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IMAGERY IN D. H. LAWRENCE'S "THE RAINBOW"

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## Introduction

This paper is an attempt to examine the nature of D. H. Lawrence's imagery in "The Rainbow", one of his greatest novels. But before committing ourselves to the task, we have to determine what kind of novel we are dealing with.

As Daiches (1) said, in "The Rainbow" Lawrence takes three generations and, probing both vertically and horizontally, explores with great power and subtlety all the basic human relationships between man and his environment, the relationship between instinct and intellect, and, above all, the proper basis for the relationship between man and woman as he conceived it. This sort of novel had nothing to do with the chronicle novel so popular at that time (throughout Europe). It was rather, in F. R. Leavis's (2) phrase, a "dramatic poem" in which passionate imagination, working through a prose sometimes incantatory in its poetic movement selected and presented the smallest incident for its suggestive and symbolic power.

Thus, the controlling themes and ideas as expressed in the various episodes of the book constitute the narrative logic of the

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(1) David Daiches, A critical history of English Literature Secker & Warburg, Revised edition, London, 1969. p. 1165

(2) Ibid. p. 1165

novel, and this is also expressed by the all-pervasive imagery, which becomes its poetic logic. Perhaps in no other writer do we find the image so largely used as in Lawrence. The chief reason for this exceptional predominance of the image in him lies in the character of the idea which is his subject. Lawrence wants to make us aware of the profound life force whose rhythms the natural creature obeys and must obey if he wants to find his true self and to achieve fulfilment. Also he wants to make us aware of the natural form of things as separate identities, each one with its own value as such. To make us aware of all this, Lawrence explores the feelings of his characters, for only in feeling has the life force any immediacy of reality. And it is in the image where Lawrence seeks the objective equivalent of feeling. Lawrence's exceptional gift for the symbolic image is a function of his rare sensitivity, or in other words, of his vision of life as infinitely creative of individual identities, each whole and separate and to be revered as such.

The connotations of the technical term "image" are extremely varied, ranging from its narrowest sense of "a picture made out of words" (3) to its broadest one comprising all forms of figurative language like symbols, metaphors, similes and so on.

According to Aristotle "Diction becomes distinguished by the

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(3) I. A. Richards, Practical Criticism. A Study of Literary Judgement, Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd, London, 1948

use of strange words metaphors and everything that deviates from ordinary modes of speech". He also says that it is a great thing to use these poetical forms but that: "The greatest thing of all by far is to be master of metaphor. It is the one thing that cannot be learned from others; and it is also a sign of original genius, since a good metaphor implies the intuitive perception of the similarity in dissimilars." (4)

When one is faced with the unique art of D. H. Lawrence, one of the greatest masters of figurative language in Modern English Literature, Aristotle's emphasis on metaphor and thus on imagery as a whole does not seem exaggerated. It is a sign of Lawrence's original genius because he made his imagery the embodiment of his profound understanding of life as the oneness of opposites, the (as I said before) perception of similarity in dissimilars. Since in the use of images a writer is free and his associations can form themselves unhindered, imagery is really one of the most personal elements of his style, reflecting his personality and vision and a true mark of originality - the one thing that cannot be learned from others.

But imagery as Marco Mincoff states in The Study of Style (5)

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(4) Lock, Gibson, Arms, Readings for liberal education, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, New York, 1962, p. 326.

(5) Marco Mincoff, The Study of Style, Nauka i izkoustvo, Sofia, 1966

really becomes a sign of poetic genius in the coexistence of its three essentials, namely: its concentration, - that is the concentration of the greatest possible amount of significance into a small space; its evocativeness - that is the power to evoke from us a response to the poetic passion; and its congruity - that is the balance and proportion which can be perceived in great imagery found in prose as well as in verse.

Lawrence's excesses on the level of imagery are often the result of his particular artistic vision. It is, of course, part of the general tone of early 20<sup>th</sup> century art, and has its roots in the general feeling of uncertainty and insecurity, the tension, the extremes and the hysteria of the period in which he lived.

Lawrence's intensity of perception made him turn his hatreds and passions into beliefs which make his "philosophy", that is, his own vision of life as a whole, in its different and varied aspects. But his desire to impose this "philosophy of life" on others made him a times turn into a reiterative preacher trying to impose his "doctrine" on his readers.

Lawrence's doctrine belongs to the tradition of protest against 19<sup>th</sup> century industrialism. He asserts that the industrialization of society has brought about a catastrophic uprooting of man from nature and hence from his own true nature. His deep belief in nature's healing effect upon man, makes him a most ardent defender of man's closest connection with nature as an indispensable condition for a wholesome life. The protest against "the mechanical civilization" (as we

shall see in the use of imagery for the background drawing) is shared by Lawrence, to a certain extent, with other writers, like Dickens and Coleridge - to them all the coming of the machine means the mechanization of man: the irrevocable loss of some of the most valuable traditions of mankind.

