliefs. Philosopher and novelist are not necessarily co-existent. Having examined him as a philosopher we shall now turn to consider him as a novelist.

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid., "To the Hon. Dorothy Brett . . . Spring 1925," II, 837.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., "To the Hon. Dorothy Brett . . . ? 26 January 1925," II, 828.

## CHAPTER II

### SONS AND LOVERS: EXPLORATION OF THE DILEMMA

In discussing balance in the individual and in relationships in these three novels, it is essential to remember that although Lawrence was motivated by the philosophy of life discussed in Chapter One, he created art not philosophy. Sons and Lovers was his first great work. Lawrence, however, was not a 'stylist' in the sense that Henry James was. The reader must learn respect for Lawrence's method; he must be patient in waiting for images to build by impression and sensation and he must recognize that even in the end they will be cloaked in much uncertainty. For example, in the scene in which Morel shuts his wife out of the house and she wanders in the garden, much remains inaccessible to the intellect. Her fear of, and fascination with, the mysterious plants in the 'great white' moonlight, her identification with the lilies, along with her keen sensation of exclusion create the final impression but yield no satisfactory explanation of it. It is difficult to define Lawrence's intention here, perhaps impossible, but the power of the scene can not be forgotten.

Consistent with his philosophy, Lawrence's appeal is not to his reader's intellect, and one will be disappointed if he looks only for intellectual refinement in this type of

art. The theme of balance, then, is not explicitly drawn out of character and situation by Lawrence himself; the word 'balance' is mentioned relatively few times. Yet one is justified in approaching the novel with this kind of examination in mind because one can understand, in these terms, the failures in relationships shown in the novel. Lawrence does not 'moralize', even though, as author, he retains objectivity and will comment on a character and situation freely. Lawrence's art in Sons and Lovers creates situations which are comment enough on the action. Thus, the reader will look in vain for the kind of judgment Lawrence bestowed on his friends in letters, though it is the same man who speaks.

In Sons and Lovers, the individual is revealed primarily through relationships. The nature of being and the expression of it through human contact are integral. An incomplete character can only express himself incompletely. I choose to express this negatively because in Sons and Lovers Lawrence is concerned with failure; failure of self and failure in relationships. The novel is not written from the point of view of one character's consciousness, even in those chapters about Paul. When a character such as Paul moves into relationship with another character, the reader is fully aware that it is a relationship of two different people. Both individuals are realized as human beings; they both

bring needs, hopes, and limitations to the relationship. There is no external 'right' of which Paul is the representative, but rather these needs and hopes must be satisfied anew, and differently, in each relationship. Failure is the result of the combined limitations of the participants. Paul's partners are not merely externalized manifestations of an internal struggle, but rather, they also share in the responsibility for his failure. Paul's women have each taught him about himself and have each wronged him, but they have not made it impossible that he should never meet his 'mate', the 'right' woman. If, and when, he does he will be offered anew the possibility of salvation. Alone, however, he has only the 'drift towards death'.

Mrs. Morel is the dominant force in the novel. Her marriage begins the novel and her death effectively ends it. Neither William nor Paul can 'leave' their mother emotionally, and she is in the background of their struggles. She is a large, if limited, character and our reaction to her is complex. Her marriage is the first relationship described in depth in the novel and is perhaps the most crucial, for her sons must live and grow in the consequences of its failure.

This marriage, like those in The Rainbow, is a marriage of opposites. Gertrude Morel was highly intelligent, intellectual, and puritanical. However, she was instantly captivated by Walter Morel who was completely different;

Therefore the dusky, golden softness of this man's sensuous flame of life, that flowed off his flesh like the flame from a candle, not baffled and gripped into incandescence by thought and spirit as her life was, seemed to her something wonderful, beyond her.<sup>1</sup>

The tragedy of her life is that his sensuousness remains beyond her. She falls in love with Morel's vitality but cannot live with it and accept it as the measure of his being. In the end she returns her allegiance to her own nature. Mrs. Morel cannot accept her husband's very real limitations. She had 'flashes of fear' soon after her marriage when she realized he did not understand her when she spoke seriously to him and that she was not everything to him. He had lied to her about owning the house and the furniture and this she considered a betrayal. By the time the first child arrived all love was dead between them. Gertrude soon despised her husband and he became brutal in his jealousy of the child:

There began a battle between the husband and wife -- a fearful, bloody battle that ended only with the death of one. She fought to make him undertake his own responsibilities, to make him fulfil his obligations. But he was too different from her. His nature was purely sensuous, and she strove to make him moral, religious. She tried to force him to face things. He could not endure it -- it drove him out of his mind.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>D. H. Lawrence, Sons and Lovers, Compass Books Edition, (New York: The Viking Press, 1958), p. 10.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 14.

Lawrence recognized the need of a fight, even a fearful one, to achieve balance in marriage, but here neither partner had the courage to face the battle honestly. Both sought escape, Morel in drink, his wife in her family. Morel's first interference in the life Gertrude was beginning to create for herself was his last and the first step in his disintegration. Although she admits later that she was 'silly' in her outburst over Morel's cutting William's hair, they both knew that it symbolized the end of their affinity. Morel was now considered a threat to the security Gertrude was building for herself in her child. The essential fact of this security lay in Morel's exclusion from the circle that was tightly closed against him. The mother's feeling was transmitted to the children; they came to hate everything their father stood for in the family; he was the enemy who attacked the fortress of motherlove which walled them in. The children are unable to see their father with any kind of objectivity, though the pathos of his situation is clear to the reader. Lawrence has not hesitated to work in this theme of pathos as an undertone and comment on the situation.

It is obvious that Morel drank to escape his wife's scorn and to have an excuse to stay away from home. However, he always retains enough self-respect not to will his own death through drink. Also, he remains regular at work

to provide for the family that hated him, though admittedly, less and less adequately. However, we can appreciate his hatred of authority, his opposition to which was responsible for his cut in salary. Though brutal, he is never vicious. After locking his wife out, he was ashamed for a time, as long as his nature would permit such a self-accusation. He becomes less of a man after every such encounter: after the drawer struck Mrs. Morel's head, and she insisted on ministering to herself while fiercely clutching the baby Paul to her, Morel sees her blood fall on the child's head:

Fascinated, he watched the heavy dark drop hang in the glistening cloud, and pull down the gossamer. Another drop fell. It would soak through to the baby's scalp. He watched, fascinated, feeling it soak in; then, finally, his manhood broke.<sup>3</sup>

Mrs. Morel was now no longer a wife but fulfilled herself only as a mother. Her husband knew she cast him off:

Henceforward he was more or less a husk. And he himself acquiesced, as so many men do, yielding their place to their children.<sup>4</sup>

She no longer existed for him; his soul "would reach out in its blind way to her and find her gone" so that he would be forced to go to bed leaving her "to enjoy herself alone, working, thinking, living."<sup>5</sup> His isolation from the family unit is complete. Although his last child loved him for

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<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 40.    <sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 46.    <sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 47.

a while:

He was shut out from all family affairs. No one told him anything. The children, alone with their mother, told her all about the day's happenings, everything. Nothing had really taken place in them until it was told to their mother. But as soon as the father came in, everything stopped. He was like the scotch in the smooth, happy machinery of the home. And he was always aware of this fall of silence on his entry, the shutting off of life, the unwelcome. But now it was gone too far to alter.

He would dearly have liked the children to talk to him but they could not.<sup>6</sup>

Morel was only successful with the children when he took them away from the home and their mother to his work shed, his domain. The mother did not begrudge him this little. Seen in this light, Morel is a pathetic character. Certainly he was never much more than self-confidently alive in somewhat the same sense as the nightingale, but this Lawrence considered a positive thing and it was taken away from him.

It would be a mistake to see only Mrs. Morel's influence in her husband's degradation, but her share in the responsibility for it is considerable. Rather than reflect a balance between the two, she has forced the relationship to reflect only herself. In the end, therefore, she alone remains. Preferring to heap all the blame on her husband, only once does she acknowledge her share in the breakdown

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<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 62.

of her marriage. She stands before a rich sunset at a time when "the beauty of things stands out, and she had the peace and the strength to see herself."<sup>7</sup> She observes her child whose "look was heavy, steady, as if it had realised something that had stunned some point of its soul,"<sup>8</sup> and "at that moment she felt, in some far inner place of her soul, that she and her husband were guilty."<sup>9</sup> This is the child that had 'boiled within her' as she wandered delirious with rage after Morel had shut her out of her home. Though she wonders if her son will be a Joseph, she thrusts him to 'the crimson, throbbing sun' whose light is rapidly failing, and determines to call him Paul. Out of her failure he becomes the missionary to men. Lawrence's irony is implicit. Such are the effects of a relationship destroyed.

Unlike Miriam, Mrs. Morel is a passionate woman. Paul later theorizes that this is what caused her to stay with her husband. She had experienced "the real, real flame of feeling through another person,"<sup>10</sup> and therefore, though she was religious, she could never lose herself in the sterility of orthodox religion. Her allegiance remains in life and the living. She lives through and for her children, refusing to die even when she contracts cancer. However,

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<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 36.    <sup>8</sup>Ibid., p. 37.    <sup>9</sup>Ibid., p. 36.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., p. 317.

her passionate nature has its negative side. Finding no outlet in her husband, she turns to her sons and takes them as lovers. Bound to her by ties of blood as well as love, her sons, William and Paul, are thereafter crippled in adult love relationships. This crippling, however, is most explicit with William. Nevertheless, Paul's secondary position to his mother makes him more vulnerable to her power when he finally wins her first love. He has to desire intensely and earn her devotion in order to receive it, whereas William is heir to it simply because he is first-born and oldest. Paul has been forced into the background in his early life where he strengthens his resolve to fulfil his mother when he is able.

The degree of Mrs. Morel's absorption in her sons is exhibited in her relationship with William. Any mother would feel her concern over William's uncertainties in London, however:

. . . he did not stand firm on his own feet, but seemed to spin rather giddily on the quick current of the new life. . . . She could feel him losing himself.<sup>11</sup>

His failure to attain maturity is symbolized by his 'love' for the shallow Gypsy. He is cruelly critical of her flightiness before his mother yet his physical liaison with the girl prevents him from leaving her. His mother is his

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<sup>11</sup>Ibid., p. 90.

conscience; he exposes the girl before her. He has no self-respect and this is shown in his cleaving to a girl who he knows would never visit his grave should he die. William is lost to life because his mother had been all he was. He is non-existent as a human being and his physical death is only the end of a long process of dissolution. Mrs. Morel, however, is never consciously aware of her responsibility in William's flight from life; she is only aware that her hope to fulfil herself in her son may be destroyed.

When William finally does die his mother wills to follow him. She could not rouse herself to interest in life; "She could only brood on her dead son; he had been let to die so cruelly."<sup>12</sup> Her life had lost its meaning; she had lost her outlet. Paul is in despair at her exclusion of him and, cut off from the mainspring of his life, he begins also to die. His illness shocks his mother back into life; "I should have watched the living, not the dead,"<sup>13</sup> she says, as she suddenly realizes she has another son to live through. As meaning is infused back into her life she gives sustenance to Paul and he returns to health: "The two knitted together in perfect intimacy. Mrs. Morel's life now rooted itself in Paul."<sup>14</sup> The process begins again. She has learned nothing.

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid., p. 140.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., p. 141.

Unfortunately, when a mother waits until her sons are grown to give them the full measure of her love, they will leave her when she is most vulnerable to hurt and jealousy at her loss. This is what happens to Mrs. Morel especially with regard to Paul. More sensitive than his brother, Paul chooses a girl with remarkable character. Miriam is not unlike Mrs. Morel in respect of intelligence and intellect but, rather than view his choice as a kind of compliment to herself, Mrs. Morel hates the girl. Mrs. Morel instinctively knows that Miriam will challenge Paul's very love for his mother. Mrs. Morel fights Miriam for Paul's love with all her strength. Paul is caught in the resulting tension.

Mrs. Morel is aware of Miriam's subconscious intent with regard to Paul:

"She exults--she exults as she carries him off from me," Mrs. Morel cried in her heart when Paul had gone. "She's not like an ordinary woman, who can leave me my share in him. She wants to absorb him. . . . till there is nothing left of him, even for himself. He will never be a man on his own feet--she will suck him up." So the mother sat and battled and brooded bitterly.<sup>15</sup>

Though this evaluation is partially true about Miriam, it is an even more significant comment on Mrs. Morel's own situation. She wants Paul to get physical love which she can't give him from other women but she wants to hold the key to his finer sensibilities. She feels Miriam also wants

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<sup>15</sup>Ibid., p. 192-3.

that key and is in despair. Mrs. Morel is splitting and differentiating between the two aspects of love discussed in Chapter One. Paul's life becomes a continual effort to find himself in the tension resulting from this loss of balance. Mrs. Morel's tragic error is not in trying to find for him a release for his physical nature outside their relationship, but in giving him love that in the first place was more than maternal. Mrs. Morel took her grown sons as lovers; there would be none of the 'pushing out of the nest' that is a fundamental part of maternal love. In a lover, however, one should find a culmination of past loves; a uniting and a balancing of physical and spiritual love. This a mother can never provide, even with proxies. Paul remains an uneasy child through the novel, held by his mother's love, yet uneasy in its inadequacy. ". . . I shall never meet the right woman while you live,"<sup>16</sup> he says to his mother and this is because he can never give his whole soul to the search.

Miriam, however, is no mere mother substitute. Paul's relationship with her is both good for him and bad for him. Like Clara after her, Miriam represents something in him which he must come to terms with. However, his search is always complicated and retarded by his continued dependence on his mother. At this time in his life Paul exists less in

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<sup>16</sup>Ibid., p. 351

himself than as 'spread out' among his relationships with his women. Part of his problem is that he must deal with the contradictions that spring from the relationships all at the same time. This breeds tensions that too often can only find release in brutality. Paul's struggle to manhood is another kind of "Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man."

