

## THE ART OF CHARACTERIZATION IN D. H. LAWRENCE'S *THE RAINBOW*

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### ABSTRACT

*The concept of the character is considered one of the basic concepts relevant to the novel. T Character, plot, setting and the point of view all constitute the novel's design. Characters are imaginary people who are made of their actions, their speech and the commentary made on them by the narrator. For Lawrence, his art of characterization is considered as original and unconventional in the sense that his character portrayal is different from the customary mode. His novels are peopled by very few characters at a time and this stands in contrast with other novelists like Dickens, Fielding and Thackeray. For example, there are only six main characters in The Rainbow, even though it deals with three generations and covers a long span of time. He does not include heroic and villainous characters in his novels. That is to say that neither heroes nor villain exist in his novels in the conventional sense of the term. They are flesh-and-blood people like the common people encountered in real life. His characters are emotionally deficient and suffer from psychological and mental disorders. Moreover, Lawrence's characters are not presented from social, religious or political perspectives, even though the reader can find traces of that. Instead, he concentrates on the inner region of the self and the struggle to reach self fulfillment rather than the struggle between an individual and his society. Walter Allen comments that what interests Lawrence in his characters is not the social man but the subterranean submerged part of the individual that is the unconscious mind. His characters are taken by some critics to be mere tools to convey Lawrence's philosophy and thought. In addition, almost most of the characters in The Rainbow have symbolic significance.*

#### **1- First Generation (Tom Brangwen, Lydia Lensky):**

Lawrence distinguishes his The Rainbow from his previous novel Sons and Lovers and from the nineteenth century novels by saying:

*"You mustn't look in my novel for the old ego- of the character. There is another ego, according to whose action the individual is unrecognizable, and passes through, as it*

*were, allotropic states which it needs a deeper sense than any we have been used to exercise, to discover are states of the same single radically unchanged element.”*

The Rainbow opens with the description of the old way of life in which the first generation of Brangwen family lives. In this very famous description, Lawrence shows that man, nature and animal constitute a harmonious integrated entity. Life of the first generation is described as brimming with vitality. Sexual overtones in the opening description of the novel are one manifestation of the characters’ vitality. Thus, the opening paragraph of the novel deals with the history of the rural setting into which the male character Tom Brangwen of the first generation is born. Tom and Lydia are portrayed as straddled between two ages; the industrial age and the rural age. Industry has elbowed the rural mode of life into the shadow but not complete disrupted it. Tom has an innate isolation from other people around him. He hates the people around him as they mirror the mechanical aspect and not the organic one of life. the word “mechanical” is usually reoccurs in the novel to refer to Lawrence’s and his characters’ attitude towards the industrial, spiritless and uncreative life. Tom Brangwen represents the aristocrat of the instincts. He suffers from sexual awakening due to social and psychological suppressions. For tom, woman is either mother or sister and so his first sexual experience causes him much strain and tension as he considers that as a violation and distortion of the holy image of the woman struck in his mind. Lawrence delicately depicts the subtle realities of adolescence:

*“A hot, accumulated consciousness was always awake in his chest, his wrists felt swelled and quivering, his mind became full of lustful images, his eyes seemed blood flushed” (p. 28).*

However, Tom’s attempts to satisfy his sexual appetite are not achieved with stray girls whom he encounters. He keeps his quest for the self satisfaction till he meets Lydia Lensky with whom they form a relatively balanced relationship.

Lydia Lensky is introduced into the novel as a foreigner who is different from other women in the Brangwen family. Thus, she offers Tom a new world that is for Tom “the world that is beyond reality” (p. 29). Lawrence does not name Lydia until late in the novel and this intentionally done by him to enhance her foreignness. She is introduced as a Polish widow who came to England with her late husband. Her foreignness is significant for Lawrence himself. Here it is noted that there is some resemblance between Tom-Lydia relationship and Lawrence-Frieda Weekly relationship. Lawrence’s wife is from Germany and so this allows him to know much about foreign views. Lydia’s feeling of strangeness deserted her from her surroundings. Tom feels that there remains some aspect of her which he could not access, and this natural distance id desirable from Lawrence’s point of view. He believes that this natural distance enables them to achieve the rainbow of the relationship and which other couples struggle much to gain.