Condemning the anti-humaneness and callousness of the new civilization Lawrence proposes a freedom of passions and feelings. In an Utopian way he dreams of saving man by the revival of the "natural and primitive principles" of human personality, and states that the real beauty of human existence lies in the instinctive spontaneity of their manifestation. However, while trying to re-evaluate the complete human personality, he minimizes it, for he does not take into account the great capacity of the human mind and its intellectual powers to apprehend life and he overestimates the part played by the physiological factor in peoples lives.

Lawrence's theory of the individual psyche is of interest because his theory of society depends on it; within each individual there is a "dark self" (or "blood being") which exists independently of the "ordinary mental consciousness" (or "white self"). When the psyche is healthy, the dark self, which is the true source of passion, the true centre of response to the outerworld, has primacy and power over the mental consciousness. When the relationship between them is disturbed, the mental consciousness usurps the primacy and man becomes a creature of his own fixed will, self - enclosed, self -referring, insensitive instead of being open and receptive before the world; he



becomes and automat, a machine.

In a letter to E. Collings, written in 1913, Lawrence expresses the essence of his philosophy about the "voice of blood". "My great religion is a belief in the blood, the flesh as being wiser than the intellect" (6). These words of his speak for themselves clearly enough. For Lawrence education is cold, cerebral, useless and so Ursula Brangwen in "The Rainbow" finds the school lessons bewildering and trivial, except "once when with her blood, she heard a passage of Latin and she knew how the blood beat in the Roman body" (7). Blood and instinct are always the surer guides and, between men and women, in Lawrence's view, it is "blood contact" and not mental communication which is important.

In "The Rainbow" two main principles are present: the first one is connected with his giving a true and realistic representation of the life of his characters, the second one, with his desire to describe the unknown impulses of their soul that come from the depths of their subconscious, the passions and desire that are beyond any analysis of the mind. The concrete and accurate representation of reality is combined with general conclusions and symbols usually claiming to have universal and philosophical meaning, both which not always achieve that goal. The originality of Lawrence's work, from my point of view, is rooted in the

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(6) J. R. Smittson, The Letters of D. H. Lawrence, Gerald Duckworth & Co. Ltd. London, 1960, p. 162

(7) D. H. Lawrence, The Rainbow, C. Nicholls & Company Ltd, Penguin Edition, 1979, p. 335

different combinations of these two main principles.

In the following three chapters I will try to show how Lawrence's imagery helps to give shape and meaning to his themes, to create his characters and to reveal the background of the novel. I am conscious that within the scope of this paper I can only deal with part of it.

## Themes and Images

One of the basic functions of imagery is the moulding of the theme. C. D. Lewis puts it very vividly: "The images are like a series of mirrors set at different angles, so that, as the theme moves on, it is reflected in a number of different aspects. But they are magic mirrors - they do not merely reflect the theme, they give it life and form". (8)

In "The Rainbow", one can find many themes on which to focus one's attention. Unfortunately I will not be able to point out all of them, but only those I consider are most important and which will best serve my purpose. The main theme is suggested by the title itself: it is the quest for harmony - the oldest and the grandest of conceptions.

Lawrence sees life as a never ending process of death and rebirth, of destruction and creation, of conflict and renewal. And his central theme is a vision of balance achieved through them, a vision of harmony made possible out of the conflicting forces, a vision of the new world, symbolized in the arch images of the novel and of course, the central symbol of the rainbow.

The central symbol of the rainbow is closely associated with other arch images and the images of the various gateways, doorways, entrances, the top of the hill, "the hole in the wall" (9) - the tra-

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(8) Cecil Day Lewis, The Poetic Image, Cape, London, 1958  
p. 68

(9) D. H. Lawrence, The Rainbow, C. Nicholls & Company Ltd.  
Penguin Edition, 1979, p. 114

ditional theme images of the quest, implying an opening out into the world which is new, other, unknown: "the beyond" (10) one of the key words in the novel. The meaning values of the doorway images become valuable for each generation and each character separately; the quality of the "arch" of their achievements is explored throughout, for the door affords a vista into the infinite, it is the "arch" which connects with the perfection of harmony.

The doorway imagery persists throughout the novel. The book which Will buys in Nottingham lies in his hand "like a doorway" (11). Ursula's successive disillusionments with religion, with social service in bourgeois society, with science, with purely sensual experience are imaged as a series of doorways leading nowhere and hilltops that show ugliness:

"Always the shining doorway ahead; and then, upon approach, always the shining doorway was a gate into another ugly yard, dirty and active and dead. Always the crest of the hill gleaming ahead under heaven; and then, from the top of the hill only another sordid valley full of amorphous, squalid activity." (12)

It is interesting to point out that the arch images appears for the first time in the novel in a negative sense, it is broken: He felt like a broken arch, thrust sickeningly out from support" (13) -

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(10) Ibid. p.15

(11) Ibid. p.165

(12) Ibid. p. 436

it must be reconstructed, built anew. Thus from the beginning of the novel the image of the broken arch suggests the theme - the characters must establish new relationships which will form the arch, linking the innermost with the world, the arch of supreme fulfillment.

