

6

Strong Women, Weak Men: D.H. Lawrence's *The Rainbow* and *Lady Chatterley's Lover*

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ABSTRACT

D.H. Lawrence's impact on his contemporaries was enormous and still continues to be so due to the polemics that his fiction brought to bear on the way social reality was captured in British fiction, but perhaps more especially because of his boldness in portraying a society that was pretentious¹, and failed to acknowledge its own weaknesses. The paper builds on this premise to argue that more than anything else, Lawrence portrays women who have the energy and ability to, and do overthrow the values of patriarchy that impinge on their possibility of self-assertion. *The Rainbow* and *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, portray heroines who in their avid and genuine attempts to pull themselves out of their exacerbated and moribund social confines, undermine their roles as traditional mothers, exasperate their men folk and succeed even if in some cases only minimally, to ascertain their own freedom. To Lawrence, these women are strong willed, fearless, daring and create by their actions the hope of a less pathetic and compromised future. Contrary to held opinions therefore, the paper locates the source of men's anguish in Lawrence's fiction to their inability to contain the vigour of women and continue to make belief about their own power. Put differently, the paper evolves on the belief that Lawrence's fiction wrestles with the power and authority of women over men and the disturbing realisation of its inevitable permanence.

1 For details on this see Walter Houghton's *The Victorian Frame of Mind, 1830-1870*. Yale University Press, 1963

INTRODUCTION

D.H. Lawrence will be remembered amongst many things for his pointed and poignant criticism of British social moeurs, but most especially for his boldness in the treatment of women and their values², a fact that earned him amongst others the description of being “one of the arch male chauvinists of modern literature” (Mauzerall, 88), a reputation propagated (in the greater part) by Kate Millet’s *Sexual Politics*. In an era where the line between tradition and religion was blurred, Lawrence was able to discern the underlying and sometimes infinitesimal vestiges of a quiet rebellion of attitude. He was able to see that the moral world to which the British so much looked up to and fought hard to preserve was crumbling. Perhaps, more shocking was the sense of frustration occasioned by the gradual breakdown of the barriers that have hitherto held sway in the dispossession of women. Probably informed by both his upbringing and the family social environment in which he grew up, Lawrence’s depiction of women is tantalising. He portrays a world of fierce moral and psychic opposition between the sexes, where men and women are locked in a subtle but energetic struggle for moral and psychic supremacy. His misfortune as a writer probably resulted from his historical “situationality” as he wrote at a time, when as Jonathan McAlon has indicated, public morality was “about being good, upstanding and pulling together in a crisis”³. Lawrence was in many ways a man of his opinions, holding fast to his views of the evolution of society and less to the cultural dictates of the time.

2 Lawrence’s *The Rainbow* was banned on publication because the novel was considered pornographic.

3 It should be noted that some 1101 copies of *The Rainbow* were burned by a hangman outside the Royal Exchange. The novel was banned because as the prosecutor Herbert Muskett declared there was ‘a mass of obscenity of thought, idea, and action (see Jonathan McAlon 2015)

Lawrence's reputation amongst feminists as "one of the arch male chauvinists of modern literature" (Jorgette Mauzerall P.89), had made it impossible for his critics to reposition him in any objective lens with regards to his treatment of the relationship between men and women. Whether or not Lawrence like many writers of his time, as Anne Fernihough states, saw "'the educated 'New Woman' [as] a symptom of degeneration" (xvi) (qtd. in Mauzerall 90) did not make him to be completely obliterated to the inert reality of the strength of the woman and her ability to have a permanent impact on the man-both as child and mature individual.

His heroines are exacerbated by the lies of a moribund society that continues to impinge on their struggle to tear themselves away from serfdom to freedom even if that freedom compromises their identity or calls into question their individuality. In *The Rainbow* and *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, Lawrence portrays heroines, Ursula Brangwen and Lady Chatterley, who are vigorous, enthusiastic and act in a way that shapes and defines their identity. Confronted by traditional models of sexuality and friendship, class stratification and the question of marriage, the heroines of the above stated novels insist on their vision of truth and the reality defined by that truth. Lawrence's attempts to bring order into the text by reorganising the characters' created personal space rather reveal the women's capacity to challenge orthodoxy and to tear down the emotional attachment to men that has brought them to servitude. Lydia Lensky, Anna Brangwen and Ursula Brangwen in their various ways create a torpid darkness which represents the dark urges of the female soul's dislike against any barriers to emotional self-fulfilment. This same dark emotion is ingrained in the testament of love of Constance Chatterley who has very little difficulty in making the choice to abrogate the sacred sacrament of marriage in order to come to terms with her genuine erratic soul in search of affection. Even if at some point Ursula and Constance diverge in their methods for the quest for fulfilment,

they remain essentially representative of a force that contradicts Lawrence's male hegemony. Lawrence's ironic treatment of women's subjugation is perhaps his own belated attempts to reconcile with his personal ego, the superiority of men.