Miriam is the first of Lawrence's intellectual women who exhibit the 'will-to-power', but she is treated with a greater sensitivity than Hermione is in Women in Love. Paul must struggle through to an understanding of the type of love she offers and there is none of the sense of definition that we receive in Hermione's description. Miriam, in her insecurity of self, wants to possess things, to smother them in her unnaturally excessive love. Throughout their relationship she wants only the Paul she is familiar with and understands. She cannot acknowledge the 'unknown' side of him. Paul protests this insistence of hers to 'put him in her pocket'. When he is ill she glories in the chance to minister to him, to be everything to him. It is a maternal instinct that has no place in an adult love relationship:

Then he was so ill, and she felt he would be weak. Then she would be stronger than he. Then she could love him. If she could be mistress of him in his weakness, take care of him, if he could depend on her, if she could, as it were, have him in her arms, how she would

love him!<sup>17</sup>

She exhibits here the mixture of egotism and insecurity that is the inevitable result of the imbalance in her soul.

There is a severe lack of vitality in Miriam, for all the force of her personality. This is expressed in several ways. Though we learn that as a young woman she is full-breasted and luxuriously formed: "All the life of Miriam's body was in her eyes. . . . Her body was not flexible and living."<sup>18</sup> Of Miriam, Lawrence continues: "There was no looseness or abandon about her. Everything was gripped stiff with intensity, and her effort, overcharged, closed in on itself."<sup>19</sup> She cannot laugh or swing or jump without fear. Paul protests against this death in the midst of life: "If you put red berries in your hair, why would you look like some witch or priestess, and never like a reveller?"<sup>20</sup>

Miriam's religion is the mainspring of her existence. She was mystical, and "went to church reverently, with bowed head."<sup>21</sup> On her mother's side her family was mystical and saintly in the same way, 'above' vulgarity, and proud. Too religious and inhibited to think of men except with scorn, Miriam took Nature as her lover with the same intense religious mysticism in which she approached all the important

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<sup>17</sup>Ibid., p. 143.    <sup>18</sup>Ibid., p. 153.    <sup>19</sup>Ibid., p. 154.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., p. 188.    <sup>21</sup>Ibid., p. 142.

things in her life. It is in their common love of Nature, however, that the love between Paul and Miriam had its start, he as the artist, she as the mystic.

Paul is shocked by the suffocating intensity with which Miriam gives her love to the creatures in Nature. She tries to smother flowers with her love in the same way she tries to smother Paul. This denotes a lack of respect for the 'otherness of other things' that is characteristic of Miriam's version of 'love'. Paul's reaction is essentially the same as Miriam's four-year-old brother's: "Don't-- don't, Miriam!" It is not without reason, then, that when they finally split, Miriam accuses Paul of being a child of four who always fought her love! Paul stands back in surprise and growing horror when Miriam strokes and fondles flowers:

"Can you never like things without clutching them as if you wanted to pull the heart out of them? Why don't you have a bit more restraint, or reserve, or something?

. . . . .

You're always begging things to love you as if you were a beggar for love. Even the flowers, you have to fawn on them-- . . . .

. . . . .

You don't want to love--your eternal and abnormal craving is to be loved. You aren't positive, you're negative. You absorb, absorb, as if you must fill yourself

up with love, because you've a shortage somewhere."<sup>22</sup>

Paul's own love of nature has not this smothering quality. He has learned his mother's awe and joy in nature. "And now, you see? I might have missed them" she cries. "And I've never had a glory of the snow in my garden in my life."<sup>23</sup> Her simple awe at nature's infinite beauty and variety is considerably more consistent with Lawrence's own attitude. Paul shares her joy and respect and his love for nature is infused with a sense of proportion. Unlike Clara he feels free to pick flowers because they are beautiful and he enjoys them, and he scorns her notion that they are somehow corpses. Perhaps it is this quality that makes him an artist; that enables him to capture the "shimmering protoplasm in the leaves and everywhere" and know that "Only this shimmeriness is the real living. The shape is the dead. The shimmer is inside really."<sup>24</sup> Miriam can appreciate this quality in his work but only he can 'capture' it by the paradoxical process of respecting its 'otherness'.

The question arises, why does Paul seem unable to leave Miriam, if in fact, they are so different? Miriam is invaluable to Paul as an artist and a young man struggling to an understanding of his being. In discussion and conflict

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<sup>22</sup>Ibid., p. 218.    <sup>23</sup>Ibid., p. 164.    <sup>24</sup>Ibid., p. 152.

with her he learns about himself. His process is seen mainly in regard to his art:

He was conscious only when stimulated. A sketch finished, he always wanted to take it to Miriam. Then he was stimulated into knowledge of the work he had produced unconsciously. In contact with Miriam he gained insight; his vision went deeper. From his mother he drew the life-warmth, the strength to produce; Miriam urged this warmth into intensity like a white light.<sup>25</sup>

Paul, whose inspiration enters from below, as Lawrence would say, has to become aware of what he receives, but it is inevitable that he should finally reject Miriam's insistence on bringing every aspect of their lives to the conscious, spiritual level. Paul comes to suspect that she does so because she has no vital source of being or that her very conscious intensity has destroyed it: "You make me so spiritual!" he cries to her. "And I don't want to be spiritual."<sup>26</sup> Yet he grows in his relationship with her:

There was for him the most intense pleasure in talking about his work to Miriam. All his passion, all his wild blood, went into this intercourse with her, when he talked and conceived his work. She brought forth to him his imaginations. . . . this was life for her and him.<sup>27</sup>

Miriam gives him something his mother cannot, something crucial to him as an artist and a man, and Mrs. Morel, who wants to be all things to her son, is jealous. Paul cannot understand her resentment of his need to move beyond what her

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<sup>25</sup>Ibid., p. 158.    <sup>26</sup>Ibid., p. 188.    <sup>27</sup>Ibid., p. 202.

love can give him. He cries, "But you don't, mother, you know you don't care whether a picture's decorative or not; you don't care what manner it is in."<sup>28</sup>

Unfortunately, however, as the above quoted passage indicates, Paul's only real life with Miriam is in art; as a man and woman, their relationship is sadly deficient. Its failure is a complex thing and seems to arise from Miriam's extreme chastity which Paul both shares and rebels against. Miriam's chastity is a product of her religion which establishes spirituality as the only standard of goodness. To Miriam, reality was structuralized in a Platonic manner so that the only 'real' love would be between the individual and God, purely spiritual. On the level of this world love could only be self-sacrifice, a glory in itself for its service to God but at best a compromise with the 'lower' passions.

Miriam always sees her love for Paul in terms of sacrifice. When she first recognizes her feeling for him, in her shame, she prays to God for His sanction. She is ashamed of her feeling but accepts it in the spirit of sacrifice because love is God's gift. The shame is in Paul Morel's material interference in a matter between herself and God. Her attitude has not changed when, at twenty-three

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid., p. 212.

she accepts Paul as a lover. We can see that he considers their love differently:

He said that possession was a great moment in life. All strong emotions concentrated there. Perhaps it was so. There was something divine in it; then she would submit, religiously, to the sacrifice. He should have her. And at the thought her whole body clenched itself, involuntarily, hard, as if against something; but Life forced her through this gate of suffering, too, and she would submit. At any rate, it would give him what he wanted, which was her deepest wish. She brooded and brooded and brooded herself towards accepting him.<sup>29</sup>

In her, sexuality is almost non-existent except as a negative thing. She does not understand Paul's sexual needs, and like Mrs. Morel, she thinks they can be split apart from 'real' love and satisfied in any loose manner. Miriam is disappointed in Paul when he seems to enjoy his sex-play with Beatrice and she is confused when it appears important to him that he can't love her physically:

This about not loving her, physically, bodily, was a mere perversity on his part, because he knew she loved him. He was stupid like a child. He belonged to her. His soul wanted her.<sup>30</sup>

She knows that Clara Dawes cannot give him what she could, but only physical love. Therefore she is willing that Paul go to Clara to satisfy his 'itch':

She believed that there were in him desires for higher things, and desires for lower, and that the desire for the higher would conquer. At any rate he should try. She forgot that her "higher" and "lower" were arbitrary.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>29</sup>Ibid., p. 284.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., p. 222.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid., p. 229.

Miriam can never understand that Paul is groping towards finding a balance between spiritual and physical love. He is wretched in the split she forces on their relationship; she has chosen for herself 'higher' love but this is the real perversity. Paul says, when they finally become lovers, "Don't you think we have been too fierce in what they call purity? Don't you think that to be so much afraid and averse is a sort of dirtiness?"<sup>32</sup> Paul is fighting for a place in love for his physical instincts which exist and won't allow him to ignore them. For Miriam, however, there is no conflict in the split. Paul has not yet achieved the balance of blood and mental consciousnesses but he has recognized the importance of the 'first half'. At one point the two walk on the beach where they see the moon rise, and Paul's repressed longings burst forth;

She was slightly afraid--deeply moved and religious. That was her best state. He was impotent against it. . . . There were flashes in his blood. But somehow she ignored them. She was expecting some religious state in him.

. . . . .

. . . he did not know he wanted to crush her on his breast to ease the ache there. He was afraid of her. The fact that he might want her as a man wants a woman had in him been suppressed into a shame. When she shrank in her convulsed, coiled torture from the thought of such a thing, he had winced to the depths of his soul. And now this "purity" prevented even their first

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<sup>32</sup>  
Ibid., p. 281.

love-kiss. . . . and then he was too shrinking and sensitive to give it.<sup>33</sup>

Paul has accepted Miriam's definition of their relationship partly because he received so much from it as it was and partly because the only love he knew to that time was his mother's which was similar in many ways. Because everything was "thought and weary struggle into consciousness"<sup>34</sup> in his relationship with Miriam, he considered it only platonic friendship. However, with them the abstract could not mingle with the passionate; "if she put her arm in his, it caused him almost torture. His consciousness seemed to split."<sup>35</sup> He senses the split where there should be union and balance and that there can be no union on her terms:

If he could have kissed her in abstract purity he would have done so. But he could not kiss her thus--and she seemed to leave no other way.<sup>36</sup>

He insists repeatedly that their relationship is only friendship, yet he knows this is not strictly true. Miriam has no battle because, for her, love and friendship are equal. But Paul is restless and determines to break off:

"How often have we agreed for friendship! And yet--it neither stops there, nor gets anywhere else. . . . I can only give friendship--it's all I'm capable of--it's a flaw in my make-up. The thing overbalances to one side--I hate a toppling balance. Let us have done. . . . You

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<sup>33</sup>Ibid., p. 178-9.    <sup>34</sup>Ibid., p. 172.    <sup>35</sup>Ibid., p. 173.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid., p. 188.

see, I'm deficient in something with regard to you."<sup>37</sup>  
 He senses the reason for the failure and how much simpler  
 and better their love could be: "If only you could want  
me," he cries. "And not what I can reel off for you!"<sup>38</sup>

Paul blames the failure on himself. He half agrees  
 with Miriam that his sexual desires are a perversity, the  
 serpent in the garden of their love. Lawrence sees this as  
 a universal modern problem, the product of centuries of  
 traditional religious thinking. Paul has to fight this  
 tradition with only his unconscious feelings as guide. It  
 is no wonder he partially succumbs to uncertainty!

He was like so many young men of his own age. Sex had  
 become so complicated in him that he would have denied  
 that he could want Clara or Miriam or any woman he  
knew. Sex desire was a sort of detached thing, that did  
 not belong to a woman.<sup>39</sup>

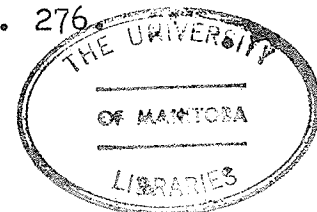
At this point Paul has become capable of union on the level  
 of the blood-consciousness with 'Woman' but not on the level  
 of mental consciousness with the 'right' woman. Such men  
 feel that the mental consciousness has to be ignored in  
 satisfying the passions, or the passions in satisfying mental  
 or spiritual love. This is because they recognize only  
 mother-love or spiritual, platonic love as 'good':

A good many of the nicest men he knew were like himself,  
 bound in by their own virginity, which they could not  
 break out of. . . . They could easier deny themselves

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., p. 221.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., p. 194.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., p. 276.



than incur any reproach from a woman; for a woman was like their mother, and they were full of the sense of their mother. They preferred themselves to suffer the misery of celibacy, rather than risk the other person.<sup>40</sup>

Of course, when the woman will only offer herself as a sacrifice to the man's 'base' passions, it is small wonder that the man is filled with shame to have to demand this of her. This sense is always present even when Miriam and he come together:

She lay to be sacrificed for him because she loved him so much. And he had to sacrifice her. For a second, he wished he were sexless or dead. Then he shut his eyes to her, and his blood beat back again.

And afterwards he loved her--loved her to the last fiber of his being. He loved her. But he wanted, somehow, to cry.

. . . . .

He had always almost wilfully, to put her out of count, and act from the brute strength of his own feelings. And he could not do it often, and there remained afterwards always the sense of failure and of death. If he were really with her, he had to put aside himself and his desire. If he would have her, he had to put her aside.<sup>41</sup>

Paul's struggle to free himself from Miriam occupies a good portion of their relationship. During this time the scene is always switching back and forth between Miriam and Mrs. Morel. Though his mother's love seems to be the other pole in his conflict, this is not exactly the case, as this examination of Miriam and Paul's relationship has shown.

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<sup>40</sup>Ibid., p. 279.    <sup>41</sup>Ibid., p. 290.

With Miriam, the conflict is over their imbalance of spiritual and passionate love. His mother offers only another kind of spiritual love. It only looks as though he escapes Miriam to return to his mother, because though she is the 'strongest tie in his life', it is with a sense of self-sacrifice that he acknowledges her as "the pivot and pole of his life, from which he could not escape."<sup>42</sup> And it is not enough for him, his mother's love: "he was at peace because he still loved his mother best. It was the bitter peace of resignation."<sup>43</sup> The tie of blood is what holds him to his mother's love where it failed with Miriam. He is now resigned to his spiritual love for his mother because he can't break the tie. He tacitly agrees to look for passionate love elsewhere which is what his mother had always wanted. Defeated, he is accepting the split between the mental and blood-conscious levels, but his discomfort reveals his betrayal of self.