Anna (one of the characters of the novel) does not understand the meaning of the rainbow: "something she did not grasp" (14); it is Ursula, Lawrence's main character, who sees in it its splendour and grasps its meaning: "she knew...", and she sees in it the new world, "the new architecture". (15)

The rainbow symbol in which the arch image finds its final expression, the supreme, heavenly arch stands apart from the other theme images. Not only because Lawrence finally chose it as the title of his novel instead of the former "Wedding Ring", but because it achieves his original intention of showing the woman becoming individual, self responsible, taking her own initiative. It is more than an image. E. Vivas has a special term for it: "the constitutive symbol" - which he applies to the rainbow symbol as well. He defines it as "a symbol whose referend cannot be fully exhausted by explanation because that to which it refers is symbolized not through it, but in it. The symbol means itself".(16)

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(13) Ibid. p. 65

(14) Ibid. p. 195

(15) Ibid. p. 496

(16) Eliseo Vivas, D. H. Lawrence: The Failure and the Triumph of Art, George Allen & Unwin Ltd. London, 1961

But the rainbow, one of the oldest and most poetic symbols, the complete arch spanning the earth out of sunshine and rain, is a natural symbol of wholeness - epitomizing the theme of the quest for new relationship which will make for the wholeness of the individual and the wholeness of society.

Another very important theme of Lawrence is the whole organic complexity of life. In image after image he shows life as continuity in time and space, continuity in change, evolution through conflict, continual movement. To achieve this he uses the relations between the macrocosm and the microcosm. The macrocosm rendered by Lawrence's cosmic imagery-chaos, stars, sun, moon and by his nature imagery. And the microcosm -that is the human individual or rather the various individuals in relation to each other. And the emphasis is specifically on the relationship man-woman, as the most creative and at the same time the most natural for Lawrence's evolutionary view of life.

Also, there is always "flux" in Lawrence's works: the complex movement of succeeding generations, the dynamic life of the Brangwens. The basic idea of movement underlines the major running images of flux, flood, flow. Ursula must "create a new knowledge of Eternity in the flux of time" (17). The novel abounds in verbs of motion of all kinds, nothing is steady and fixed, nature, human and non-human is pulsing, vibrating, quivering. Everything is in motion: "rippling music", "lights trailing in myriads", "twinkling lights" (18), the sky "teeming and tearing along" (19), the

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(17) D. H. Lawrence, The Rainbow, C. Nicholls & Company Ltd. Penguin Edition, 1979, p. 493

(18) Ibid. p. 451

"stir and seeth of lights and people", "the big restless night" (20) - the whole cosmos is moving, traveling. This universal movement corresponds to the restlessness of the characters and to their wild outbursts of despair and desire, their swiftly alternating depressions and ecstasis. In this we also find the restlessness of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Within the main theme of life (as a whole organic complexity of continuity in time, evolution through conflict, etc.) we encounter different sub-themes which are nevertheless important for a clear and better interpretation of Lawrence's ideas and beliefs. For example an important sub-theme would be life as a struggle. In the very beginning of the novel, imagery sets the theme of the struggle for fulfillment in a world that denies it. The sense of life as struggle is conveyed by various metaphors of violence. Tom wants to "break" Lydia "into acknowledgement of him" to "smash her into regarding him", to "tear her into recognition of himself" (21) It is Lawrence's ability to convey their unique force and insight across this sense of conflict which gives his finest descriptions of personal relationships. Recurrent words like battle, fight, rage, storm, smitten and so on, generate an atmosphere of tension. The early Brangwen women strain their eyes "to see what men had done in fighting outwards to knowledge", they hear "the battle... waged on the edge of the unknown" and they decide to be of "the fighting host" (22)

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(19) Ibid. p. 107

(20) Ibid. p. 448

(21) Ibid. p. 64

Pain and suffering are inseparable from struggle and conflict: Will's soul is "a black torment of unfulfillment" (23), "whipped almost to death" (24). The images of pain and suffering, the frequent metaphors of torment, torture, hurt, ache are frequent; like Anna's anguish of love", or Lydia being "tormented into moments of love by the child" (25), here one may interpret that love and actually any intense emotion is bound up with pain. It is difficult not to remember the war in whose shadow the novel was written; they reflect the impact of the pain and sufferings, of a war-torn world, pain and sufferings, death and destruction.