Ursula Brangwen and Constance Chatterley are defined by their rancour against class structures and the former's aversion for religious symbolism. Miss Brangwen and Lady Chatterley contradict their prohibitive social structures. Constance is not tamed by the luxury of class, and Ursula's enthusiasm is not quietened by the beauty of aristocracy. In both situations, neither the luxury of class, nor the overwhelming male hegemony can mitigate the rebelling spirit of the two women. Their rebellion paves the way for an affirmation of self-esteem. In Ursula this sense of self is accentuated by her courage to ridicule her father's blind contentment with the material symbols of the church. Her attitude is a challenge to the whole galaxy of male oriented opinions; it calls to question the very basis of belief and throws doubt on the femininity of thought that characterised her age and generation.

The three love and marriage relationships in *The Rainbow* are indexed to the attempts by the women to create a new order of thought and action, which should inadvertently devour the organic constitution of men's assertive power. The story of the likes of Ursula and Constance is Lawrence's chronicle of the inevitability of change and how our ability to adapt to it will determine our survival and define our personalities. His females are caught between inevitable change and the vestiges of a fading past. *The Rainbow* and *Lady Chatterley's Lover* introduce us to the caprices of a worn out past and the necessity of a bold future. And this is what his male characters fear to come to terms with and his female characters agonise to achieve. Lawrence's rainbow is a portrait of women signifying an irreversible finality-an untainted change, a process feared by William, Skrebensky and Clifford. This is the inevitable constant to which they will be

powerless, but about which they would have liked to exert authority and influence. Their boldness, Lawrence seems to say, is challenged by the intrepidity of soul of the women who venture into the darkness of the unknown and the faceless future; while on the contrary Lawrence's men seem contented with the statusquo and do not attempt to challenge orthodoxy and venture into unknown space. This assumption relates to and affirms Peter Fjagesund's observation that Lady Chatterley's Lover expresses "naïve and rustic utopia and apocalyptic nightmare of modern industrialised society". Perhaps more than a naïve hopefulness, Fjagesund's sees a cultural cataclysm when he states that the novel "is a consistent expression of the darkest cultural pessimism while at the same time preaching the most tender and heartfelt hope for the future" (146). He is concerned about Lawrence's apocalyptic view of history, the deflection of hitherto held cultural norms that are giving way under the pressure of modern thought. New theories of behaviour and social cohesion are pull factors that engineer a new attitude towards life and a new vision of the power of the male vis-à-vis the female.

LOVE, MARRIAGE AND SEXUAL FREEDOM

The Rainbow and *Lady Chatterley's Lover* chronicle in varying ways and with varying aesthetic trajectories the difficult struggles of Lawrence's women to assert sexual freedom and emotional self-expression. The opening pages of both novels signal the inevitability of time passing and of changes in taste. Lady Chatterley is aware of the "essentially" "tragic age" in which we find ourselves; the need for us to manage this "cataclysm" that has befallen us, the difficult future we have to embrace, but perhaps most especially, she is conscious of the one thing needful, "We've got to live, no matter how many skies have fallen"(1). Opposed to a paralysed Clifford, Lawrence foreshadows the very troubled future of the Chatterley's and in some prophetic ways x-rays the discordance that will eventually

pave the way for Constance's search for a better system of thought and action. Her vision of what tomorrow holds is far more transcendental than Clifford's whose state of being imposes a stale and moribund traditionalism, auguring decadence and failure. Unlike the male Brangwens, the females see things differently. Lawrence announces from the start that they "were different", and their world was characterised by a determined spirit to see into the greater things of the future. They investigated "the spoken world beyond" and "they strained to listen" (6) to the voice of the future. In showing their desire for the future, for the mundane, Lawrence's women are portrayed as human beings determined to challenge the future even if this went contrary to moral and social beliefs dear to them and their society. Hena Maes-Jelinek opines that while criticism of society is Lawrence's major concern, yet his purpose is not as Lionel Trilling has indicated "the investigation of reality beginning in the social field" (1)⁴