Tom-Lydia relationship has witnessed flow and ebb like the rhythm of life itself and this continues until they come to a state in which there is neither domination nor submission on any party. Tom and Lydia are presented in a way that reflects the sense of duality within themselves. That is Lydia needs Tom to lean on him for security, and at the same time she struggles hard to free herself from his influence. Similarly, Tom needs Lydia to fill in the gap in his own personality and at the same time he works hard to keep his identity inviolate.

## **2- Second Generation (Anna lensky, William Brangwen):**

Little Anna is introduced to the novel as a haughty young girl. She is entirely Polish by birth. Her foreignness accounts for her staying away from other people around her. It takes time until she gets familiar with her adopted father Tom Brangwen. When she is eighteen years old, she meets her cousin, a nephew of Tom Brangwen, who comes to work in the lace factory in the nearby village of Ilkeston. He is twenty years old and is always welcomed at Marsh Farm. Anna falls in love with the young William Brangwen. They soon announces to Tom and Lydia their wish to get married. The wedding is made and after marriage they spend two weeks alone in their cottage, ignoring the world and existing only for themselves. Anna is the first to come to the world of reality by her decision to give a tea-party that angered her husband. Anna becomes pregnant shortly after marriage, and the coming of the child is a shock to Will for he now feels that Anna is now a mother more than a wife. Each year a baby comes to life and the last one is Ursula who is her parents' favorite.

Anna's and Will's religious views are reflected in the chapter "The Cathdral" in which they visit the Lincoln cathedral. Will is possessed by a wild ecstasy as they entered the cathedral. But Anna resents his ecstasies and also makes fun of some of the carvings which appear so fantastic to him. He is angry that she has destroyed his love for the cathedral but he hs not the guts to express his feelings. His passions towards the cathedral are shattered. Here Will's defeat in defending his religious love for the church symbolically represents the Christian ebb in the past century. Thus Anna is portrayed as a dominating lady. She is proud, willful and independent. Even when she allows Will to enter into her privacy, she wants him to come as an assistant on her terms. Lawrence shows her dominance in a symbolic scene in which she tried to dominate the geese.

Like Tom and Lydia, Anna and Will has a relationship of struggle between Anna's desire to dominate and Will's willing to submit, and this continues until they come to self realization and Will becomes free in his own mind from Anna's domination. Their relationship is marked by hate-love interaction which for Lawrence is important for marriage relationship. David Daiches inquiries if these flares of hate alternating with periods of sexual passion and satisfaction represent an element in every adequate marriage. After she has been pregnant, a critical change takes place in her life. She is now convionced of her role as a mother. She

gives up her aspiration for the beyond. Nigel Messenger in How to Study D. H. Lawrence's Novels argues about that change in Anna's personality:

*"Anna seems to have more easily accepted a limited fulfillment in terms of motherhood. Her womb 'speaks' for her and because of that she is prepared to relinquish more spiritual claims. In this respect she is like the Brangwen men.... Like them she feels inward 'to the teeming life of creation'; like them she is caught up in the cycles of procreation and 'unable to turn round'".*

Will is the weak circle in the chain for Anna forces him to adopt his life and thoughts to her terms, and Anna is the victor as one of the chapters title indicates, "Anna Victrix". Lawrence describes him in regressive terms. For example, he "sinks" back into being like a stone in the water. The verb "sink" is repeated in describing Will's defeat and retreat to the church as in seek if safety to compensate for the lack and to fill the gap in his inadequacy. He retreats from facing the challenges in life into the enclosed undemanding safety of the church. Anna represents the thought that woman's satisfaction is fulfilled in child-birth. Thus, eventually they form the second successful marriage in the novel.