Here we come to another subtheme: destruction which leads to creation. For destruction is ambivalent in Lawrence: in his work it means the beginning of creation. The dying phoenix must destroy itself before it can be reborn. Like fate, the flame-fire images suggest the phoenix: "He burned up, he caught fire and become splendid" (26). The major image of rebirth (creation) is the kernel (nut) casting off its husk (rind, shell). The violence of breaking from enclosure is destructive, but also creative; the other images of rebirth "the seed buried in dry ash" (27), the various resurrection images from the Bible - the images of Christ, risen "to life not to death", "perfect in body and spirit, whole and

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(22) Ibid. p.9

(23) Ibid. p. 182

(24) Ibid. p. 188

(25) Ibid. p. 51

(26) Ibid. p. 444

(27) Ibid. p. 437



glad... arrived at last to wholeness, perfect without scar or blemish" (28); and on the other hand the insistence on words like annihilated, null, extinguished, symbolizing death (destruction).

Nature is another important theme in Lawrence. That is the strong connection of the representatives of the three generations of Brangwens that live in blood connection with nature and the whole cosmos. In its opening "The Rainbow" immediately establishes human existence as part of the whole cycle of nature. The Brangwen men live rooted in their midland farm for generations:

"So the Brangwens came and went without fear of necessity, working hard because of the life that was in them, not for want of the money... 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, 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." (29).

The first paragraphs of the book set out superbly the world of "The Rainbow". The Brangwens live absolutely in tune with the rhythms of nature and that is the very essence of Lawrence's doctrine: you must live in closest union with nature, and not simply union, but to feel nature's living saps in your veins, to feel nature's pulse beating with your pulse, to breath in and out together with it, never to lose hold of it - that is the only way to understand life, to find and feel the life force in everything and to have it in yourself to keep you going.

In this paragraph we can trace the first symptoms of something very interesting and peculiar, which is later on enlarged throughout the book. Here we are confronted with the image of the marsh where the Brangwens live. quite paradoxically, indeed, gradually we become aware that all those people that are living with the rhythms of nature and drawing their living powers on it, come from the Marsh. we seem to catch some implied significance, as that the Marsh is a source of life.

The above quotation (pp.7-8) is concerned with man who is always

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(29) Ibid. pp.7-8

associated with blood consciousness, the flesh and the instinctual in life. The potent, earlier generations of Brangwens are masters of horses which do their will. They face inwards to "the heat of their blood" and rest content within themselves. But the women are different:

"On them too was the drowse of blood-intimacy, calves sucking and hens running together in droves... But the women looked out from the heated, blind intercourse of farm-life, to the spoken world beyond... the woman wanted... something that was not blood-intimacy. Her house faced out from the farm-buildings and fields, looked out to the road and the village with church and Hall and the world beyond... She faced outwards to where men moved dominant and creative, having turned their back on the pulsating heat of creation, and with this behind them..."(30)

"The Rainbow" shows woman claiming the right to enter the activity of man in the world, and thereby calling for a new relationship between the sexes. The symbolic confrontation of male and female set forth in the opening paragraphs of the novel is not aimless. It is a female (Ursula) that Lawrence chooses as a main agent, as a representative of the last and youngest generation of Brangwens who is after the new and the positive in life and this quest will carry on through the generations. Here once again we are faced with another important theme: the war of the sexes, the relation between man and woman, the woman becoming an individual, self-conscious, stable and strong. Lawrence's essentially dialectical

perception of life provides the inner structure of the images: "hatred that was burningly close to love" (31), "love that was keenly close to hatred" (32), "pleasure pain" (33) or "bitter-corrosive love" (34). His perception of the contradictions and paradoxes which are the very essence of man-woman relationship is the basis of the love-hate and love-war imagery.

Most of the images of darkness symbolize the unconscious, the underworld of the senses, the instincts, the urges that are not admitted. Ursula's face seem to say "where are you, you pale citizen. You subdued beast... you primeval darkness falsified to a social mechanism" (35). She still sees the primeval darkness of the senses as the only alternative of social mechanism.

The bitter conflict between Will and Anna in their marriage derives from Will's unwillingness to let "light" from the outside enter into their love life. When they are first married, they are "as remote from the world as if the two of them were buried like a seed in darkness" (36). Anna is the first who welcomes the renewed contact with the outside world and she is described in light "She... sunlight inside her" (37). Eventually they

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(31) Ibid. p. 114

(32) Ibid. p. 114

(33) Ibid. p. 267

(34) Ibid. p. 181

(35) Ibid. p. 46

(36) Ibid. p. 145

(37) Ibid. p. 148

compromise with each other and achieve in being "separate in the light, and in the thick darkness, married" (38).

The novel is pervaded by images of darkness and light, appropriated symbolically to its concern with deep instinctive behaviour and emotions, which is another no less important theme.

In his imagery Lawrence emphasizes the importance of sensual perception because it seemed to him that the intuitional and the intellectual had fallen into imbalance on the side of the intellectual ("the mechanical") and he sets himself the task to revive emotional values. This I think accounts for the profusion of animal imagery in the novel. Lawrence felt (as I said before) that the intrusion of industry was hostile to the intuitional. Yet the animal imagery must not be associated with the unconscious only (as we shall see later, it is used for characterization).

The themes which I have mentioned in this chapter: life as a struggle, man in relation with nature, relationship between man and woman, the whole concept of life as creativity and destruction, life as a flux and others not mentioned (since there are many which I have consciously not dealt with) are used by Lawrence to explain the major theme of the novel - the quest for harmony.