That Lawrence opens the two novels with women affirming their desire to explore the unknown reveals his underlying and perhaps unconscious desire for them to tear away from the yoke of servitude. In stating that "The woman was the symbol of that further life which comprised religion and love and morality" (16), Lawrence assumes that the women understand better than the men the social and metaphysical needs of the society. The Brangwen women are energetic, foresighted and bold. They are at home while their men wonder about out of the house. Tom like his nephew William cannot stand the emotional enthusiasm of his wife. He is overwhelmed by Lydia's dark energy and her charisma, the result of a certain internal calm. The original glow that characterise both men and later Anton Skrebensky give way under the pressure of Lydia's, Anna's and Ursula's emotional

4 For details on this discussion see Lionel Trilling's *Manners, Morals, and the Novel* in *Forms of Modern Fiction*, ed. William Van O'Connor. Bloomington, 1962.

magnanimity. More than the men, the Brangwen women are contemplative and intensely emotional. Lawrence captures the intense but silent emotional uproar that characterise the Tom-Lydia relationship as an expression of a desire to break from tradition. While Lydia is constant and fearless in her affections, Tom is, psychically unstable and unsure about the nature of his relationship to Lydia. His unstable relationship to the wife betrayed in the internal wrangling that characterise him are revealed in his contemplations about his relationship to her: "Did he own her? Was she here for ever? Or might she go away? She was not really his, it was not a real marriage, this marriage between them. She might go away. He did not feel like a master, husband, father of her children.... he could never be satisfied, never be at peace, because she might go away" (54). All through the two novels, the fear of separation is stronger in the men than in the women, especially in the case of Tom who "... was afraid of his wife" (58), especially as she overwhelms him by her dignified silence.

Lydia Lensky's love for Tom is profound and real and characterised by a grandeur, the result of an informed silence. In lapsing into alcohol and constantly going out of the house, Tom attempts to escape from the reality of home. He is oppressed by the silent hostility of his dwelling place and even as he goes out in order to expiate his fears, he is tormented by his lack of genuine mastery of his wife. He is subtly forced to subjection and lulled into "the baptism to another life" (87). Tom's nightmare like his nephew William after him, is the feeling of isolation and separation. Lydia does not suffer from any form of agitation; she remains stable struggling to control her internal combustion, transforming that energy into meaningful love lessons to the husband. Lawrence paints a picture of Tom as being psychically shot down. He is tortured by the various questions Lydia asks and by the suggestion that he could get another woman. He is emotionally torn apart and ridiculed; he is even chided, cowed down and eventually rendered powerless.

Lawrence inverts the role, giving Lydia the power to bring to order Tom's erratic and spasmodic behaviour. Tom is frightened and overwhelmed by the disturbing reality of his wife's powerful silent energy; he betrays his own total lack of security, evidence that he has lost control over both himself as human being and his household. The wife has gotten her secured space and tutored the husband to a reverential obedience. His desire to "be received within the darkness which should swallow him and yield him up to himself.", so that he could be "burnt away till he lit with her in one consummation, that were supreme," (87) has become his only wish. More traditional than her daughter Anna, Lydia succeeds however, to tame to some significant level, the attempted superiority of Tom and to cause him to have both respect and love on her own terms. She is a precursor of a new system of values whose inevitability is the stunning truth that Lawrence's male characters must come to terms with.

The same wild energy that tames Tom in *The Rainbow* annihilates Clifford Chatterley and the gamekeeper. Lady Chatterley's "unusual energy" both external and internal is probably a natural disposition and the result of her interaction with men. In this rather ethically challenging novel, Lawrence arrests the reader with bold and unswerving depiction of the moral arrogance of a new generation of women determined to love and marry on their own terms and to exert their freedom to sexuality in ways hitherto not accepted by conventional morality. He tears open the doors of truth in affirming that a "woman could take a man without really giving herself away. Certainly, she could take him without really giving herself into power". The blatant truth that a woman "could use this sex thing to have power over him" represents the enormous power that a woman has over the man, rather than an insult on the nature of women. In Lawrence's societies this was definitely so outrageous, the frankness with which he inadvertently announces with biting irony the sexual engagement of his generation to the blatant

realities of sex itself⁵. Crafted in a narrative that lays bare the ultimate truth, Lawrence underscores the one and only meaningful necessity to women-to wit, the search for freedom and fulfilment. In the lives of all the Brangwen women but especially Ursula and Constance Chatterley, there is an intense and intensified necessity to break free of rules, to tear down the walls of a hegemonic morality and to venture into an unknown inviolable space. The book's closure reflects its opening, as it sounds a rather disturbing note on the dark and necessary unknown. The Brangwen women and Constance Chatterley represent more the rational and therefore forward looking.