He had always admired the passionate quality in Clara Dawes, first as an artist when he could only live through art and then as a man. Therefore he goes to her in passion and finds none of the spirituality he so hated in Miriam. She says of herself "I seemed to have been asleep nearly all my life,"<sup>44</sup> but when she awakes she finds she wants

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<sup>42</sup>Ibid., p. 222.    <sup>43</sup>Ibid., p. 215.    <sup>44</sup>Ibid., p. 274.

Baxter Dawes, a man of her own kind, after all. She cannot understand the spiritual aspect of Paul's soul. "Now don't get sentimental" is her uneasy comment when he gazes out to sea in artistic appreciation. Passion is all to her. Paul objects to her love-making at work; it is to exist only in spare time "That's all, and not always then--not the kissing sort of love."<sup>45</sup> His impatience reveals the inadequacy of this level of love for him; there must be another level as well, and Clara cannot give it to him. Though his mother is his first love, Paul is annoyed that he has to keep his sexual life secret from her. He wants a whole love life and resents the split: ". . . he resisted his mother's influence. He did not tell her things; there was a distance between them."<sup>46</sup>

Paul is disturbed that he cannot be fulfilled in Clara because he had thought passion was what he lacked. He speaks of Clara to his mother:

You know, mother, I think there must be something the matter with me that I can't love.

. . . . .

I even love Clara, and I did Miriam; but to give myself to them in marriage I couldn't. I couldn't belong to them. They seem to want me, and I can't ever give it to them.<sup>47</sup>

He cannot give himself completely for two reasons. His

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<sup>45</sup>Ibid., p. 355.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid., p. 345.

<sup>47</sup>Ibid., pp. 350-51.

mother holds part of him to herself, and also the women to whom he has offered his love are not willing to accept all of him. Again he blames himself when he is only partly at fault. Nevertheless, Paul does receive his longed for 'baptism by fire' with Clara, and it was "for each of them an initiation and a satisfaction":<sup>48</sup>

To know their own nothingness, to know the tremendous living flood which carried them always, gave them rest within themselves. If so great a magnificent power could overwhelm them, identify them altogether with itself, so that they knew they were only grains in the tremendous heave that lifted every grass blade its little height, and every tree and living thing, then why fret about themselves? They could let themselves be carried by life, and they felt a sort of peace in the other. There was a verification which they had had together. Nothing could nullify it, nothing could take it away; it was almost their belief in life.<sup>49</sup>

Paul has now experienced fully, though separately, both levels of consciousness; it remains for him to find the 'right' woman who can unite these for him in a true love relationship. Clara is not this woman; she is unsatisfied even by their passionate experience and realizes she could never 'have' Paul as she could her husband. From Paul she had learned the definition of her being; she now stood "distinct and complete,"<sup>50</sup> sure of what she needed in life. Paul is equally unsatisfied with her. "They would separate in the end . . . Each wanted a mate to go side by side with."<sup>51</sup> The process of dissolution is slow because their

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<sup>48</sup>Ibid., p. 354.

<sup>49</sup>Ibid.

<sup>50</sup>Ibid., p. 361.

<sup>51</sup>Ibid.

debt to each other is great, but as their lovemaking grows more mechanical, sensational, and therefore shameful, and Mrs. Morel fails in health, they draw apart. Finally, Paul ends the relationship by restoring Clara to her husband. This act forces Paul to face life alone. Recognizing that his mother can no longer help him, in an act of love, he releases her from the torture of her daily life. Paul acts symbolically to save his soul by breaking the crippling bond between them. Immediately the tension is released; she becomes like a young girl again in her death, a 'nice and natural' memory cherished by her son.

After his mother's death, however, Paul is completely solitary, "crumpled up and lonely. His mother had really supported his life."<sup>52</sup> He sinks into nihilism and Clara is no support to him: "He felt she wanted the man on top, not the real him that was in trouble."<sup>53</sup> Life lost all meaning to him: "The realest thing was the thick darkness at night,"<sup>54</sup> where "nothing was distinct or distinguishable."<sup>55</sup> He was truly destroying his soul:

"Mater, my dear--" he began, with the whole force of his soul. Then he stopped. He would not say it. He would not admit that he wanted to die, to have done.<sup>56</sup>

He has only this core of vitality, this stubbornness,

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<sup>52</sup>Ibid., p. 407.    <sup>53</sup>Ibid.    <sup>54</sup>Ibid., p. 410.

<sup>55</sup>Ibid., p. 412.    <sup>56</sup>Ibid.

between himself and death. But he is alone and needs help; he turns to Miriam: "She was better and bigger than he. He would depend on her."<sup>57</sup> Again he half-heartedly offers her marriage; but to turn back to this love he has already rejected would be only a retreat to the womb of mother love: "She could not take him and relieve him of the responsibility of himself"<sup>58</sup> because she can only be a sacrifice. "He wanted her to hold him and say, with joy and authority: 'Stop all this restlessness and beating against death. You are mine for a mate.'<sup>59</sup> She cannot say so because it is not true. Only this 'mate' can relieve him of his nihilism; no man can be expected to live meaningfully in the stark universe bereft of love and relationship that Lawrence paints. Paul has learned the value of a balanced soul; he recognizes the need for a union of spirit and passion, but this is only half the meaning. Man can live fully only in relationships which acknowledge the full breadth of the human soul. With Miriam Paul knew that "in staying, stifling the inner, desperate man, he was denying his own life. And he did not hope to give life to her by denying his own."<sup>60</sup>

For Paul, the life ahead is bleak; he has been

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<sup>57</sup>Ibid., p. 413.    <sup>58</sup>Ibid., p. 418.    <sup>59</sup>Ibid.    <sup>60</sup>Ibid.

stripped of everything but his very soul with its past experience. If he has learned by this experience he should be able to recognize his 'mate' if, or when, he meets her; Lawrence offers no hope beyond this and the fact that Paul "would not give in," and walks "quickly" toward the human business of the "humming, glowing town."<sup>61</sup> He is beginning his search.

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<sup>61</sup>Ibid., p. 420.

### CHAPTER III

#### THE RAINBOW: PAST AND PRESENT

The Rainbow is a very different novel from Sons and Lovers. Although similar themes can be found in both novels, Lawrence in The Rainbow was attempting something different. The nature of this difference becomes evident as we turn to the novel. In place of one dominant 'hero', such as Paul Morel, The Rainbow tells a series of stories which are essentially separate except for a blood connection. Although structural continuity is achieved by the fact that the younger generation grows within the relationships of the older generation, when the break occurs, it is almost complete. That is, there is no Freudian preoccupation with the influence of the past on the present. For example, we are shown that Anna, as a child, is proud, imperious, and self-centered, yet there is no sense of cross-reference when these qualities are shown in their adult expression. Thus, although this is a saga of generations, the purpose goes beyond revealing the peculiarities of one particular family. Blood relationship is present, but the individual is ascendant.

Lawrence has chosen to chronicle a passage of about fifty years during which the Nineteenth Century passes into the Twentieth. For any student of history this is

significant in itself. In broad terms, the change occurring at this time amounted to the catastrophic. Lawrence chose to represent it by the Biblical symbol of the Flood. However, the sense of the destruction of an old corrupt world for a fresh beginning is absent. It is Tom Brangwen who is drowned in the flood, he who had formed one half of "the pillar of fire and the pillar of cloud."<sup>1</sup>

The arch is a recurring image of multiple implication. It is involved in the nature of freedom, of art, even in the meaning of human life. The major characters all have some relationship with the arch and its final expression, the rainbow. Tom and Lydia are the columns;<sup>2</sup> Anna lives beneath it,<sup>3</sup> and Ursula observes it transform the world.<sup>4</sup> Symbolically, the flood destroys the old beautiful world of the first chapters; it is a flood of corruption represented by creeping industrialism. There is no fresh beginning; the rainbow is hope, but hope growing directly from corruption. The slate is not wiped clean; the new world must be built from the stagnant waste of the old. This is the message Ursula receives, but it is analogous to the meaning she has been creating with her own life.

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<sup>1</sup>D. H. Lawrence, The Rainbow, Compass Books Edition, (New York: The Viking Press, 1967), p. 92.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.    <sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 193.    <sup>4</sup>Ibid., pp. 494-5.

Within the broader context of this panoramic saga, the truths in human relationship outlined in Chapter One of this paper and represented artistically in Sons and Lovers, are as meaningful as ever. Nevertheless, in The Rainbow, human relationships are tied to their historic context. At the same time in which we are learning about three generations of the Brangwen family, we are viewing the birth of the modern age. The individual, compressed against his historic milieu, has the kind of proportion Lawrence deemed most fit. Man is not the only feature in this landscape. It is this sense that separates The Rainbow from Sons and Lovers and Women in Love.

The first section of the novel is the shortest but most poetically beautiful. The atmosphere it imparts haunts the remainder of the novel with the same sense of a rich past that gave rise to the folk movements of the last century. The roots of the novel lie in the incomparable poetry expressed in the union of man and the earth. The Brangwens were the inheritors of the earth<sup>5</sup> with a simplicity born of the security of fulfillment. Life was reduced to its fundamentals, to the cycles of the seasons and procreation, and man, suffused with this richness, was indeed wealthy. Sensing the value, the Brangwens were prudent of

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 1.

their wealth:

But heaven and earth was teeming around them, and how should this cease? They felt the rush of the sap in spring, they knew the wave which cannot halt, but every year throws forward the seed to begetting, and, falling back, leaves the young-born on the earth. They knew the intercourse between heaven and earth, sunshine drawn into the breast and bowels, the rain sucked up in the daytime, nakedness that comes under the wind in autumn, showing the birds' nests no longer worth hiding. Their life and interrelations were such, feeling the pulse and body of the soil, that opened to their furrow for the grain, and became smooth and supple after their ploughing, and clung to their feet with a weight that pulled like desire, lying hard and unresponsive when the crops were to be shorn away. The young corn waved and was silken, and the lustre slid along the limbs of the men who saw it. They took the udder of the cows, the cows yielded milk and pulse against the hands of the men, the pulse of the blood of the teats of the cows beat into the pulse of the hands of the men. They mounted their horses and held life between the grip of their knees, they harnessed their horses at the wagon, and with hand on the bridle-rings, drew the heaving of the horses after their will.<sup>6</sup>

I have quoted this passage in full because it is as significant as it is beautiful. These men are participating in creation itself. They are one with the sexual rhythm, at once infused with it and the cultivators of it. In essence, their role is the ultimate artistic expression because they mold living matter to their creative will. Their function is almost divine, except that they also are integral to the unfolding life-poem. In this novel art becomes an attempt to recreate this ultimate expression. When industrialism and 'civilization' sever man from his union with

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p. 2.

the soil, art loses its connection with living pulses and becomes only the expression of man. This is not necessarily wrong, for all art that we commonly recognize derives from this process, yet it is more fragile. It becomes the possibility of the few rather than the many.

It is the same kind of desire for communion with the source of creation that motivated Will Brangwen to carve his Adam and Eve. His was another kind of expression, but no less valid. However, his inspiration died when he himself remained uncreated. Will's ancestors were of the art they formed; modern man must find, or at least perceive, fulfillment first, then afterwards express it in art. There is no choice involved between the two creative processes, however. Just as the Brangwen women inevitably look out with yearning to the world of knowledge and human creativity, so the process of human development is away from the land. The Flood separates the old from the new and the rainbow stands only in the new world.

Tom and Lydia Brangwen's relationship is essentially a continuation of the kind of life expressed in the above quotation. Their fulfillment is the kind that Paul Morel is groping toward, but although there is a struggle to achieve a mature union, it is not prolonged in the same way that Paul's or Ursula's is. Tom and Lydia have external support that is missing for Paul and Ursula. Like the Brangwen men

before him, Tom is sensitive and intuitive, not intellectual. He trusts to his instinct and is rewarded. His experience with a prostitute shocked him, and his instinctive reaction is the best he could have:

The disillusion of his first carnal contact with woman, strengthened by his innate desire to find in a woman the embodiment of all his inarticulate, powerful religious impulses, put a bit in his mouth. He had something to lose which he was afraid of losing, which he was not sure even of possessing. This first affair did not matter much; but the business of love was, at the bottom of his soul, the most serious and terrifying of all to him.<sup>7</sup>

He waits for a woman like Lydia because his instinct is to seek out a union with the Unknown. He does not know her personally; he cannot understand her stories of her past life, yet he knows he must unite with her to complete himself. Carnal knowledge or blood intimacy will round out the unit, make knowledgeable the unknown.

Even in their fulfillment, however, they know no more 'about' each other. Tom follows out, with a minimum of groping, Lawrence's deepest beliefs about human growth. This is no accident. Even in their fierce battle to create the 'third thing' between them, Tom, unlike Mr. Morel, "preserved his measure, some things between them he never forfeited."<sup>8</sup> Again, as if by instinct, Tom knew, "after he had raged and tried to escape, and said he was good enough by himself, he

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<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 14.      <sup>8</sup>Ibid., p. 59.

was a man, and could stand alone, he must, in the starry multiplicity of the night humble himself, and admit and know that without her he was nothing."<sup>9</sup>

Anna, on the other hand, has no such instinct. Though she shares her husband's awe of the church to some degree, she cannot rest until by intellectual dominance she has reduced his love to ash for him, destroyed him, and ultimately herself. This is the 'will-to-power,' untrammelled intellect, all too often the product of 'civilization'. Anna is not a Brangwen by birth but rather, the product of an already ancient 'civilization'. Her father even at the time of her birth was reduced to "nothing but skin and bone and fixed idea."<sup>10</sup> Lydia had lost her first youth in company with this 'fixed idea', and her vitality was almost gone with her husband's death: "It needed so much to begin afresh after she had lost so lavishly."<sup>11</sup> Her instinct saves her, however, and she turns to Tom Brangwen for new life.