Character - drawing

One of the basic functions of imagery in "The Rainbow" is to portray characters, which Lawrence achieves with great professionalism. He sustains a system of nature imagery: animal and flower imagery mostly, applying it to each character, which helps him to, in a way, depersonify his characters, so that they are shown acting in an instinctual manner which goes along with his theory of the "voice of blood".

Lawrence uses the images of flowers in connexion with the characters of women, but he does not use them consistently. Thus, it is rather difficult for us to interpret his particular images of flowers. A possible interpretation might be that the flowers hold life and respond to the will, zest for life, just as Ursula and Anna. For example Ursula's face is "like a flower in the sun" (39), "radiant as a flower" (40) and Anna is "radiant like a nearly opened flower with tears like dew" (41).

On the other hand, the animal imagery is extremely varied. Will, for example, is throughout the novel "the animal that lived in the darkness" (42). His essentially sensuous nature is suggested in the images of a cat and mole: "his cat like grin", "cat like voice", "dark, keen blind head", "hair like steek thin fur" (43), everything about him remind Anna "of an animal" (44). The "mole" is Lawrence's most consistent metaphor for Will; the later "blind

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(39) Ibid. p. 170

(40) Ibid. p. 306

(41) Ibid. p. 167

(42) Ibid. p. 107

(43) Ibid. p. 107

(44) Ibid. p. 207

subterranean thing", the "tunneling nose" (45) are extensions of the mole image. Throughout the novel he is "a man of ceaseless activity. Blindly like a mole he pushed his way out... towards individual expression" (46), and for Ursula Lawrence uses "free unbeatable animal" (47) revealing her courage, her optimism, and love for freedom, her vitality and sensitiveness.

It is very interesting to observe that different characters are associated with the same animal or bird. In this way Lawrence achieves characterization. Anna's tiger image for instance: "she was as proud and shadowy as a tiger aloof", shows her proud and remote; later on her mother: "she turned on him like a tiger and there was battle" (48), would mean the primeval instinct of the endangered female; Ursula compares Skrebensky to a tiger on his return from Africa when she sees him as a beautiful specimen: "burning, splendid, royal, something like a tiger (49). It is the same with the bird imagery. Will in the beginning of his marriage with Anna is shown as a bird of prey: "like a hawk" (50) and, later, Anna is also a bird of prey: "she too was a hawk" (51). Both have acquired a certain aspect one through ambition and the other in her fight for freedom.

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(45) Ibid. p. 173

(46) Ibid. p. 355

(47) Ibid. p. 269

(48) Ibid. p. 63

(49) Ibid. p. 444

(50) Ibid. p. 162

(51) Ibid. p. 163

The animal symbolism in the character drawing of the major characters often serves the purpose of portraying manner or temper. In the portrayal of the minor characters concrete animal images emphasize mostly the sensual, probably because a minor character cannot be properly individualized. Anthony Schofield, for example, is compared to several animals. He has the eyes of a goat, a strutting stride, he is a form, a satyr and has a neighing laugh. All these similes bring out his animal nature only. And Baroness Skrebensky is likened to a kitten, a ferret, a weasel and a stoat being a woman of slight size and engaging manners.

Very often in the use of nature imagery, Lawrence also associates the characters with inanimate objects: stones, pebbles, rocks, flames, fluid and others. This is a sort of depersonification of the characters. For instance uncle Tom is seen through Ursula's eyes as "a fluid, unsatisfactory flux" (52); Anna looks "strange and amorphous... like a warm, glowing cloud" (53); Ursula realizes that Skrebensky is a "stone", "a loadstone weighing on her" (54).

Thus the characters in "The Rainbow" have an interesting relationship with nature. It seems that their deepest contacts with nature comes usually after a crisis. Lydia's recovery from the "blackness of memory" is given through her increasing awareness of the coming flowers: the primroses are "a disturbing influence near her feet" (55), of the singing of the thrushes

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(52) Ibid. p. 292

(53) Ibid. p. 185

(54) Ibid. p. 319

(55) Ibid. p. 52



"till her heart was forced to lift up its voice in rivalry and answer" (56); Ursula turns "to spring and the opening buds" (57) in her desolation with Skrebensky (actually she is the character who is most often associated with nature). For this Lawrence borrows the Romantic idea of the healing power of nature. He also stresses (through nature imagery) the intimate connection between the outer world of nature and the inner world of the human being: "the heather come rosy under the skies setting the whole world awake" (58).

The darkness - light images also produce this effect of depersonification. Most of the darkness images are applied to the male characters: Will's "tense, electric darkness", of Skrebensky "a darkness, an obstinacy settled on him too, in a kind of inertia" (59). Will is throughout the novel "the animal that lived in darkness" (60) and Tom Brangwen is the exception in the application of darkness images to men, - he is described more often in terms of light.