Clifford's physical disability is Lawrence's artistic ploy to further his moral outrage at a moribund British sexuality. He concedes to Connie – the intelligentsia-the superiority of emotional force, reducing the husband to a nonentity, "alone he was like a lost thing. He needed Connie to be there, to assure him he existed at all" (11). Lawrence subordinates his men and their emotional survival to the psychic strength of the women, raising the latter to mythical figures. The contact zone of Lawrence's men and women is the feeling of togetherness that gives them life and meaning, that defines their being as exclusive entities. What seems to have been Lawrence's moral depravity or courage is the physical explosion of an internal combustion that gave way under the pressure of new modes of life. Set in post-World War 1 England, the novelist wrestles not simply with the power of women, but with the changing faces of human sexuality and the difficulty of accepting it.

This is the basis of the meaning of marriage in the two texts. These two novels read in other contexts still challenge traditional notions of marriage and sexuality. They insist on the necessity of a reverse order, seeing in that the way to a much-needed

5 See Walter Houghton's *The Victorian Frame of Mind, 1830-1870*. Yale University Press, 1963.

freedom. Connie and Ursula want to love on their own terms and in their morbid silence they seem to leave their companions with no choices. Their deafening silence threatens the fabric of a hitherto consensus definition of love and marriage based on masculine leadership. Lawrence paints a picture of an enthusiastic urgency for liberation exulted by Lady Bennerley who urges Connie to give meaning to her time and avoid future regrets. There is no doubt that Lawrence's women love their husbands and lovers, but they have a passion for a life more enthusiastic, characterised by more colour than what they are offered at present. They are not immoral in themselves but attempt to ignore or rather to rebel against the existing morality of their social environments. This kind of morality inhibits their sexual freedom or their right to freeze their existing relationship and look up to the rainbow.

She is tormented by the possibility that the father of her child should be someone the child will live to see. In as much as Connie may secretly like this, she is not as tormented as much as the husband by the notion of fathering a child for another man. She craves for "the democracy of touch, the resurrection of the body" (63). This statement as blasphemous as it may be, seems to be the totality of Lawrence's concern for women. It encapsulates the whole doctrine of women's freedom, which is, the freewill to choose what to do with one's body but also the freedom of thought. While the gamekeeper is afraid of the consequence of their adulterous relationship, Connie is simply adamant. This sense of indifference is not simply a common disregard of the social mores of the time or her surrounding, but an expression of an indignant repulsion of all that makes complete sexual self-expression impossible. Unlike Constance Chatterley, the gamekeeper's insistent 'I am afraid. I'm afraid. I'm afraid o' things.' (109) is more a betrayal of his lack of courage than an expression of his moral aptitude. He suffers from psychological imbalance, the result of his lack of will power, of inability and of cowardice. He is crippled by an uncontrollable emotional

dependency on her, but also by the realisation of the improper nature of this act.

Clifford is a featherweight compared to the vibrant Connie who tells him straight to his face 'But I want to love you, and I can't. It only seems horrid' (151). The brutality of her truth is the expression of her force of character. She is ready to let go Clifford for the gamekeeper, while the latter is unable to withstand the possibility that his wife could meet them both. It is not because he has more moral nerves, but simply because he lacks the guts. His self-reflexive attitude borders on extreme doubt about his personality and ability to keep Connie. His tumultuous relationship with Bertha Coutts handicaps his full expression of love. His hesitation to act immediately even if justified by law can equally be attributed to fear, the fear of having a full-blown woman. Like most Lawrence's men, he is dependent on women. But curiously, Lawrence has been harassed by feminists⁶ beginning with Simone de Beauvoir, and especially intensifying with Millet on his anti-feminist stance. These feminists while justifiably sustaining arguments that Lawrence wrote "guide books for women", (qtd. in Millet)⁷ fail to substantially characterise men's attachment to women for psychological support.

Clifford is portrayed as a pathetic figure, not simply because of his physical incapacity, but his mental debauchery. His physical appearance is both artistically and aesthetically relevant to the understanding of a society that is both demented and sick. He represents a society whose foundational values have become shaky and which is bound to collapse. Lawrence

6 See Ronald G. Walker's review of Peter Balbert. D. H. Lawrence and the *Phallic Imagination: Essays on Sexual Identity and Feminist Misreading*. New York: St Martin's P, 1989

7 For detail discussion on this see Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*. New York: Knopf, 1953, 209

characterises him as a pathetic figure depending on his nanny for love and help. His insistence that Mrs Bolton should kiss him is the culminating point of his handicap. To describe him as a "child-man" (259) is precisely to show the extent of his degeneration.