Their relationship is grounded in the natural cycle. The progress of their development is compared to the opening and closing of a flower to the sun. Lydia's vitality is restored from "grey nothing" by "morning and evening, the

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<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p. 35.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., p. 46.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., p. 60.

persistent ringing of thrushes from the shrubbery."<sup>12</sup> Tom wins communion with Anna while feeding the cattle during his wife's labour. The natural order is never far in the background, which lends a richness and a kind of surety to their struggle to fulfillment. Although Tom is swayed by the promise of worldliness offered by Alfred's mistress, Lydia senses his estrangement, challenges him in it, and thereby fulfills their union. This kind of directness is missing in both Anna's and Ursula's relationships. More lost at the start, they more easily can lose everything.

Tom and Lydia's relationship is the only one in the novel to gain balance and fulfillment. In them, freedom, religion, and knowledge receive new meaning. They are free and equal within the limits of their love: "She waited for him to meet her, not to bow before her and serve her. She wanted his active participation, not his submission."<sup>13</sup> One is not God, the other slave; they are both human beings. If they meet in dignity, as such they attain human fulfillment, which is also the will of God. For this reason their union is described in religious terms:

It was the entry into another circle of existence, it was the baptism to another life, it was the complete confirmation. Their feet trod strange ground of knowledge, their footsteps were lit up with discovery.

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<sup>12</sup>Ibid., p. 49.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 90.

They had passed through the doorway into the further space, where movement was so big, that it contained bonds and constraints and labours, and still was complete liberty. . . . it was the transfiguration, glorification, the admission.<sup>14</sup>

The blooming of their love is like a religious conversion; it is, in fact, one. The discovery of carnal knowledge brings them closer to knowledge of God. Later, this leads Tom, at his daughter's wedding, to make the only speech of his life: "There's very little else, on earth, but marriage. . . . In heaven there is no marriage. But on earth there is marriage, else heaven drops out, and there's no bottom to it."<sup>15</sup> His marriage is the creative act of his life: "What had he known, but the long, marital embrace with his wife! Curious, that this was what his life amounted to! At any rate, it was something, it was eternal."<sup>16</sup> He falters here, that he has nothing material to show for his life and hates to lose his daughter and be proved old, but yet he is proud of his art: "When at last they had joined hands, the house was finished, and the Lord took up his abode. And they were glad."<sup>17</sup> Religion, wed to life as man is to woman is a growing thing creating both freedom and security from itself. Anna's release is proof:

Anna's soul was put at peace between them. She looked

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<sup>14</sup>Ibid., p. 91.    <sup>15</sup>Ibid., p. 134.    <sup>16</sup>Ibid., p. 124.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., p. 92.

from one to the other, and she saw them established to her safety, and she was free. She played between the pillar of fire and the pillar of cloud in confidence, having the assurance on her right hand and the assurance on her left. She was no longer called upon to uphold with her childish might the broken end of the arch. Her father and her mother now met to the span of the heavens, and she, the child, was free to play in the space beneath, between.<sup>18</sup>

Anna, however, does not learn from her parents in forming her own life. She remains the child in the space between, stunting both her growth and her mature expression of freedom. This is the nature of her 'victory':

If she were not the wayfarer to the unknown, if she were arrived now, settled in her builded house, a rich woman, still her doors opened under the arch of the rainbow. . . .

. . . . .

Through her another soul was coming, to stand upon her as upon the threshold, looking out, shading its eyes for the direction to take.<sup>19</sup>

Ursula is such a soul; she actively creates her life while her child-mother is left behind in the blind heat of procreation.

There is great charm in Lawrence's description of the early relationship of Anna and Will. Such scenes as Anna's fit of laughter in the church, her youthful romanticism, her father's jealousy of Will and subsequent incarnation as 'fairy godfather', and Anna and Will's wedding night are memorable

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid.    <sup>19</sup> Ibid., p. 193.

for the tender amusement with which they are rendered. Lawrence's humour at such times is subtle and poignant, rich in sympathy in spite of the necessary detachment. This humour never bites; the chuckle it evokes reveals rather than exposes the kinship of human frailty.

Although this early relationship is the vehicle of some of the best humour of the three novels, as it develops the mood becomes increasingly serious. Though the relationship began with considerable potential for fulfillment, it results only in collapse. The balance that is essential to fulfillment either in the individuals concerned or in the relationship itself is never achieved. One way to examine this failure is to look at Will's artistic deterioration. Because art of any kind in this novel is the expression of the individual tuned toward fulfillment, Will's defeat can be seen in these terms. When he meets Anna he has artistic inspiration, even if his technique and form are sometimes inadequate; when he turns back to art in later life, he has skill but no inspiration. His decline as an artist is seen in terms of his decline as a man.

As a young man his artistic search is sublime. Although his phoenix appears as a lowly butterstamp and he could not wait to finish any of his figures before he turned to carving his Eve, it is obvious that Will's ecstasy is in his apprehending the very essence and meaning of the

creative act. The two Angels in his carving cover their faces with their wings in awe before the passion of the creation before them. With the same awe, symbolically, they cover their faces before their young creator as he goes to the Marsh and his potential fulfillment.<sup>20</sup> The power of this imagery exposes the devastation of his subsequent betrayal. In Anna he seeks 'the essence of life,' whereas to her "to touch him alone was bliss."<sup>21</sup> This split in understanding is shown early, but although it is fundamental, it is not significant in itself. It is Anna's inability to accept the inevitable marriage of opposites that destroys the possibility of a healthy balance in their relationship.

For Will, their love created a new, more perfect world. At first we smile at his uncertainty when he observes Anna's complete disregard for conventional behavior on their honeymoon, but he accepts this abandon finally and enters wholeheartedly into their newly created universe of two. Anna, however, strikes the first jarring chord that disrupts their harmony. She insists on being the leader; she must have a tea-party before he is ready to return to the practical order. This is the first of a series of unsympathetic actions on her part. She is not intentionally cruel, but her 'will-to-power' is unobservant of what lies

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid., p. 116.    <sup>21</sup> Ibid., p. 125.

in its path to 'victory', even if it is her husband's manhood.

Will, a true Brangwen, lives through intuition and sensitivity. He is particularly vulnerable to attack because of this very sensitivity. He is mortally wounded by his wife's lack of respect for him. In short, she ignores him where he does not directly relate to herself; she denies him his measure as a human being. This is the basis of his desire to be 'master' of the house; it is necessary for him to feel her respect and, when she ignores him, he makes himself ridiculous trying to force her. He is trapped by his very need of her and her continued denial of him results in his resentment expressing itself in cruelty;

He was cruel to her. But all the time he was ashamed. And being ashamed, he was more cruel. For he was ashamed that he could not come to fulfilment without her. And he could not. And she would not heed him. He was shackled and in darkness of torment.<sup>22</sup>

Anna insists on remaining independent and whole in her inviolate spirit. She accepts her 'possessions', becomes a "rich woman enjoying her riches,"<sup>23</sup> but never yielding herself into relationship. She dances in her bedroom exultant in her motherhood selfishly excluding her husband from her ecstasy. He is reduced to impotent fury. He threatens the 'innocence' of her pregnancy so she forbids him to sleep

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid., p. 179.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., p. 193.

with her. However, he literally needs her more than he needs himself. The choice has been defined by Anna; he chooses her and 'kills' himself. Ironically, she gives him freedom, or what appears to be such:

He had just learned what it was to be able to be alone. It was right and peaceful. She had given him a new, deeper freedom. The world might be a welter of uncertainty, but he was himself now. He had come into his own existence.<sup>24</sup>

However, through the imagery describing his submission to her will we see the true nature of this 'freedom'. Before, when he fought her pushing him away: "She was the ark, the rest of the world was flood."<sup>25</sup> She was still the 'essence' of life; hope for fulfillment was offered only in their relationship: "Why did life, without Anna, seem to him just a horrible welter, everything jostling in a meaningless, dark, fathomless flood?"<sup>26</sup> The flood, of course, is the image of destruction and therefore it is his instinct for survival that resists her pushing him off. However, she is relentless, and, rather than lose everything, he gives up half. The battle is over:

He let go, he did not care what became of him. Strange and dim he became to himself, to her, to everybody. A vagueness had come over everything, like a drowning. And it was an infinite relief to drown, a relief, a great, great relief.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>24</sup>Ibid., p. 187.    <sup>25</sup>Ibid., p. 183.    <sup>26</sup>Ibid., p. 184.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., p. 186.

In place of artistic intensity, there is 'vagueness'; his real self has drowned in the flood.

Instead of Tom and Lydia's freedom which is so big that it includes limits, Will and Anna's freedom is akin to chaos and licence:

Before he had only existed in so far as he had relations with another being. Now he had an absolute self-- as well as a relative self.

But it was a very dumb, weak, helpless self, a crawling nursling. He went about very quiet, and in a way, submissive.<sup>28</sup>

Anna has her children but Will has only the chaos and licence of his physical passion for his wife. Anna is willing to accept him thus, defeated, fully known to her, but her victory is hollow. To hold her illusion of fulfillment in herself she must forego following the rainbow to her destiny. She must remain suspended in her animal function, bearing her children. Supposedly, she waits until she has borne her last child before she begins her personal development, but by then it is too late.

As Will's soul dies, so does his artistic inspiration. One of the symbols of this inspiration is his love for the Church, an aspect of his blood-consciousness, not his mental consciousness:

In church, he wanted a dark, nameless emotion, the emotion

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid., p. 187.

of all the great mysteries of passion.

. . . . .

The verity was his connection with Anna and his connection with the Church, his real being lay in his dark emotional experience of the Infinite, of the Absolute.<sup>29</sup>

Anna is vaguely dissatisfied with her own intellectual response to church services. She looks for meaning in the sermon, in humanitarian thoughts:

The thought of her soul was intimately mixed up with the thought of her own self. Indeed, her soul and her self were one and the same thing in her. Whereas he seemed simply to ignore the fact of his own self, almost to refute it. He had a soul--a dark, inhuman thing, caring nothing for humanity.<sup>30</sup>

She resents his freedom that she cannot share, sensing that he "was conveying to strange, secret places the love that sprang in him for her."<sup>31</sup> She resists escaping the restrictions of thought, refuses to allow herself to be transported by the mystery of the lamb in the window. She is afraid of freedom and hates her husband for exposing her to it. "She wanted to rend him,"<sup>32</sup> and she succeeds.

In the chapter, "Cathedral", Anna's destruction of Will as a man is shown in spiritual terms. Beneath the arch of the dome of the cathedral, Will experiences again the sensation he felt in creating his Eve:

Then again he gathered himself together, in transit, every jet of him strained and leaped, leaped clear into

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<sup>29</sup>Ibid., p. 155.    <sup>30</sup>Ibid.    <sup>31</sup>Ibid.    <sup>32</sup>Ibid., p. 156.

the darkness above, to the fecundity and the unique mystery, to the touch, the clasp, the consummation, the climax of eternity, the apex of the arch.<sup>33</sup>

The sexual imagery reveals the tremendous vitality and richness of his experience. Will's soul is poised at the juncture of heaven and earth, where "the thrust from earth and the arch was locked on the keystone of ecstasy."<sup>34</sup> Anna, too, was overcome and almost won. However, at the final moment she again rejects the mystery and thereby the meaning:

But yet--yet she remembered that the open sky was no blue vault, no dark dome hung with many twinkling lamps, but a space where stars were wheeling in freedom, with freedom above them always higher.

. . . . .

She claimed the right to freedom above her, higher than the roof. She had always a sense of being roofed in.<sup>35</sup>

She cannot accept the very real limitations of freedom and so forfeits it for chaos. She drags her husband, too, into her limbo by mocking the carved faces. Will, making his choice, "responded more deeply to the sly little face that knew better, than he had done before to the perfect surge of his cathedral."<sup>36</sup> In a world without meaning, sensuality can serve as well as artistic passion; nothing matters; one is "happy enough."<sup>37</sup> Art has lost its message:

Before he had thought[them] cathedrals absolute. But

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<sup>33</sup>Ibid., p. 199.    <sup>34</sup>Ibid.    <sup>35</sup>Ibid., p. 200.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid., p. 202.    <sup>37</sup>Ibid., p. 205.

now he saw them crouching under the sky, with still the dark, mysterious world of reality inside, but as a world within a world, a sort of side show, whereas before they had been as a world to him within a chaos: a reality, an order, an absolute, within a meaningless confusion.<sup>38</sup>

As his artistic self shrinks, his life becomes more superficial, for, "in spirit, he was uncreated."<sup>39</sup> Will becomes devoted to the exterior of the church's form as he loses sight of the mystery of its message: "He was also slightly ashamed, like a man who has failed, who lapses back for his fulfilment."<sup>40</sup> He has achieved a kind of suspension which will enable him to live in relative peace and comfort, but he has sacrificed his unique individuality to do so;

As he sat sometimes very still, with a bright, vacant face, Anna could see the suffering among the brightness. He was aware of some limit to himself, of something unformed in his very being, of some buds which were not ripe in him, some folded centres of darkness which would never develop and unfold whilst he was alive in the body. He was unready for fulfilment. Something undeveloped in him limited him, there was a darkness in him which he would not unfold, which would never unfold in him.<sup>41</sup>

The last section of the novel, which comprises the greatest number of pages, describes the growth to maturity of Ursula Brangwen. It is essentially the same type of story as that of Paul Morel, although Ursula does not face the struggle against cloying parental love that Paul must.

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<sup>38</sup>Ibid., p. 202.    <sup>39</sup>Ibid., p. 203.    <sup>40</sup>Ibid., p. 204.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid., p. 207.

Ursula, too, discovers the meaning of love, but though she narrowly misses several pitfalls, she nevertheless does not need symbolically to 'kill' a parent as Paul must. Thus, her way is surer and, perhaps, less interesting.