Lydia's darkness is the darkness of the unknown past. Her darkness is connected with her foreignness, it is "the blackness of memory" (61) in her eyes. After the death of her two children we are told that "a darkness had come over Lydia's mind (62). Her darkness is very firmly rooted in the

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(56) Ibid. p. 67

(57) Ibid. p. 316

(58) Ibid. p. 53

(59) Ibid. p. 320

(60) Ibid. p. 107

(61) Ibid. p. 43

(62) Ibid. p. 72

reality of her past. It is the dark memory of her dead children, the horror of the Civil War, her disillusion, her husbands death:

"A darkness was on her, like remorse, or like a remembering of the dark, savage, mystic ride of dread, of death, of the shadow of revenge"(63).

Lydia's darkness is more often connected with her physical portraiture: "her thick dark brows" (64), her "dark muzzle" (65) and her black mourning clothes.

Anna, too, has her share of the darkness images, but it is the darkness of the unknown (before her marriage): "all the moonlight upon her, all the darkness within her" (66). Later on she becomes only the "dark half of the moon" (67), a most probable indication of the incompleteness of her personality.

The darkness images have two basic meanings, corresponding to those of light; there are two areas of darkness: within - the darkness of the senses; and without - the cosmic darkness.

Tom Brangwen feels his mothers death as "a blow out of the darkness" (68)-this is the cosmic mystery of darkness. Lawrence's darkness is so

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(63) Ibid. p. 51

(64) Ibid. p. 29

(65) Ibid. p. 105

(66) Ibid. p. 124

(67) Ibid. p. 235

(68) Ibid. p. 21

intensely felt that one can breathe it, one can touch it, one can even smell it, like "the strange darkness of Africa... one breathes it, like a smell of blood" (69). Darkness in Lawrence can be solid, it can be liquid: "the fluid darkness" (70), Ursula drifts through "strands of heat and darkness" (71); "the deep vibration of the darkness" (72), etc.

But darkness has other meanings also. It can be the darkness of disillusion: "ugly disillusion, the same darkness and bitter gloom" (73); the darkness of loss: "a great inner darkness and void" (74). Most of the images of darkness symbolize the unconscious, the underworld of the senses, the instincts, the urges that are not admitted. In the images of darkness, I think one can find the clearest example of Lawrence's overwriting: combinations like "black darkness" (75), "strong darkness" (76), "darker than darkness" (77), etc. and his insistence on darkness throughout the novel often seems to become obsessive.

Anna and Ursula are the characters usually associated with the light

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(69) Ibid. p. 446

(70) Ibid. p. 446

(71) Ibid. p. 229

(72) Ibid. p. 446

(73) Ibid. p. 435

(74) Ibid. p. 341

(75) Ibid. p. 78

(76) Ibid. p. 339

(77) Ibid. p. 238

images in the meaning of radiance, vigour. Anna's light in the novel is more of the silvery hue: her "silvery radiant face" (78), "face illuminated like war lit up from the inside", hair "like thistle dawn" (79); while with Ursula Lawrence insists on the "golden": "golden brown eyes", "golden museau"; she walks "as if her feet were beams of light that walked on flowers for footsteps" (80), "radiant as an angel" (81).

Individualization in Lawrence is achieved in images implying features of character and relationships. "The blue steady livingness of his eyes" which "Lydia enjoyed like morning" (82) suggests for her, Tom's hearty, warm, sensitive nature. But he is also the inarticulate, unintellectual farmer who feels his incompetence, his "lack of the further, the creative life" (83), and at the same time cannot suppress the yearning for something finer, for the unknown. And he finds the unknown in Lydia. From her first appearance in the novel her foreignness and strangeness, so essential to their union, are emphasized by her "flitting movements" as if she walks "unseeing and unseen". (84) Lawrence is constantly drawing our attention to her "ugly-beautiful mouth", (85) her "dark muzzle" (86) which make her still stranger. The "arch"

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(78) Ibid. p. 118

(79) Ibid. p. 88

(80) Ibid. p. 204

(81) Ibid. p. 204

(82) Ibid. p. 55

(83) Ibid. p. 67

(84) Ibid. p. 29

(85) Ibid. p. 48

of their union is easily achieved because of Lydia's actual foreignness. There exists between Tom and Lydia a natural distance. They are both able to recognize and respect their "separateness" in "togetherness. And their relationship is actually imaged by a doorway: each becoming a "doorway to the other" (87); the arch of their union is suggested by "the pillar of fire" and the "pillar of cloud" (88) images - the union of the two conflicting natural elements. Their arch is presented as the creation of an environment in which Anna can grow. The image of the two pillars and the child playing between them curiously resembles a doorway - they both become a doorway to Anna.