Clifford is only saved by the love of Mrs Bolton who recognises that, but for her, he would be nothing especially as Lady Chatterley would not have done anything to help him because "she was not the one to put a man forward. She wanted too much for herself" (259). This could equally be said of Ursula. Like Ursula, she is accused wrongly, because she simply wanted to protect her own personal space, the kind that Clifford would not have had the courage to give, but for which she would have a burning desire. Mrs Bolton and Connie are two women on near different sides of the moral and social platform. The former is of the old school, matronly, accepting of values that will eventually give way and the later looking forward to new tidings, to the splendid side of life. They both have a sense of love and have suffered and still do suffer for it, but at different levels.

Clifford considers Connie's sexual rebellion as beastly, swearing never to grant her divorce. The force of the sentence "I shall never divorce you" (264) betrays both its sincerity and finality. Clifford and Connie are torn apart by major differences and attitudes towards life because of the difficulty of their various choices, captured vividly by Mrs Bolton who promises Connie that 'I'll be faithful to Sir Clifford, and I'll be faithful to you, for I can see you're both right in your own ways'(264).Mrs Bolton's wise judgement captures the essence of Lawrence's artistic experimentation. Connie is neither with Clifford, nor is she with Mellors. She is however with herself, something she has longed to have. Put differently, Connie has been battling to preserve herself, to be herself. She has won the so-much cherished freedom to act even if this is at the expense of her true

love-Mellors. Her solitude is less a sanction of her moral travesty and more a triumph of change.

The passion with which Anna expresses her love for William is the same passion with which Connie, Ursula and Lydia express their loves for the various men they fall in love with. She tells will “Will, I love you, I love you, Will, I love you” (109). In this simple sentence is packed anxiety and desire, but also love in the way that only Lawrence’s women can express. She is carried to him with so much passion and marries him in a buoyant ceremony, with the woman being more confident and outgoing than the man. Like his uncle before him, William is afraid of this woman who has entered his life and is determined to stay there. In spite his fear of her, he marries her and “He was anxious with a deep desire and anxiety that she should stay with him where they were in the timeless universe of free, perfect limbs and immortal breast, affirming that the old outward order was finished” (139). The desire to possess his wife, to keep her by his side, to own her will be as in the case of his uncle Tom and like Clifford in *Lady Chatterley’s Lover*, the reason for his undoing. He is an incapacitated being and depends on this woman for his strength. Already, his thoughts betray his own fear of solitude and by implications his overarching possessiveness. We are told that William “felt his veins would burst with anguish of thankfulness, his heart was mad with gratefulness, he could pour himself out upon her for ever” (144). Always as with Lawrence, the men are on the grateful side, begging for affection and demanding possession of both body and soul, yet incapable of withstanding the biting criticisms of women. Anna is wildly opposed to the way her husband conceives religion from a material rather than a spiritual perspective. She finds some of the preaching of the church “horrible” (149) an attitude that enrages William and thereby antagonises the couple.

She began to tremble. He wanted to impose himself on her. And he began to shudder. She wanted to desert him, to leave him a prey to the

open, with the unclean dogs of the darkness setting on to devour him. He must beat her, and make her stay with him. Whereas she fought to keep herself free of him. (157)

She is violently expressive to the great chagrin of the husband. Her desire for gender equality is revealed in the questions she asks Will about the miniaturisation of female portraits in the church. She taunts Will violently on the caricaturisation of the female folk. Her rebellion is at the very heart of Will's faith. She ridicules the values of Will's Christian faith and doctrines that have given meaning to his life and family over the ages. Lawrence paints Anna as an astonishing and fearless lady ready to attack the church's preaching at the heart of her very fundamental practices.

She is overwhelmed by her own self-importance especially when she is pregnant. She shows her happiness by dancing naked, defying any sense of propriety, ignoring Will completely, assuming that she is already master of her own destiny. She is the more determined to free herself from his grip. She fantasizes on her great need for freedom and self-expression. She seems to be self-contained. At least at this moment, she sees Will as "some vast, hideous darkness" (171) from which she has to pull away. She wonders at "what horrible hold did he want to have over her body? Why did he want to drag her down, and kill her spirit? Why did he want to deny her spirit? Why did he deny her spirituality, hold her for a body only? And was he to claim her carcass?" (171). The big concern for Anna is the freedom of spirit. And for this, she is ready to fight with anybody. She wants to tear herself from the moribund social environment in which she was born, and which does not seem to augur well with the changes in time. Will's submission to Anna is her final victory, the quintessence of her struggles, the price for peace which Will has to pay. He gives up so that he can be at peace with himself and their lives conclude on the fact that now "she was the daytime, the daylight, he was the shadow, put aside, but in the darkness potent with an overwhelming voluptuousness" (200).