Ursula's father is devoted to his child as Mrs. Morel is to Paul. His marriage has failed him and "his life was based on her, even whilst she was a tiny child, on her support and accord."<sup>42</sup> However, the relationship does not become mutually neurotic in the same sense as Paul and Mrs. Morel's. "Her father was the dawn wherein her consciousness woke up,"<sup>43</sup> but he forced too much from her, "asking as a magnet must always ask."<sup>44</sup> "She was wakened too soon,"<sup>45</sup> and asked for more than she could give, "very early she learned to harden her soul in resistance and denial of all that was outside her, harden herself upon her own being."<sup>46</sup> Rather than try to become her father's fulfillment in the way Paul had, she resisted with her very life. Thus, their connection seemed even stronger, "yet it was always straining to break."<sup>47</sup> Her father's cruelty to her marks the beginning of the severance. He challenges her independence of him, trying to frighten her into clinging to him. Her father's love is too unpredictable and perverse

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<sup>42</sup>Ibid., p. 217.    <sup>43</sup>Ibid., p. 218.    <sup>44</sup>Ibid.    <sup>45</sup>Ibid.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid., p. 221.    <sup>47</sup>Ibid.

for Ursula to cling to, and she moves apart from him after the incident in the swingboats:

His golden-brown eyes glittered, he had a strange, cruel little smile. And as the child watched him, for the first time in her life a disillusion came over her, something cold and isolating. She went over to her mother. Her soul was dead towards him. It made her sick.

Still she forgot and continued to love him, but ever more coldly.<sup>48</sup>

Clearly, Ursula shares her grandfather's instinct for choosing what is best for her personal development. She must cast off her father's perverted kind of love. In her grandmother she learns early what a woman must look for in a man. Her grandmother remembers Tom Brangwen as though he were alive; her home is a paradise to the child. There Ursula learns of her blood grandfather and the lesson he taught Lydia with his life and death:

He had failed, everything had failed, yet behind the failure was the unyielding passion of life. The individual effort might fail, but not the human joy. She [Lydia] belonged to the human joy.<sup>49</sup>

Ursula's adventures with her grandmother were a mystic delight that fed her young romanticism and gave her food for life: "That was a great relief, to know the tiny importance of the individual, within the great past."<sup>50</sup>

Although Ursula is in many ways a realist,<sup>51</sup> she also

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<sup>48</sup>Ibid., p. 223.    <sup>49</sup>Ibid., p. 255.    <sup>50</sup>Ibid., p. 258.

<sup>51</sup>Ibid., p. 259.

has a strong romantic nature. According to her dual nature, she divides the week into the Sunday world and the everyday world. The Sunday world was a world of freedom and joy, mysticism and spirituality, a world of Absolutes and natural Christian virtue. The everyday world, however, was one in which the house crawled with undisciplined children, where a young girl could find no privacy, and where one shook one's sister's head off if she dared to slap one's 'other cheek'. True to her Brangwen ancestry, in religion, Ursula "wanted the sense of the eternal and immortal, not a list of rules for everyday conduct."<sup>52</sup> Just as she fought her mother for a place for spirituality and dignity in life, so she hated Evangelical 'humanizing' of Christ and His teachings:

"... it was the vulgar mind which would allow nothing extra-human, nothing beyond itself to exist."<sup>53</sup> She resists 'explanations' of the scriptures, preferring mystical transports inaccessible to the rational intellect. She would give up heaven rather than be as poor as "the miserable squalid Wherrys."<sup>54</sup>

The Brangwens lived for the ecstasies of the religious cycles. However, the meaning was dying from Christianity in slow degrees, was being given over to Evangelical 'rules of conduct.' The drama of cycles was becoming

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<sup>52</sup>Ibid., p. 272.    <sup>53</sup>Ibid., p. 273.    <sup>54</sup>Ibid., p. 276.

'mechanical'.<sup>55</sup> The Resurrection was never very meaningful in human terms and the emphasis on its denial of the flesh as the climax of the Christian cycle is crippling to the human spirit: ". . . how could the hands rejoice, or the heart be glad, seeing themselves repulsed. . . . Alas, for the Ascension into heaven, which is a shadow within death, a complete passing away."<sup>56</sup> What, in fact, has Christianity done for man in everyday terms?

Is the flesh which was crucified become as poison to the crowds in the street, or is it as a strong gladness and hope to them, as the first flower blooming out of the earth's humus?<sup>57</sup>

Ursula rejects the mystery of the Sunday world because Christianity cannot give meaningful answers to everyday life: "There was something unclean and degrading about this humble side of Christianity."<sup>58</sup> Her problem now is, "whither to go, how to become oneself?"<sup>59</sup> in the everyday world:

Out of the nothingness and the undifferentiated mass, to make something of herself! But what? In the obscurity and pathlessness to take a direction! But whither? How take even one step? And yet, how stand still? This was torment indeed, to inherit the responsibility of one's own life.<sup>60</sup>

Ursula's problem, then, is existential. In the modern world, traditional values are no longer as meaningful as in the

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<sup>55</sup>Ibid., p. 279.    <sup>56</sup>Ibid., pp. 279-80.    <sup>57</sup>Ibid., p. 280.

<sup>58</sup>Ibid., p. 283.    <sup>59</sup>Ibid., p. 282.    <sup>60</sup>Ibid., p. 281.

past, and women as well as men must create personal meanings out of chaos to come to fulfillment. Ursula must challenge the unknown, step beyond the security of past experience to learn about herself.

During her adolescence her sexuality begins to awaken. While she is still dedicated to the Sunday world she begins to think of Christ as a lover and is shocked at her inability to sort out her confusion: "The confusing of the spirit world with the material world, in her own soul, degraded her."<sup>61</sup> To Lawrence, of course, spirituality cannot be experienced unless sensuality is also given its respective place, perhaps not even then. Chastity results in perversion, and Ursula tastes of this adolescent horror. However, her instinctive response to Skrebrensky's tale of the couple making love in a cathedral is indicative that she will pass through 'the plague of puberty' relatively unscarred, and with Lawrence's approval.

With her sexual nature awakened she is ready for her first relationship with a man. She is fascinated by Skrebrensky because, "he was himself,"<sup>62</sup> and, "he brought her a strong sense of the outer world."<sup>63</sup> Too young to be either, she is here choosing to live through another, not herself. For this reason her need for Skrebrensky becomes

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<sup>61</sup>Ibid., p. 285.

<sup>62</sup>Ibid., p. 289.

<sup>63</sup>Ibid., p. 288.

less as she, too, becomes mature. His main immediate attraction, however, is that he satisfies her sexual needs in healthy, direct terms:

In the shed they played at kisses, really played at kisses. It was a delicious, exciting game. . . . Daring and reckless and dangerous they knew it was, their game, each playing with fire, not with love. A sort of defiance of all the world possessed her in it--she would kiss him just because she wanted to.<sup>64</sup>

Of course, Ursula is in love with love, not Skrebrensky, and he, as a lover for a mature woman, is severely limited:

Why did he never really want a woman, not with the whole of him: never loved, never worshipped, only just physically wanted her.<sup>65</sup>

Skrebrensky never really develops beyond this, whereas Ursula does. For this reason, when he returns, their relationship fails after running the gamut of sensuality.

At this point, however, Ursula is still an adolescent searching for her identity. Her sensual nature has only just been awakened, is in no way understood; its force is compelling and blind: "And in this state, her sexual life flamed into a kind of disease within her."<sup>66</sup> At least part of her 'love' for Skrebrensky comes because he is what she is not, a realized 'self'. Thus, she loves in him what she will be. Ursula must learn the limitations and ultimate perversion of a love of one's 'self'. This is Lawrence's

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<sup>64</sup>Ibid., p. 300.    <sup>65</sup>Ibid., p. 315.    <sup>66</sup>Ibid., p. 332.

philosophical definition of homosexuality. Ursula's love for Miss Inger begins as a worship of 'ideal womanhood' that the schoolmistress typifies. This is a normal 'stage' in adolescent development. For evaluative purposes, Lawrence carries this worship to its logical conclusion to illustrate what one 'is' if one's understanding of love develops no further than this 'love of self'. Ursula comes to realize the death inherent in this 'love':

. . . . a heavy, clogged sense of deadness began to gather upon her, from the other woman's contact. And sometimes she thought Winifred was ugly, clayey. . . . She wanted some fine intensity, instead of this heavy cleaving of moist clay, that cleaves because it has no life of its own.<sup>67</sup>

She disposes of Miss Inger in marriage to her Uncle Tom, who is her 'mate'. Because she knows what they are, Ursula hates the falsity of their criticism of the effects of industrial mechanism on the colliers' lives:

But her Uncle Tom and her mistress remained there among the horde, cynically reviling the monstrous state and yet adhering to it. . . .

. . . . .

His real mistress was the machine, and the real mistress of Winifred was the machine.

. . . . .

Hatred sprang up in Ursula's heart. . . . Her soul's action should be the smashing of the great machine. . . . Let them starve and grub in the earth for roots, rather than serve such a Moloch as this.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>67</sup>Ibid., p. 343.      <sup>68</sup>Ibid., p. 349.

Ursula, however, cannot retreat from encounter with the modern world. She must feel its mechanical destruction through experience. She resists her mother's simple, traditional version of 'womanhood'. Ursula, in her existential quest, must create a new womanhood, meaningful for life in the modern world. Ever aware of the "secret riches, a reserve, . . . always the price of freedom"<sup>69</sup> in her femaleness, nevertheless, "other things should be tried first. . . . She wanted to make her conquest also of this man's world."<sup>70</sup> Unaware of the cost of this conquest, she follows out her purpose to be a teacher. She is horrified at her encounter. "Well, if you can't keep order, what good are you?"<sup>71</sup> replaces, irrevocably, any standard of personal worth. The only results of her offer of personal relationship to her class are cruel beatings of the children because of the breakdown of order. She proves capable of adjustment but the door to her childhood closes forever. In the prison of the school, "her wild chaotic soul became hard and independent":<sup>72</sup>

She dreamed fondly of the time when she need not be a teacher any more. But vaguely, she knew that responsibility had taken place in her for ever, and as yet her prime business was to work.<sup>73</sup>

Ursula has now entered a period of continuous

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<sup>69</sup>Ibid., p. 333.    <sup>70</sup>Ibid.    <sup>71</sup>Ibid., p. 380.

<sup>72</sup>Ibid., p. 408.    <sup>73</sup>Ibid., p. 410.

disillusionment that is only alleviated on the last page of the novel. At college she hoped to enter 'Holy ground' but soon learns the chilling truth: "It pretended to exist by the religious virtue of knowledge. But the religious virtue of knowledge was become a flunkey to the god of material success."<sup>74</sup> However, she continues to the end of her three years only to fail finally, as if in protest.

At this point, Skrebrensky returns and she enters again a life of sensual fire: "She waited, every moment of the day for his next kiss."<sup>75</sup> Unlike her encounter with Winifred Inger there is no shame when she and Skrebrensky consummate their passion: ". . . it was as if she had received another nature."<sup>76</sup> The spirit of her Sunday world is reborn with a new meaning. Whereas Skrebrensky was "always side-tracking his own soul,"<sup>77</sup> Ursula is finding hers. Her self-knowledge surpasses his as she discovers the possibilities of sexual relationship. Almost immediately she grows dissatisfied with him who can give her no more than passion. In spite of her fear of hurting him, however, their relationship is over:

He seemed added up, finished. She knew him all round, not on any side did he lead into the unknown. Poignant, almost passionate appreciation she felt for him, but none

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<sup>74</sup>Ibid., p. 435.    <sup>75</sup>Ibid., p. 450.    <sup>76</sup>Ibid., p. 451.

<sup>77</sup>Ibid., p. 443.

of the dreadful wonder, none of the rich fear, the connection with the unknown, or the reverence of love.<sup>78</sup>

Ursula, in building her own world, is returning to the values of Tom Brangwen's world. She is seeking, by casting away what is not true, a whole relationship capable of complete balanced fulfillment in Lawrence's terms.

She has one further temptation. When she discovers she is pregnant, the traditional role of womanhood, that of bearer of children, presses in on her acceptance:

Who was she to be wanting some fantastic fulfilment in her life? Was it not enough that she had her man, her children, her place of shelter under the sun?

. . . . .

For what had a woman but to submit? . . . At last she was a woman.<sup>79</sup>

Although she became increasingly victim of a "gathering restiveness, a tumult impending within her"<sup>80</sup> in this resolve, she has not the strength to assert what she has just learned of herself over the responsibilities of her impending womanly role.

This is done for her through her experience with the horses at night. The horse is an intense phallic symbol in D. H. Lawrence's work. It is an even more powerful symbol of natural, independent selfhood than the nightingale. The horses are a reproach to her and conquer her because they

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<sup>78</sup>Ibid., p. 473.    <sup>79</sup>Ibid., p. 485.    <sup>80</sup>Ibid.

are irrefutably themselves, whereas she is about to deny herself. In her resulting illness she regains her true self and the courage to assert it. Even if it were possible, she would not return to Skrebrensky.

Having fully created her self, her task is done. Now she must wait to receive the fully created man for her final adventure into mature relationship:

The man should come from the Infinite and she should hail him. She was glad she could not create her man. She was glad she had nothing to do with his creation. She was glad that this lay within the scope of that vaster power in which she rested at last. The man would come out of Eternity to which she herself belonged.<sup>81</sup>

In the process of finding herself, Ursula has found the meaning of God, of life, and of love. She at last experiences the 'human joy'.

This joy is symbolized by the rainbow. Both will come from the corruption of the modern world for, since the flood, there is no other place. But first the sunrise must expose the full horror of the day: the "eyes of those who are buried alive," the "corruption so pure that it is hard and brittle," and "the old churchtower standing up in hideous obsolescence above raw new houses on the crest of the hill, the amorphous, brittle, hard edged new houses advancing from Beldover to meet the corrupt new houses from

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<sup>81</sup>  
Ibid., p. 493.