The world in the second generation is different. The polarities are more extreme, the relationship of the individual is more intense and distorted. The images of "apple-blossom face" and "wilde, fierce hair" (89) are the outstanding features of Anna. The reiteration of "royal", "regal", and the later simile "like a queen holding an audience" (90) suggests her domineering manner. "She was too much the center of her own universe" (91) - this is a clear indication of the girl who will make it, "her instinct to avoid thinking, to avoid it to save herself" (92). Her "Splendid-lady ideal" and

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(86) Ibid. p. 105

(87) Ibid. p. 13

(88) Ibid. p. 97

(89) Ibid. p. 143

(90) Ibid. p. 272

(91) Ibid. p. 98

(92) Ibid. p. 143

the "unskinned susceptibility" (93) is a forwarning of her character. At her wedding she is imaged as a "vain independent minx", "vain white peacock of a bride" (94), images pointing to her flippancy.

It is very interesting how Lawrence in his arch, doorway and religious imagery, manages to show the relationship between Ann and Will, their concepts and beliefs. The doorway image often embodies an illusion. It seems to Ann at first that Will: "was the hole in the wall, beyond which the sunshine blazed on an outside world" (95); she desires sunshine but Will offers her: "jewelled gloom of the church" (96). His world is enclosed dim within the jewelled arch, his substitute for the rainbow. The fact that they are "opposites" to each other is evidenced in their different reaction to the cathedral. Anna is the one that clings to rationality and individualism; she reacts saying that it is not the absolute, that many things have been left out of "the great concept of the church" (97). She destroys Will's "vital illusions", she is "the voice of the serpent in his Eden" (98); until he begins to regard the church as "a world within a world" (99). The opposites in Will and Anna are most clearly presented in their metaphoric battles. Their debilitating, self-consuming battles are the result not only

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(93) Ibid. p. 71

(94) Ibid. p. 136

(95) Ibid. p. 114

(96) Ibid. p. 201

(97) Ibid. p. 204

(98) Ibid. p. 204

(99) Ibid. p. 227

of their opposite nature but of their isolation. Significantly Lawrence makes a new use of the Eden image: "as if the heavens had fallen, and he were sitting with her among the ruins, in a new world, everybody else buried" (100); the tacit denial of their world foreshadows their marriage. Another image from the Bible is also ominous: "as though this house were the Ark on the flood" (101), an introduction to all the flood imagery applied in their relationship -suggesting the flood of unbridled sensuality. Here they are not doorways to each other - Anna is Will's Ark in the flood, then Will becomes Anna's rock in the flood, till they both are flooded in "the darkness and death of their own sensual activities (102) - Lawrence's favourite metaphor for the idea that the pursuit of extreme sensation is destructive. Their marriage is also presented in terms of conflict: "It was a dual" (103), "the fierce unnamed battle went on" (104), "they went their way now shadowed and stained with blood" (105).

Anna and Will's relationship is symbolized by the Gothic arch; not the Romanesque round arch, but the jagged edge of the Gothic pinnacle, all points and recesses: "the Gothic form which always asserted the broken desire of mankind in its pointed arches escaping the rolling, absolute beauty of the round arch" (106). And their separate arches fail to link "the in-

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(100) Ibid. p. 144

(101) Ibid. p. 147

(102) Ibid. p. 237

(103) Ibid. p. 236

(104) Ibid. p. 168

(105) Ibid. p. 170

nermost with the universe" because of their self-imposed roof. Will subsides into a day-to-dayness of home, work and church which is now only a symbol to him. Anna does for a moment have a vision of the rainbow - this is actually the first appearance of the rainbow symbol in the novel, but it is indistinct: "something she did not grasp" (107). For Anna is not the person to be favoured with the sight of its full glory. She chooses to forget it because it is "a long way off". The relationship of Anna and Will is an example of creativity denied; it is a compromise deferring the struggle again for the coming generation.

Ursula, the main representative of the last generation, faces a different world, a harsh reality which neither her parents, nor her grandparents have had to face. She is free of their limitations, emancipated, but this freedom makes the struggle more difficult: "she wrestled through her dark days of confusion, soulless, uncreated, unformed" (108); and it gives her a deep sense of responsibility: "the cloud of self-responsibility gathered upon her" (109). Ursula is one of Lawrence's "natural aristocrats" (110). She hates poverty and poor people: "the ugly, unlovely, squalid wherrys" (111); the poor are "like vermin" to her; people are "an upright

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(106) Ibid. p. 237

(107) Ibid. p. 195

(108) Ibid. p. 288

(109) Ibid. p. 283

(110) Ibid. p. 461

(111) Ibid. p. 278



menace". Revealing similes show her dislike for the "mob": "she had an instinctive fear of petty people, as a deer is afraid of dogs" (112); "she felt like a swan among geese, of superior heritage and belonging" (113).

Before the final vision of the rainbow Ursula, too, must pass through several doorways and follow several false arches that do not bring the liberation she seeks. The first one is religion. A startling naturalistic image reveals her disillusion with Christianity: "If maggots in a dead dog be but God kissing carrion what then is God? She was surfeited of this God" (114). Her rejection of Christianity is the rejection of pure spirituality, dogma and hypocrisy.