She succeeds to get away with her own vision of marriage and love and affirms her authority over the man. She can now love on her own terms and define the marriage in that same regard. Mauzerall observes that “in subsequent generations, as women in the novel move toward independence, the men become more and more desperate. Lawrence seemed to understand what feminists theorists maintain; that at the deepest psychological level, men need women more than women need men” (96). Will is defeated, and painfully so, and as S, Chelliah affirms, as an ‘illustration[] of the men in Lawrence who are ultimately defeated by the women whom they love’ (979). Ursula’s later attitude will be an extreme form of the prolongation of this system of thought and action.

In her youth, Ursula is revolted by her mother’s “superficial authority” (201) and would be determined to chart her own way no matter the consequences. We are told that “And very early she learned to harden her soul in resistance and denial of all that was outside her, harden herself upon her own being” (207). This is precisely the reason for her excitement to go to Grammar School because there, “she was going to walk among free souls” (249). More than anything else, the idea of being free from home and parents is a defining feature in the growth of Ursula. Like Lawrence’s other women, she is a dark presence capable of consuming her male folk. She is transfigured by her first love encounter-to Skrebensky, an encounter that makes her want to “fling herself into all the hidden brightness of the air” (283). She will later on want to embrace the moon in its totality or rather want the moon to embrace her totally. In love, she is like all the Lawrence women, aggressive, bold and well meaning.

In her relationship with her father, Ursula is tenacious, determined to get loose from his grip, get a job of her own and assert her authority even as tender as she is. The rough and tumble of her time at Kingston-on-Thames Grammar School hardens her the more, gives her a sense of self. She does not

completely submit to the man's world even though she suffers greatly from it. Even if the likes of Mr Harby brutalise her, by the time she is leaving the school, she has brought her authority to bear on her students and has equally shown to the male dominated school authorities her capacity to stand her grounds on some issues. All along in that school, she fights hard to be free, and we are told that "she was free" (393).

Perhaps, Ursula's greatest battle is with Skrebensky. She sees him merely as the source of her "freedom and delight" (407) and of an "illimitable endless space for self-realisation and delight for ever" (407). The joy of his return to England elevates her sense of self and doubles her excitement. She is caught between the demands for fulfilment and the obligation of a communion of selves. Ursula considers that "To be oneself was a supreme, gleaming triumph of infinity" (409), even if in this situation that sense of self will have to take cognition of Skrebensky her represents the new reality. She justifies part of her happiness in being with Skrebensky, but equally recognises that he cannot or rather should not have anything to do with her "permanent self" (419), a fact that will later on hurt Skrebensky to the point that he will detach himself from her in ungentlemanly manner. His proposition of marriage is responded to with scant attention. He is ridiculed by the quality of attention she gives him.

Like Tom William in *The Rainbow* and Clifford in *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, Skrebensky is overwhelmed by his inaccessibility to Ursula. He cannot possess her in the way he wants, and this is a source of frustration to him because it reveals somehow his inability to have control over him. He is worried because Ursula eludes him and therefore calls into question his manhood: "He felt as if his life were dead. His soul was extinct. The whole being of him had become sterile; he was a spectre, divorced from life. He had no fullness, he was just a flat shape.... The horror of not-being possessed by him" (424). Ursula's

expression of love is more a matter of physical attraction than an expression of a vigorous internal need, especially since she does not want anybody to possess her permanent self. And she succeeds like the rest of the women under study, to bend Skrebensky to her caprices. That Skrebensky cries in public and is comforted by Ursula is the culminating point of her victory over him. Even if later on she will beg to have him, she has succeeded in twisting him out, in making him bend to her especially as "he was crying uncontrollably, noiselessly, with his face twisted like a mask, contorted and the tears running down the amazing grooves of his cheeks." (433). Lawrence's description of Skrebensky's emotional breakdown is both ironic and pathetic. He is like Tom, William and Clifford, a big baby and by crying, we are told that Skrebensky's "manhood was cruelly, coldly defaced" (434).