Lethley. . . ."<sup>82</sup> The natural world is dying beneath the creeping cancer of the industrial city and Ursula is sickened at the sight. Yet in the midst of this city she has found meaning for her life; she has created one pedestal of her personal rainbow. As she continues to gaze at the exposed world, the new Truth dawns:

And then, in the blowing clouds, she saw a band of fierce iridescence colouring in faint colours a portion of the hill. And forgetting, startled, she looked for the hovering colour and saw a rainbow forming itself. In one place it gleamed fiercely, and, her heart anguished with hope, she sought the shadow of iris where the bow should be. Steadily the colour gathered, mysteriously, from nowhere, it took presence upon itself, there was a faint, vast rainbow. The arc bended and strengthened itself till it arched indomitable, making great architecture of light and colour and the space of heaven, its pedestals luminous in the corruption of new houses on the low hill, its arch the top 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.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> Ibid., p. 494.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., p. 495.

## CHAPTER IV

### WOMEN IN LOVE: THE MODERN ANSWER

Like Sons and Lovers and The Rainbow, Women in Love explores the meaning of love and the possibility of human fulfillment. Of the three novels, Women in Love is the most explicit statement of Lawrence's philosophy of life and love, as outlined in Chapter One of this paper. It is also the most carefully constructed of the three novels. Structure is intimately related to plot; there are almost none of the intense poetic outbursts of the earlier novels which were only nominally related to the story. Those readers who appreciated the poetry of such passages will be disappointed by the tone of this novel. Though no explicit mention is made of World War I, Lawrence was obviously suffering from the general disillusionment of the period as he wrote. The dominant tone in Women in Love is one of ennui amounting to despair. The characters must constantly struggle to attain any kind of positivity against a negative sludge already smothering almost all the world. Too often death is seen as the only positive force and sleep as the only possible human action.

Women in Love is the conclusion of the quest begun in the two previous novels. There is very little hope left. Whereas Paul and Ursula of the earlier novels had all the

world before them after they had struggled out of their private dilemmas, here the bright hope of the "humming, glowing town" and the rainbow is blasted and Ursula and Birkin have only themselves and their love. Even Lawrence, as author, shares the cynicism of his characters and exhibits a new ironical detachment from the material. He does not hesitate to mock any character, even Birkin, who is a fictional representation of himself. Here, however, the humour is aloof, even wry; there is no trace of the gentle whimsy that contributes to the charm of the earlier novels.

Women in Love has a tight structure. The movement of the novel, that of the world being established as a wasteland, and Ursula and Birkin becoming separated from it, is established both on the level of plot and on that of structure. Images and thematic words and phrases provide the link. The novel is structured around the four central characters who are, or become, united by ties of love. Ursula and Gudrun, although they are sisters, are also friends in the way Birkin wants himself and Gerald to be. However, Lawrence differentiates between his couples in describing them. Gudrun and Gerald, physically, are seen as nearly ideal representatives of Twentieth Century civilization. Gudrun is strikingly beautiful, sophisticated, and an accomplished artist. Gerald is established immediately as a strongly male figure, as Gudrun's first reaction to him

indicates:

[Gerald] was of a fair, sun-tanned type, rather above middle height, well-made, and almost exaggeratedly well-dressed. But about him also was the strange, guarded look, the unconscious glisten, as if he did not belong to the same creation as the people about him. Gudrun lighted on him at once. There was something northern about him that magnetised her. In his clear northern flesh and his fair hair was a glisten like sunlight refracted through crystals of ice. And he looked so new, unbroached, pure as an arctic thing. . . . His gleaming beauty, maleness, like a young good-humoured, smiling wolf, did not blind her to the significant, sinister stillness in his bearing, the lurking danger of his un-subdued temper.<sup>1</sup>

Gerald is shown as a man in control of his material destiny; he is rich, travelled, unfailingly attractive to women, and a powerful industrial magnate. The description of Birkin and Ursula, in contrast, is much more scant. Physically, Birkin is thin and sickly; his appeal is limited to those who can perceive his core of vitality, and in speech and manner, he often makes himself ridiculous. There is almost no physical description of Ursula at all, except that she is more 'womanly' than Gudrun and therefore less attractive. She is also less worldly than her sister. In description, then, Gerald and Gudrun more directly represent worldly values.

The first definitely negative reference is made against Gerald. In spite of the favorable impression given

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<sup>1</sup>D. H. Lawrence, Women In Love, Compass Books Edition, (New York: The Viking Press, 1960), p. 8-9.

of him earlier, his mother, speaking of her children, says of Gerald: "He's the most wanting of them all. You'd never think it, to look at him now, would you?"<sup>2</sup> This statement makes Gerald's later comment about his family, and himself, more meaningful: "We're all of us curiously bad at living. We can do things--but we can't get on with life at all."<sup>3</sup> Secondly, Birkin remembers that Gerald is Cain, having killed his brother when a child. This becomes tied in with the 'death-wish' and discussions of brotherhood. Birkin reflects:

"Am I my brother's keeper?" he said to himself, almost flippantly.

Then he remembered, with a slight shock, that that was Cain's cry. And Gerald was Cain, if anybody. . . . Gerald as a boy had accidentally killed his brother.

. . . . .

He did not believe that there was any such thing as accident. It all hung together in the deepest sense.<sup>4</sup>

Later, Birkin reacts against Gerald's fear of universal liberty. Gerald says, "We should have everybody cutting everybody else's throat in five minutes."<sup>5</sup> Birkin is shocked at Gerald's disguised 'death-wish':

"It's a nasty view of things, Gerald, and no wonder you are afraid of yourself and your own unhappiness."

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<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 19.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 197.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 20.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 27.

"You seem to have a lurking desire to have your gizzard slit, and imagine every man has his knife up his sleeve for you."<sup>6</sup>

Although Birkin, Ursula, and Gudrun often think of, or long for death, there is a difference in Gerald's attitude. Although he has the most direct connection with death, having slain his brother, he will not admit the fear and fascination death holds for him. In this, as well as everything else of importance in his life, Gerald is "ignoring the demand of the soul."<sup>7</sup> He says to Birkin about death, "It doesn't interest me, you know,"<sup>8</sup> when, "as a matter of fact, he did care terribly, with a great fear."<sup>9</sup> Death for Gerald is no blissful release from worldly torment as it is for the other three characters. His desperate, prolonged search for his sister's drowned body amounts to an attempt to disprove the power of death, and he almost drives himself mad in the process. His reaction to his father's long-expected death is one of fear and fascination, not sympathy:

Gerald stood transfixed, his soul echoing in horror. He would move, but he could not. He could not move his limbs. His brain seemed to re-echo, like a pulse.

. . . . .

A strange sort of grin went over Gerald's face, over the horror. And he walked out of the room.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 28.    <sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 194.    <sup>8</sup>Ibid., p. 196.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid.    <sup>10</sup>Ibid., p. 326.

Rather than admit his attitude to death, Gerald drives it out of his consciousness by a force of will-power, and by a Freudian chain-reaction, becomes possessed by it. Lawrence connects Gerald's very activity, which has made him successful in the world, with his repressed attitude to death.

Even in the midst of the sisters' admiration for Gerald's activity, his power and freedom as a man, they reflect on his 'go': "The unfortunate thing is," says Gudrun, "Where does his go go to, what becomes of it?"<sup>11</sup> There are two important examples of the direction Gerald's 'go' takes. The first is shown in his cruelty towards his mare in forcing her to stand near a moving train. In the same way as at his father's death, "a glistening, half-smiling look came into Gerald's face,"<sup>12</sup> an image which connects his attitude to death with his will to dominate:

A sharpened look came on Gerald's face. He bit himself down on the mare like a keen edge biting home and forced her round. She roared as she breathed, her nostrils were two wide, hot holes, her mouth was apart, her eyes frenzied. It was a repulsive sight. But he held on her unrelaxed, with an almost mechanical relentlessness, keen as a sword pressing into her. Both man and horse were sweating with violence. Yet he seemed calm as a ray of cold sunshine.<sup>13</sup>

In these quotations, the word 'glisten', the northern images of the 'cold sunshine', the sword, and the wolfish 'bit himself down,' and the image of the 'mechanical relentlessness'

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<sup>11</sup>Ibid., p. 41.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., p. 103.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 104.

come together in a supreme example of cruelty. This is the outward result of Gerald's state of mind. His desire to kill Gudrun when she begins to oppose him near the end of the novel is only another example of what is shown here.

In the scene with the mare, Gerald's character is stripped bare; he is shown as he really is. Thus, the sisters' reactions are significant. Ursula's is as powerful as it is simple: "She alone understood him perfectly, in pure opposition."<sup>14</sup> Gudrun, however, is overcome by the exhibition of what she considers to be male sexual power, but which here expresses itself through cruelty:

Gudrun was as if numbed in her mind by the sense of indomitable soft weight of the man, bearing down into the living body of the horse: the strong, indomitable thighs of the blond man clinching the palpitating body of the mare into pure control; a sort of soft white magnetic domination from the loins and thighs and calves, enclosing and encompassing the mare heavily into unutterable subordination, soft-blood-subordination, terrible.<sup>15</sup>

Gudrun, then, is becoming associated with Gerald at the very source of his imbalance of soul, whereas Ursula in her reactions is separating herself from them both.

The second example of the direction of Gerald's activity is seen in the chapter entitled "The Industrial Magnate." Gerald is seen as a disturbed man who "saw himself on the point of inheriting his own destruction."<sup>16</sup> Discontented

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<sup>14</sup>Ibid.    <sup>15</sup>Ibid., p. 106.    <sup>16</sup>Ibid., p. 213.

with his life, he had sought meaning in travel and experience, but "he found humanity very much alike everywhere, and to a mind like his, curious and cold, the savage was duller, less exciting than the European."<sup>17</sup> He saved himself from utter purposelessness, however, by replacing in his attitude to life, the organic principle with his conception of "the pure instrumentality of mankind."<sup>18</sup> By rebuilding his father's industry, symbolically, Gerald recreated the world according to the mechanical principle. Surprisingly, the workers, and by implication, society, accepted their loss of dignity in the new order:

Their hearts died within them, but their souls were satisfied. It was what they wanted. Otherwise Gerald could never have done what he did. He was just ahead of them in giving them what they wanted, this participation in a great and perfect system that subjected life to pure mathematical principles. This was a sort of freedom, the sort they really wanted. It was the first great step in undoing, the first great phase of chaos, the substitution of the mechanical principle for the organic. . . .<sup>19</sup>

The inevitable result of a system devoted to mechanical perfection is that the less perfect but vital human principle is lost. The reward for Gerald's success is his own uselessness as a human being. Having attempted to gain fulfillment only through activity, the activity spent, the man is hollow. Gerald is seized with fear; "he did not

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<sup>17</sup>Ibid., p. 214.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., p. 215.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., p. 223.

know what to do."<sup>20</sup> The crisis is one of identity, the most fundamental for man: ". . . when he was alone in the evening, and had nothing to do, he had suddenly stood up in terror, not knowing what he was."<sup>21</sup> Pathetically, he stares at his face in the mirror, "seeking for something"<sup>22</sup> afraid to touch it "for fear it should prove to be only a composition mask."<sup>23</sup> Avoiding the real problem, by a supreme effort of will, he forces himself to think of something else and preserve his sanity. However, the danger of collapse is always there because he cannot face his mistake and rebuild his life with human meaning.

The effort of will becomes increasingly difficult: ". . . such a strange pressure was upon him, as if the very middle of him were a vacuum, and outside were an awful tension."<sup>24</sup> To escape himself he clings to Birkin and women. Later, when Gudrun refuses to be his mother, he is destroyed by his internal chaos. This internal void and clinging quality of Gerald establishes a connection between himself and both the Bohemian world and Hermione.

In the rapport of friendship, Birkin and Gerald travel to London. "In the Train" is a significant chapter for establishing the difference between Birkin and Gerald.

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<sup>20</sup>Ibid., p. 224.      <sup>21</sup>Ibid.      <sup>22</sup>Ibid.      <sup>23</sup>Ibid.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., p. 225.

Birkin considers protestations of 'brotherly love' to be merely hypocrisy and cultural aspiration only 'one-upmanship': "Why should every man decline the whole verb. First person singular is enough for me."<sup>25</sup> Modern life is only a primitive struggle for material possessions: "What then, when you've made a real fair start with your material things?"<sup>26</sup> Significantly, Birkin then asks Gerald what the 'aim and object' of his life is. Gerald's stumbling reply is indicative that he has never before considered the question, and that he too only looks outward: "Oh--finding out things for myself--and getting experiences--and making things go."<sup>27</sup> Birkin has obviously faced the chaos that is before Gerald and has found a meaningful aim in life in spite of his modern situation:

"The old ideals are dead as nails--nothing there. It seems to me there remains only this perfect union with a woman--sort of ultimate marriage--and there isn't anything else."<sup>28</sup>

Birkin then discusses his Bohemian friends, who, in context, become associated with the empty shells that constitute most of humanity. Birkin knows that their 'looseness' is only apparent: "for all their shockingness," they are "all on one note." Birkin's scathing criticism of

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<sup>25</sup>Ibid., p. 48.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., p. 49.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., p. 50.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid., p. 51.

unfulfilled humanity is no idle pastime: ". . . his dislike of mankind, of the mass of mankind, amounted almost to an illness."<sup>29</sup> His friendship for Gerald, however, who is increasingly being associated, to the point of being the representative of this human wasteland, shows that as Ursula later observes, Birkin's mixed love and despair of humanity "is a disease [he doesn't] want to be cured of."<sup>30</sup> London, however, is seen as a dismal labyrinth, the monster within, man himself.