### **3- Third Generation (Ursula, Skrebensky):**

The second half of the novel is dedicated for Ursula's life. She is given more attention by the novelist because she is a more complicated person than any of her ancestors. Ronald Draper in his book D. H. Lawrence explains the reasons for her sophisticated and complicated personality:

*"She has something of Anna's temperament, but she also inherits Will's religious sense and is in revolt against her mother's preoccupation with childbearing. In Ursula the blood of the Brangwens and the Polish blood of her mother and grandmother are mixed. What has hitherto been a dualism, roughly expressed in marriages of two opposite types of human being, becomes in Ursula a more complex mingling.... Ursula is the meeting point of several different strands in the Brangwen tradition, and her life is the one in which that tradition is exposed to the destructive forces of modern civilization."*

Because Ursula is her parents' favorite, she is sent to high school. Thus, she is a privileged girl in her age when only very few lucky girls get high education. Her extensive education is also responsible for her being more complicated than her previous females. Her absorption and interest in study prolongs her adolescence period and delays her transition into emotional adulthood. She gets knowledge of Latin, French and Algebra. When she reached adulthood, she shares interest in education as well as in a young man, who is a son of a Polish friend of her grandmother's, Anton Skrebensky. She has two love affairs; one is a lesbian flirtation

with the schoolmistress, Winifred Inger, and the other is with Anton Skrebensky. He is a lieutenant in the British army. He falls in love with Ursula during his stay with the Brangwens. Her love gets possessive and he is afraid of that. Her love of Skrebensky is divided into two phases; one before he goes to fight in Boer, and one when he comes back to England after war. For Skrebensky, he is portrayed as a man who has a leaking flaw in his personality. He could not prove to be an adequate mate for Ursula. Although he is a lover, his ability to love is crippled by the nature of the society he is part of and the profession he accepts. Ursula-Skrebensky relationship proves to be a complete fiasco, for Skrebensky cannot make himself a husband for Ursula on equal terms.

Ursula has an examination to enter the university after finishing high school. In addition to her study in the university, she works as a teacher in a school in order to get money for her education. After two years of education, she decided to be a botanist because she thinks nature has the absolute truth. One day, after the Boer War, she receives a letter from Skrebensky that he wishes to see her again while he is in England on leave. Then, their love has returned with much more intensity than it had been six years before. They spend a weekend in a hotel as a husband and wife. Until that time she still does not want to marry Skrebensky even though he continues to insist on their marriage. Meanwhile, Ursula has neglected her study and so she fails in her final exam and then takes the exam for the second time and also fails. Then, Ursula and Skrebensky come to the realization that their relationship is not going to be a successful marriage. They leave a party early and Skrebensky leaves England to India and marries his regimental commander's daughter after a few weeks. Ursula finds out that she is pregnant. She writes to him and promised to be a good wife if he still wishes to marry her, for she does not know that he is already married. Ursula suffers pneumonia and miscarriages the child. Thus, the novel ends with a complete failure in Ursula-Skrebensky relationship. Draper argues that the triviality of Skrebensky's subsequent marriage to his colonel's daughter emphasizes the hollowness of his conception of marriage. However, Ursula, one day, sees a rainbow in the sky and believes that the vision of the rainbow is a promise of better time to come for her.

### 3- Conclusion:

This article intends to present a detailed study of the art of characterization in *The Rainbow*. It traces the depiction of three generations throughout the novel. The changes that occur in the three generations mirror the transitions in the English society from a rural community to industrial one. In this concern, it is noted that Tom Brangwen stays where he is as a farmer; Will Brangwen moves from Lace-designing to art teaching; Ursula cuts free from her family and becomes a teacher, a university student and then an emancipated woman. Lawrence through these changes in the characters' life dramatizes the accelerating changes in the English society. The three main generations in the novel represent three generations who live through a historically changing world between 1840 and about 1905. They represent the

transition from the agricultural life of the Brangwen farmers to the wage-earner in an industrial town. Tom is presented as the only member of the Brangwens who stays in the farm as a farmer while all other members of the family move away. Lydia Lensky is presented as a foreigner who sees the people around her not as persons but as mere looming presences. Her foreignness is significance for Tom for it completes his inadequacy. Anna and Will has a relationship of struggle between Anna's desire to dominate and Will's willing to submit, and this continues until they come to self realization and Will becomes free in his own mind from Anna's domination. Ursula is the meeting point of several different strands in the Brangwen tradition, and her life is the one in which that tradition is exposed to the destructive forces of modern civilization. For Skrebensky, he is portrayed as a man who has a leaking flaw in his personality. He could not prove to be an adequate mate for Ursula.

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