She comes out victorious, because Skrebensky seems to have failed. Ursula to him "was the darkness, the challenge, the horror" (448). He is interested in a woman, in whom he has total control, and life will not be complicated, regrettably Ursula does not fit that description. She is the complicated type looking forward to things beyond him, things which he will be unable to deliver. To have suddenly escaped from Ursula is a confirmation of his inability to cope with her. He cannot possess Ursula; his sudden and swift marriage to the colonel's daughter betrays the malaise of a people frightened by the imminence of change and desperately attempting to cling to tradition in the name of national values.

The moral question raised by Skrebensky's action goes far beyond the precincts of a simple inability to be bold. Those questions and the attempted possibilities of resolution are couched in the rainbow itself. The Rainbow closes with Ursula being described as "faint, dim, closed up" (449); it is not a sign of her being defeated, it simply indicates perhaps the tragedy of her love life. Lawrence finds fault with Ursula, because she is the

only female character in the two texts under study who confesses to her inappropriate behaviour, yet she is also the only one who is the boldest. Her life is simply the epitome of modern and postmodern malaise. She seems sober not because she wants love, but because she is still animated by her love for her freedom. The violently rebellious and indifferent Ursula suddenly comes to the realisation that she needs a man for her unborn child. It does not in any way call into question her desire to be free and chart her own way. Lawrence refuses to give the reader a chance for Ursula and Skrebensky to come together, so that we can see her behaviour, and in so doing leaves us with doubts as to Ursula's real intentions. She seems to have spent so much energy and would prefer to stay behind and watch the world unfold.

In the most strenuous difficulty Ursula's life is built on her quest for absolute freedom, for her to be a permanent reality void of any entanglements.

'I have no father nor mother nor lover, I have no allocated place in the world of things, I do not belong to Beldover nor to Nottingham nor to England nor to this world, they none of them exist, I am trammelled and entangled in them, but they are all unreal. I must break out of it, like a nut from its shell which is an unreality.' (457)

She is determined to ascribe to her reality a fundamental solitariness based on her ability for unreserved action. Her quest for freedom and her narcissism renders closure difficult in *The Rainbow*. She is the only female character who ends up without even the promise of a male partner or any sort of meaningful friendship. For Lydia, Anna and Connie there is some partner even if for Connie, that friendship is built on the hope of marrying Mellors. Ursula's hope is found in the appearance of the rainbow because she sees "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" (460). Ursula represents the promise of a bright future, a world that must change. The rainbow is a

sign of her freedom and the freedom of those like her who have a new attitude towards life and who must break away from traditions that inhibit freedom. Lawrence himself has indicated that the novel was about “woman becoming individual, self-responsible, taking her own initiative” (Letters 2: 165, qtd in Mauzerall), an observation that forces Mauzerall to conclude that Lawrence creates narratives that show women “at times as threatening—both to the men in their lives and to the culture at large” (91). This is a fundamental view of Lawrence’s not-so-insignificant view of women as carriers of change even if that change goes against the norms of the society.

CONCLUSION

This paper set out to investigate the relationship between men and women in Lawrence’s works under study, with the intention of establishing women’s authority over men and men’s anguish over their inability to exert their power on the females. The study underscored the fact of women’s genuine love for their partners, their main desire to live a happy marital life even if this should be on their own terms and ultimately, their search for absolute freedom. The attitudes of Lydia, Anna and Ursula Brangwen and that of Connie are conditioned by their desire to live happy lives.

Lawrence’s women under study are in my opinion genuinely in love. For each of them, the readiness to be in love is honest. Even though for Lydia and Anna they keep a certain silence that frightens their partners, yet the intensity of their emotions cannot be underestimated. Connie is genuinely concerned for Clifford and would not do anything indecent, within the limits of the morality of their time. Lawrence’s men have a penchant to access their women for the sole reason of dominating them. They are characterised as old fashioned because they believe that a woman is a piece of property to be owned. They are torn apart by this inability to have a complete hold on their female folk because they fear the consequence of

the abundant freedom and life women possess could be problematic to the affirmation of their own identity as men. In both novels, Lawrence portrays men as weaklings who hang on to the apron strings of their wives and lovers, or who draw their strengths from the submissive nature of the later.

In presenting the passage of time, Lawrence demonstrates the inevitability of change and how this affects the morality of his society. Perhaps, more than anything else, it is the fear that this change will impact on traditional modes of life that haunt Tom, William, and Skrebensky in *The Rainbow* and Clifford in *Lady Chatterley's Lover*. Lawrence understood that there is no way his society could compromise the change in morality with the passage of time. To Lawrence that change in time, engendered a change in attitudes and behaviour and those like Clifford who were not ready to switch to it will simply have to disappear from the scene. If at the time the novel was published, readers found Lawrence's attitude outrageous, it was simply because they failed to understand the reality of his vision. His moral stand portrayed through characters like Ursula and Connie is bold and can only be understood within our present context. The meaning of love, the desire to be loved is seen differently through the various relationships in the Marsh. The invasion of the marsh by new forms of life, encouraged in the new generation a sudden change in the behaviour of the younger generation, but equally played on the way traditionalists conceived their loss of power.