In the center of London is Bohemia with its men either sexless idiots like Halliday or dissipated perverts like the Russian. Minette on a smaller scale is a figure like Hermione, seeking to possess men and control them. In Minette and her group we see what Hermione and the Breadalby crowd really are. Gerald easily moves into the Bohemian world; he too enjoys his power over Minette and explores sensual experience with her. Later he realizes he has debased or exposed himself, but it is too late to reestablish his social superiority by paying Minette; he has revealed his kinship with the decadent society. Birkin, in contrast, has become irritated by the Bohemians and has set himself apart from their activities.

At this time, the first mention is made of the

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<sup>29</sup>Ibid., p. 53.      <sup>30</sup>Ibid., p. 121.

primitive sensual African carvings that become associated with Gudrun by their similarity to her work. The figure of the woman in labour suggests as Birkin says:

"Pure culture in sensation, culture in the physical consciousness, really intimate physical consciousness, mindless, utterly sensual. It is so sensual as to be final, supreme."<sup>31</sup>

It is the final expression of a whole culture directed to one end. Gerald resists the idea that it is art, preferring to keep certain illusions about civilization; yet the figure is also his totem.

Later, the connection is made explicit. Birkin in his own quest reflects on the significance of this sensual expression of art. It is sensuality divorced from mind, the product of "the death of the creative spirit."<sup>32</sup> However, "there is a long way we can travel, after the death-break,"<sup>33</sup> and Birkin wonders if the modern age is moving in the same direction:

Is our day of creative life finished? Does there remain to us only the strange, awful afterwards of the knowledge in dissolution, the African knowledge, but different in us, who are blond and blue-eyed from the north?<sup>34</sup>

Birkin perceives another way, but Lawrence's bitter social comment is seen in Birkin's premonition about Gerald:

He was one of these strange white wonderful demons from the north, fulfilled in the destructive frost mystery.

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<sup>31</sup>Ibid., p. 72.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., p. 246.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid.

And was he fated to pass away in this knowledge, this one process of frost-knowledge, death by perfect cold? Was he a messenger, an omen of the universal dissolution into whiteness and snow?<sup>35</sup>

Hermione is another character who is living in the world that is off-balance and spinning towards destruction. To sustain herself before the chaos that also faces Gerald, she has made a complete retreat from reality into a world made civilized and orderly by a supreme and continuous act of will. Although Birkin thinks "such a will is an obscenity,"<sup>36</sup> by using it, Hermione is able to piece together a mask with which to face life. Like Gerald she refuses to face her own soul and by sheer strength of will keeps back the flood of threatening insanity. Though Birkin attacks the hypocrit her will has made her, he senses the chaos that is dammed back in her:

. . . her will never failed her. . . . It almost sent Birkin mad. But he would never, never dare to break her will, and let loose the maelstrom of her subconsciousness, and see her in her ultimate madness.<sup>37</sup>

Of course, she is a complete hypocrit. Proud of her intellectual superiority, she pretends to admire purely spontaneous sensuality. With a need to possess and cling such that her very presence is an oppression, she pretends to desire to be unbounded.<sup>38</sup> Birkin mercilessly pursues

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid., p. 246-7.    <sup>36</sup> Ibid., p. 131.    <sup>37</sup> Ibid., p. 137.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., p. 78.

her in her sophisticated hypocrisy: ". . . you won't be conscious of what actually is: you want the lie that will match the rest of your furniture."<sup>39</sup> But if she cannot or will not face the chaos and the truth she must create a world in which to ignore them. Birkin senses her pathetic struggle and in spite of his satire, pities her at times and tries to humor her.

Her greatest hypocrisy, and the most unforgiveable, is her professed 'brotherly love'. She says:

"If we could only realise that in the spirit we are all one, all equal in the spirit, all brothers there--the rest wouldn't matter, there would be no more of this carping and envy and this struggle for power, which destroys, only destroys."<sup>40</sup>

Immediately afterwards she tries to kill Birkin because "his presence was the wall, his presence was destroying her."<sup>41</sup> When she feels she is threatened, it is only self-interest and her own superiority that concern her. This violent proof of what Birkin had always believed and spoke of almost results in his severance of all ties with the grossly hypocritical human race. He wanders distracted in the woods, lies naked against the grass, desperately seeking contact with a healthy kind of life: "Here was his world, he wanted nobody and nothing but the lovely, subtle, responsive vegetation, and himself, his own living self."<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>39</sup>Ibid., p. 35.    <sup>40</sup>Ibid., p. 96.    <sup>41</sup>Ibid., p. 97.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid., p. 101.

However, in spite of this momentary escape, Birkin's life, as yet, is in the human world. "It was raining and he had no hat. But then plenty of cranks went out nowadays without hats, in the rain."<sup>43</sup>

Lawrence, then, very definitely connects Hermione with the dying world of Halliday and Gerald. Beneath her civilized, de-vitalized exterior, her god is also Mammon:

. . . there was a devastating cynicism at the bottom of her. She did not believe in her own universals--they were a sham. She did not believe in the inner life--it was a trick, not a reality. She did not believe in the spiritual world--it was an affectation. In the last resort, she believed in Mammon, the flesh, and the devil--these at least were not sham.<sup>44</sup>

Civilization is indeed hollow if even its priestess rejects the creed, using the snare of the past and the "beauty of static things"<sup>45</sup> only to side-track her soul.

Gudrun also is increasingly associated with this dead and dying world. Like Gerald, who envies Birkin, Gudrun envies Ursula. Ursula "was always thinking, trying to lay hold on life, to grasp it in her own understanding,"<sup>46</sup> whereas Gudrun's formless philosophy is: "If one jumps over the edge, one is bound to land somewhere."<sup>47</sup> Aware that she is somehow missing something essential in life, Gudrun, in compensation, shares Gerald's compulsion to dominate:

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<sup>43</sup>Ibid.    <sup>44</sup>Ibid., p. 284.    <sup>45</sup>Ibid., p. 90.    <sup>46</sup>Ibid., p. 3.

<sup>47</sup>Ibid., p. 4.

Always this desolating, agonised feeling, that she was outside of life, an onlooker, whilst Ursula was a partaker, caused Gudrun to suffer from a sense of her own negation, and made her, that she must always demand the other, to be in connection with her.<sup>48</sup>

Gudrun's relation to her world is as confused as she is in her soul. She yearns for fulfillment, is discontent that "nothing materialises. Everything withers in the bud,"<sup>49</sup> but seems unable to do anything positive to form or realize her goals. She seems to desire to partake of an intense life as shown by her fascination with the working men of the market place and with Gerald, whose male power almost overcomes her. However, her envy of the apparent freedom and energy of the male role does not lead to the intention to incorporate this energy and purpose into her own life: "[the workers] aroused a strange, nostalgic ache of desire, something almost demoniacal, never to be fulfilled."<sup>50</sup> Yet, as we have seen with Gerald, even the pure vigorous energy Gudrun admires is only a half-truth. Energy must be directed toward life and human fulfillment, otherwise it is only another form of mechanical action contributing only to an imbalance of soul:

In their voices she could hear the voluptuous resonance of darkness, the strong, dangerous underworld, mindless, inhuman. They sounded also like strange machines,

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<sup>48</sup>Ibid., p. 157.    <sup>49</sup>Ibid., p. 2, (emphasis removed).

<sup>50</sup>Ibid., p. 109.

heavy, oiled. The voluptuousness was like that of machinery, cold and iron.<sup>51</sup>

Gudrun's love for Gerald is the result of her yearning, unfulfilled attitude to life. He signifies to her the passionate vital world she seeks to possess even though she senses that it may never be hers:

He was not a man to her, he was an incarnation, a great phase of life. . . . And she knew it was all no good, and that she would never go beyond him, he was the final approximation of life to her.<sup>52</sup>

Gudrun's pride that her lover is the master of the colliers is proof that she has no desire to separate herself from the mechanical principle which governs their lives. There are further examples that Gerald and Gudrun's love is founded and expressed in the dead values of the paralyzed age. In direct contrast to Birkin who has just told them his views about love and marriage, Gudrun and Gerald want "the abandonments of Roman licence,"<sup>53</sup> impermanency, and complete loss of self to the beloved while love lasts. In short, love to Gudrun and Gerald is directly connected to sensuality asking no fulfillment beyond the passionate. Gudrun and Gerald share the fate of the African sensual culture. When her love for Gerald runs its sensual course, Gudrun loses her last vestige of health, her yearning for vitality, and sinks into the negation and perversion that is typified by

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<sup>51</sup>Ibid., p. 108.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid., p. 173.

<sup>53</sup>Ibid., p. 279.

Loerke. Sensuality leads finally to dissolution.

Loerke is the ultimate expression of dissolution and mechanization. He is the hollow world stripped of all defense and pretention and as such he is attractive because he strikes a sympathetic chord in one part of every modern man. He does not pretend to be manly, in fact he accentuates his undevelopped body; in an age of desperate conformity he is noticeable for his "uncanny singleness."<sup>54</sup> All modern men sense the hypocrisy of the ideal and want as Gudrun and Ursula do, "some satisfaction in basic repulsion."<sup>55</sup> There is another way, but only for those who can create a new ideal meaningful in their personal lives.

Loerke also has seen through the hypocrisy and recognized the new gods. He is willing to serve the new order. He says:

"And since churches are all museum stuff, since industry is our business, now, then let us make our places of industry our art--"<sup>56</sup>

To Loerke, and now to Gudrun also, life has so little meaning that the only reality is art, but art that is primitive and one-sided like the African statues:

The suggestion of primitive art was their refuge, and the inner mysteries of sensation their object of worship. Art and Life were to them the Reality and the Unreality.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>54</sup>Ibid., p. 412.    <sup>55</sup>Ibid., p. 418.    <sup>56</sup>Ibid., p. 414.

<sup>57</sup>Ibid., p. 439.

Ursula, however, perceives the truth of their escapism and accuses them:

"As for your world of art and your world of reality, you have to separate the two, because you can't bear to know what you are. You can't bear to realise what a stock, stiff, hide-bound brutality you are really, so you say 'it's the world of art.' The world of art is only the truth about the real world, that's all--but you are too far gone to see it."<sup>58</sup>

Like Birkin, Loerke knows the direction in which the world is moving; he has a dream of fear: ". . . the world went cold, and snow fell everywhere, and only white creatures. . . persisted in ice cruelty."<sup>59</sup> Loerke is afraid but he will do nothing to save himself. He wants more than love and sensuality but he will not correct the imbalance within. With Gudrun he wants "a little companionship in intelligence,"<sup>60</sup> someone who can understand his view of the world, and she, flattered by his regard, is drawn into his intellectual death-in-life.

Gudrun will accept Loerke because he is all that there is left to know, but she will find no peace: "She must always see and know and never escape."<sup>61</sup> The only escape that she can see is sleep: "She wanted so much this perfect enfolded sleep,"<sup>62</sup> but there is no one to give it to her as she would not give it to Gerald. Finally Gerald reverts to childhood and death-sleep to escape the torment

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<sup>58</sup>Ibid., p. 422.

<sup>59</sup>Ibid., p. 444.

<sup>60</sup>Ibid., p. 450.

<sup>61</sup>Ibid., p. 456.

<sup>62</sup>Ibid., p. 457.

of his life while Gudrun remains the prisoner, equally lost. She will probably follow Loerke to Germany to live out the last stage of her existence, agreeable in the expectation of a new kind of life, though "underneath was death itself."<sup>63</sup>

In this discussion I have attempted to show that the characters and social levels, apparently randomly represented on the level of plot, are in fact intimately connected on the structural level. Gerald, Gudrun, Halliday, and Hermione all have certain fundamental common characteristics that place them irrevocably in the monstrous dead hypocrisy that Lawrence paints as the modern world. They are irrevocably there because they will not choose to be otherwise. They will not admit and face reality. Even Gudrun will never look at the whole of herself at one time. All she will admit is that there is nothing without; she will not balance this observation with Birkin's equally valid one that there can be something within. Half-truths at best govern these characters' lives, and the resulting internal imbalance causes them to lead half-lives with an inclination towards death. Thus, the sick and dying society perpetuates itself.

In this novel, the universal failing seems to be the fear and resulting inability to look at the self. The characters sense the chaos, which is the chaos of death and

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid., p. 459.

meaninglessness, but their reaction is to build walls in the soul to hide behind and ignore the significance. This escapism only creates death-in-life. Ursula and Birkin choose the other way. Like the other characters they sense the surrounding chaos, but in facing it squarely, they discover that there is space for human life before it; they choose the world of the catkin, the daisies/and Mino, and in doing so, the world of 'possessions', closed doors, and snow, falls away. As Sartre says, in The Flies, "human life begins on the far side of despair."

In contrast to <sup>the</sup> this world of death-in-life stand Ursula and Birkin. Their separation, however, develops gradually; their gropings only become by degrees a purposeful direction. They too are "born in the process of destructive creation,"<sup>64</sup> and the circumstances of their lives are also the results of this creation. They know disillusionment with life and often long for death, but where Gerald has only vacuum within, Birkin has a core, an aim in life. He feels his life will find a center and meaning in love for a woman, "seeing there's no God."<sup>65</sup>

In spite of this aim, Birkin is a severe and articulate critic of life. He feels keenly the prison of the life at Breadalby; "But the game is known, its going on is like

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<sup>64</sup>Ibid., p. 164.      <sup>65</sup>Ibid., p. 51.

a madness, it is so exhausted."<sup>66</sup> Birkin recognizes the hypocrisy of life in the modern world:

"If we want hate, let us have it--death, murder, torture, violent destruction--let us have it: but not in the name of love,"<sup>67</sup>

and he realizes that his despair is his fundamental human problem: ". . . one knows all the time one's life isn't really right at the source. . . . It's the failure to live that makes one ill, and humiliates one."<sup>68</sup> His despair makes him long for a world empty of the hypocritical human race. He says to Ursula: ". . . don't you find it a beautiful clean thought, a world empty of people, just uninterrupted grass, and a hare sitting up?"<sup>69</sup> Ursula agrees but knows, as Birkin also does, that they cannot escape "the actuality of humanity, its hideous actuality."<sup>70</sup> Birkin, however, unlike the other characters, has the courage to accept "that dark river of dissolution"<sup>71</sup> which is the basis of human life, and by so doing, he perceives the existentialist truth behind it. He says:

"There is life which belongs to death, and there is life which isn't death. One is tired of the life that belongs to death--our kind of life. But whether it is finished, God knows. I want love that is like sleep, like being born again, vulnerable as a baby that just comes into the world."<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>66</sup>Ibid., p. 92.      <sup>67</sup>Ibid., p. 119.      <sup>68</sup>Ibid., p. 117.

<sup>69</sup>Ibid., p. 119.      <sup>70</sup>Ibid., p. 120.      <sup>71</sup>Ibid., p. 164.

<sup>72</sup>Ibid., p. 178.

Here Birkin is looking at his despair, as yet not clearly aware of the possibilities of action.

As his love for Ursula grows, Birkin wants to make it the meaningful act of his life. He insists on a 'final and irrevocable' pledge of love between them to counteract the vapid purposelessness with which most important relationships are begun. Their relationship is to be a decisive, meaningful, declared commitment; its importance, thereby, is never to be undervalued. It is to be 'beyond love' because love, in the popular notion of a loss of self, or escape from self in the beloved, is not only a death impulse, but a contradiction in terms. Birkin, speaking for Lawrence, says:

"At the very last, one is alone, beyond the influence of love. There is a real impersonal me, that is beyond love, beyond any emotional relationship. So it is with you. But we want to delude ourselves that love is the root. It isn't. It is only the branches. The root is beyond love, a naked kind of isolation, an isolated me, that does not meet and mingle, and never can."<sup>73</sup>

Man is ultimately in isolation, and in this isolation he meets another isolated being; this is the new form of 'love', as Birkin explains to Ursula:

"What I want is a strange conjunction with you--not meeting and mingling;--you are quite right:--but an equilibrium, a pure balance of two single beings:--as the stars balance each other."<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>73</sup>Ibid., p. 137.    <sup>74</sup>Ibid., p. 139, (*italics mine*).

Ursula, confused by his unfamiliar speech, thinks he means her to be his satellite and is justifiably indignant. However, the opposite, in fact, is true. Birkin is honoring her in a manner too fundamental for her to understand. He is asking her to have the courage to be only herself, in no way reflect him. Her soul, like his, is to be fully and independently realized; she is to be a complete individual human being. Fulfilled in this way independently, they will step boldly into the unknown with no supporting preconceptions, to create the 'third thing', their love between them. Birkin explains it thus to Ursula:

" . . . it isn't selfish at all. Because I don't know what I want of you. I deliver myself over to the unknown, in coming to you, I am without reserves or defences, stripped entirely, into the unknown. Only there needs the pledge between us, that we will both cast off everything, cast off ourselves even, and cease to be, so that that which is perfectly ourselves can take place in us."<sup>75</sup>

Birkin is advocating a perfectly balanced relationship between two complete fulfilled individuals who have each shed any external worldly manifestation of personality. In such a relationship, if it is achieved, the world will obviously be of very little moment. This is the essence of Lawrence's philosophy of the self and love as outlined in Chapter One of this paper.

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<sup>75</sup> Ibid., p. 138.

Ursula and Birkin's paths to mutual love are by no means in straight lines. They often experience a sense of hopelessness wherein they realize that their present way of life is almost concluded and the future, if a new meaning isn't found, will be bleak. Rather than sink into a meaningless mechanical life, they would prefer death. Ursula asks, "Was not death infinitely more lovely and noble than such a life?"<sup>76</sup> Even here, her desire is to act decisively rather than drift with the tide. Birkin, who has the same desire, says, "Better a thousand times to take one's chance with death, than accept a life one did not want. But best of all to persist and persist and persist for ever, till one were satisfied in life."<sup>77</sup> Birkin, who sees the way clearest will persist until he wins Ursula, though the effort he must make almost exhausts him.

In the chapter, "Moony," we see Birkin's struggle symbolically. In Lawrence, the moon is a symbol of the blood-consciousness, the light in the 'dark half' of our being. It has connotations of sexuality, mystery, and the Unknown. Symbolically, by throwing stones at the moon's reflection in the water, Birkin is trying to break up, disperse, and deny his blood-consciousness. Always and irresistibly, however, the fragments of the moon drift back

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<sup>76</sup>Ibid., p. 185.      <sup>77</sup>Ibid., p. 191.

together "blindly, enviously"<sup>78</sup>; the message is clear; the blood-consciousness cannot be denied.

Ursula, who instinctively knows this truth, stops Birkin's feverish activity and wonders why he should hate the moon. It is a part of life, which must not be denied. Seeing the 'moon within her,' so to speak, Birkin says, "There is a golden light in you, which I wish you would give me."<sup>79</sup> He envies her simple, unconscious fulfillment that is such a struggle in him. Seeing her in her feminine mystery, he knows his verbal approach is a contradiction:

What was the good of talking anyway? It must happen beyond the sound of words. It was merely ruinous to try to work her by conviction. This was a paradisaical bird that could never be netted, it must fly by itself to the heart.<sup>80</sup>

With Ursula, Birkin can turn his back on the sensuality possessing the rest of society and be born again into a new free proud self who, for the price of this freedom, "submits to the yoke and leash of love."<sup>81</sup> Life, however, is not an endless succession of days. Birkin knows that a chance lost is lost forever, and life is too fleeting to be gambled with: "There was the other way, the remaining way. And he must run to follow it."<sup>82</sup>

In the chapter, "Excuse" the climax of their

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<sup>78</sup>Ibid., p. 239.

<sup>79</sup>Ibid., p. 241.

<sup>80</sup>Ibid., p. 242.

<sup>81</sup>Ibid., p. 247.

<sup>82</sup>Ibid.

struggle against each other is reached, which when overcome, leaves them united. In such battles each changes the other and they draw more together. Finally, Ursula learns what Birkin has always meant: "She had learned at last to be still and perfect."<sup>83</sup> The freedom they have won for themselves is expressed in the words: "We must drop our jobs, like a shot."<sup>84</sup> From this moment on they are completely free from cloying worldly possessions, occupations, furniture, even relatives. Their break from the dying world is almost complete.

Ursula is completely satisfied. Birkin, however, feels the need of ties with others of their own kind. Throughout the novel, once he admitted to himself his love for Gerald, he had tried to convince the other to make an eternal, binding pledge of friendship; "an impersonal union that leaves one free."<sup>85</sup> Birkin insisted on the pledge because "you can see what mere leaving it to fate brings."<sup>86</sup> Gerald, however, aimless as ever, remains uncommitted and unformed. Because of this failure, when he is dead, he is only "like clay, like bluish corruptible ice."<sup>87</sup> Birkin grieves because Gerald never lived:

If he had kept true to that clasp, death would not have

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<sup>83</sup>Ibid., p. 307.      <sup>84</sup>Ibid.      <sup>85</sup>Ibid., p. 199.

<sup>86</sup>Ibid., p. 200.      <sup>87</sup>Ibid., p. 471.

mattered. Those who die, and dying still can love, still believe, do not die. They live still in the beloved.  
 . . . He might have lived with his friend, a further life.<sup>88</sup>

The separation between the two worlds, then, is not as irreparable as it would seem, though it is fundamental. The difference is one of commitment to positive human action and life, the other fails to do so. Yet this failure has profound effect on both worlds, most obviously on Gerald's, but also on Birkin's. Because of the failure of commitment in those of the dying world, Birkin's world, given over to love and the dignity of man, a healthy vitality that seeks a place to grow, is doomed to isolation and estrangement. This is the tragedy of the modern age, that even the new day is dimmed by the death of the old. Gerald's failure has stunted Birkin's perfect happiness, prevented the final balance of the self in human relationships. Birkin expresses it thus to Ursula:

"You are all women to me. But I wanted a man friend, as eternal as you and I are eternal.

. . . . .

Having you, I can live all my life without anybody else, any other sheer intimacy. But to make it complete, really happy, I wanted eternal union with a man too: another kind of love."<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>88</sup>Ibid.    <sup>89</sup>Ibid., p. 472-3.

## CONCLUSION

Though Lawrence's conception of the self and relationship does not alter in essence, there is evidence of progression in these novels. The failing of modern society to create a meaningful truth is seen as a purely personal problem in Sons and Lovers, but is extended through The Rainbow and Women in Love to the point of becoming universal. Through the failure to respect one's self and those of others, through the self-destructive effort to recreate one's self according to one's intellectual image rather than to face the infinite possibilities of reality, and through the failure to identify with the vital sources of life, which causes a craving to cling and possess, modern man increasingly condemns himself to a life of cold alienation and perversity.

The alternative is seen as a responsible commitment to that part of life which is energetically and healthily alive. One must permit the blood-consciousness, one's 'selfhood,' to assert its rightful place in life as the 'other half.' This is not done by an act of will but by a relaxation of will; one must balance one's role as creator with that of the created. As 'creator,' man's tendency is to dominate and possess, which is a perversion; as 'one with the created,' he will perceive his relative unimportance and will be suffused with awe for 'the otherness of other things'.

Man can be 'creator' only in a limited sense, but he has the potentiality to be fully 'created' or realized, and also fully aware of his state. As such, man both shares in, and transcends, the natural order. This is Lawrence's ideal and it begins in an admission of the balance between the mental and blood-conscious levels.

To this point, no general discussion of Lawrence's style has been given. As we have seen, in spite of the disparaging comments of some critics, Lawrence concerned himself considerably with structure, and, in fact, The Rainbow, and Women in Love are less loosely structured than a casual reading would indicate. Aware that the enormous scope of The Rainbow could become unwieldy, Lawrence drew on the Biblical parallel as a means of unification and clarification, especially employing the symbol of the arch to unite the various themes of the novel. Tom and Lydia's loves become the pedestals of the rainbow-arch, the 'space beneath, between' the definition of freedom, the 'freedom to go in one direction' that Birkin speaks of in referring to love. The arch is connected with the meaning of art by Will Brangwen who experiences ecstasy beneath the arch of the cathedral. Ursula connects the arch with the quest for life by stepping forth from the portal beneath the rainbow and later her life creates the hope that the rainbow symbolizes. The images of the flood and the rainbow are richly realized

vehicles for Lawrence's meaning in The Rainbow.

Lawrence is even more careful with structure in Women in Love. Every scene and speech is intimately connected with the theme and conception. In this existentialist world picture, no one is neutral; one is bound by one's actions and views either to the 'authentic' or 'inauthentic' life.<sup>1</sup> There is no comfortable limbo for the 'in-betweens'. Thus, every character is connected structurally either with Gerald's or Birkin's world. That most are linked with Gerald is Lawrence's bitter comment on modern life.

Beyond this, stands Lawrence the prose-poet. In the final analysis, however, it is difficult to comment on Lawrence's style; ultimately one either likes it or one does not. If one appreciates it, the novels spring to life during the poetic outbursts; if one does not, then those passages are extraneous and confusing. A few critics<sup>2</sup> have

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<sup>1</sup>I do not mean here, or in the body of my discussion that Lawrence is an 'existentialist'. Certainly his insistence on the tie with nature and the salvation in meaningful relationship with a woman would cast doubt on his being an existentialist. Yet his manner of showing the necessary search for self, the responsibility and commitment necessary to reach the goal in the modern world, and the sense of salvation in fulfillment all show existentialist influences.

<sup>2</sup>primarily Harry T. Moore, (D. H. Lawrence: His Life and Works). Mark Spilka ("How to Pick Flowers" in E. W. Tedlock (ed.), D. H. Lawrence and Sons and Lovers: Sources and Criticism) argues that the connection is only nominal because the symbolistes searched for a 'spiritual infinite', which is not Lawrence's concern.

observed that Lawrence's style shows the influence of the French symbolistes who used symbols which were literal and personal. Certainly, Lawrence's symbols do not call on tradition for clarification. They acquire meaning through his own specialized usage. Thus, thinking of the moon as 'goddess of love' will not help much in interpreting the 'Moony' scene in Women in Love. The moon has acquired special meaning through continued usage in the three novels. Like darkness itself it is connected with the blood-consciousness but not in a one-to-one relationship. Like the thing it is connected with, the moon, as a symbol, preserves an aura of mystery, of 'unknowing', of perception by intuition not intellect. As such, it is a highly successful symbol for Lawrence's purposes.<sup>3</sup> Likewise, the horse, animals, and plants are literal symbols. The horse is just a horse; it conjures up no mythology, but as a horse it is a symbol of 'the otherness of other things,' and the meaning expands from there. The flower may be 'Maiden Blush' and the maiden may blush when she hears it, but it is still a little pink flower that has just been picked to give a

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<sup>3</sup>Because of these very qualities, one's interpretation of the moon and the 'Moony' scene, as well as most of Lawrence's symbols, depends entirely on one's personal reading and will likely conflict wildly with that of another critic. The lack of any 'one-to-one' relationship makes it impossible to define the meaning which itself can change or vary.

moment's pleasure to two lovers. But if that maiden strokes and fondles the flower, something is being said symbolically.

This kind of symbolism is probably directly responsible for the freshness and vitality of Lawrence's best writing. He is always close to the source of his inspiration, and through the medium of words he recreates the breathing, pulsing life, not the abstract symbol on the page. It is because we, too, 'watch' Mino and the 'promiscuous bit of fluff' that we feel the force of the life to which Birkin is persuading Ursula to commit herself. We accept the validity of Birkin's beliefs, if we are to at all, on the level of perception, not by abstract rational processes.

At his best Lawrence's style is poetic, a blend in words of manner and method. The scene describing the life of the Brangwen ancestors speaks of rhythm by rhythmic means. The prose rises and falls as we trace the passing of seasons, feel the pulse of the men and animals, and perceive the perfect union of man and the soil at the phallic level. This ideal, this union, is expressed similarly whenever it is achieved. At such times the sun will throb, the earth will 'yield up its furrow to the plough' and the life principle will become universal.

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