Lawrence's women are bold, futuristic and ready to get into the dark unknown. In spite of their desire to love and marry and live peacefully, they are ready to explore new horizons, to dig into the future, to go beyond the ordinary lives they are placed into by providence. Lawrence negotiates a way out for the men, by leading them into an infantile submission. Clifford is attached to Mrs Bolton for his daily survival, Tom and William finally submit to Lydia and Anna and Skrebensky will find solace in the

colonel's daughter. In all the situations, the novelist concludes on the hegemony of the women and the failure of the men to keep pace with the changes in thought and values. Lawrence should not simply be read as morally outrageous, but equally as a novelist who is daring and equally complacent with those who hope in a better and brighter tomorrow. Kate Millet who first attacked Lawrence's chauvinism could not help but accept that Lawrence is "the most talented and fervid of sexual politicians" precisely because in his subtlety Millet argues, 'It is through a feminine consciousness that his masculine message is conveyed' (239). Lawrence is both egregious and sympathetic towards women. And in both cases, it is through the dark psyche of his female characters that he does that. Millet doesn't exonerate Lawrence from masochism but holds him up to the standards that women's abilities demand.

The darkness Lawrence's men fear is the birth of female freedom; their anguish can be traced to their fear of confronting this darkness, reason why they will rather negotiate with their partners, than go on a headlong endless conflict with them. Lawrence does not insinuate total war with tradition. In discussing *The Rainbow* from the perspective of the foreignness within us, Maria Aline Seabra Ferreira doesn't fail to point out that the novel challenges "traditional associations[.]" for the reason that it is "the marsh men who are described as leading a life of profound "blood intimacy "with the natural and animal world, whereas it is the women who, though also implicated in this life of intimacy with the land and the process of creation, long for culture and knowledge, the possession of which they equate with power" (100). The author recognises the need for female and male relationships but insists on the need for humans to embrace change because it is in it that they can give full meaning to their lives and achieve self-expression. He uses Ursula both to question and show the dangers of extreme freedom. Jorgette Mauzerall who attempts an objective reading of *The Rainbow* from a feminist psychoanalytic perspective traces

men's dependence on women to the labour scene in the novel and to the preverbal stage where the man is completely dependent on the mother. She observes "that at the deepest psychological level, men need women more than women need men" (96). Even though her reading projects her feminist stance, she nonetheless reveals the deep-seated ability of women to dominate and determine men's moral development.

In submitting to the women, Lawrence's men acknowledge the inevitable permanence of their strength of character and the eventual dissolution of the moral values that have hitherto held sway and imprisoned the protagonists' emotions and ability to act. The values of class and social stratification, the age long traditions of the marsh will and do give way under the pressure of these changes in taste and behaviour. The death of permanence and the victory of constant change define the worlds of the characters, especially female characters that Lawrence portrays. Ursula's rainbow is the promise that it will forever be so, the feeling of change, the promise of the renewal of change and the movement towards better modes of life. The difficulty of an ending chronicled by Earl G. Ingersoll captures the essence of Lawrence's dilemma in categorically affirming his distrust for women and his wish for them to assert their freedom. Ingersoll concludes that:

The ending moves us metonymically toward the fulfilment of desire, masked as desire, in a metaphor of a sprouting acorn or a rainbow that metaphorically puts in the place of lack and of that Desire that can never be recuperated. For a moment, the rainbow sutures over the lack by announcing the promise of transformation, or movement onto another plane. And then the rainbow fades. (90)

The Rainbow and *Lady Chatterley's Lover* carry the story of human spiritual, cultural and social evolution. They portray a society that must inevitably reconnect to changes around it; one in which the linchpin for this change is women. Put differently, as the structure grows bigger in canvas, so too does the quest for an understanding of the self, of human relationships and

freedom expand and develop and eventually become the mode of life. The fusion of men and women becomes Lawrence's statement on the reconciliation of warring ideals in the development of an ideal society. In spite of his sometimes-biting criticism of women, Lawrence's fiction is a credo for women's strength and a statement on their ability to lead the world to genuine freedom and self-expression.

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