Skrebensky's character is revealed by words associated with possession: "a loadstone weighing on her", "a blind persistent inert burden" (115). Later, after their discussion along the canal, Ursula realizes the futility of Skrebensky's life which the "brick in the wall" (116) metaphor implies is shallow and conventional: Skrebensky is a "nobody", nothing but a brick in the prison wall of British imperialism. The verbs "catch", "appropriate", "capture", "net" characterize the mentality of the servant of the imperial state: "He appropriated her", "If he could but net her brilliant cold, salt-burning body in the soft iron of his hands, net her, capture her" (117).

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(112) Ibid. p. 264

(113) Ibid. p. 379

(114) Ibid. p. 326

(115) Ibid. p. 319

(116) Ibid. p. 328

The following doorway opens into an ugly yard again. The horror of the new identity as Standard Five teacher is expressed in the comparison of St. Philips School to a prison, and the motifs of darkness and confusion: "her heart was so black and tangled in the teaching, her personal self was shut in prison, abolished" (118). Skrebensky is not the doorway to the "supreme, gleaming triumph of infinity" (119). The subtle variation of the sunshine image is expressive of their disillusionment: at first it seems to her that "he held the keys of the sunshine" (120), but later on "the chill like a sunshine of frost that come over her" (121).

The image of the horses in the final chapter is probably one of the most important and most obscure images in the novel. It suggests the sub-human sensuality to which Ursula has been exposed in her relationship with Skrebensky. The action in the episode is an analogy for Ursula's inner conflict achieved through imagery and rhythm - the rhythm of the horses movements as they approach, circle, regroup, approach again resembles the rhythm of the mind struggling with its problems. Her fall from the oak tree means the breaking of all her connections with "the old, hard, barren form of bygone living" (122), imaged by the "husk" which must precede the issuing

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(117) Ibid. p. 321

(118) Ibid. p. 384

(119) Ibid. p. 441

(120) Ibid. p. 438

(121) Ibid. p. 442

(122) Ibid. p. 495

of the "naked, clear kernel" (123) of herself. The kernel image symbolizes her final liberation from the deadness and horror of her illusions and past experience. Everything she has tried has proven barren but hope in the ultimate remains. She has acquired a fuller understanding and is ready to receive the vision of ultimate perfection - the rainbow.

The images of nature, the arch images, the darkness and light imagery and all the others help Lawrence to portray his characters, although, sometimes, he might not be very clear: he only suggests, as in the image of the horses which have been interpreted by various authors in different ways. I think that Lawrence purposely did not want to be clear. He wanted his readers to instinctively feel in their blood how every character reacts to life, how every character thinks and lives. I am conscious that I have not dealt with every kind of image, but it is impossible in a paper like this to deal with Lawrence's grand scheme of imagery.

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(123) Ibid. p. 493.

### Background and Images

Character drawing in "The Rainbow" is very closely connected with background presentation not only because no character or personal relationship can exist in a social void, but also because the individual abstracted from society would not be of that interest. In most of the novel, the background is given through the presentation of the state of mind and state of spirit of the different characters in relation to the physical surroundings.

In his attempt to bring together the inward and the outward life, following the struggles for satisfactory relationships of three generations, Lawrence makes a creative analysis of English society during a period of change and disintegration, the period of approximately 1840-1905 - from the rural community where industrialism is literally only on the horizon, to the nightmare of industrial capitalism. Amidst the beautiful evocation of the slow, preindustrial farm-life of the early Brangwens, the unsettling effect is apparent. Words like "trespass" and "invasion" anticipate the war imagery of the novel, and the canal embankment is compared to a rampart.

The canal embankment, the railway, the colliery blackening the hill side are the signs of another era breaking in upon the rural community. The realisation of the need of industry fights with Lawrence's hatred of "the machine": "the rhythmic run of the winding engines" becomes "a narcotic to the brain" (124). Thus from the very beginning of the novel, imagery suggests the concrete background: the English society in a period of industrialization; for the first two generations of Brangwens will be "a low

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(124) Ibid. p. 15

to themselves, separate from the world" (125); and since Lawrence makes us see the world chiefly through the eyes of the Brangwens, it is with Ursula that we are brought back to the activity of man in the world at large.

Ursula faces a different world from that of the early Brangwens - the disintegration of Victorian bourgeois society has reached a further stage, the clash between man and the man made machine is greater than ever. The dehumanized industrial landscape is paralleled by the animated landscape of nature. The world in which Ursula has to carry on the struggle for fulfilment is a world that offers nothing worth taking part in, a world that denies the potentialities of living. This is also the period of the growth of imperialism. The Boer war is characterized in an apocalyptic simile compelling in its powers: "as if the poles of the universe were cracking and the whole night go tumbling into the bottomless pit." (126).

The cosmic imagery persists -the world Ursula is swept into, is "like chaos, like the end of the world" (127). This, however, is the concrete world of England, "the world of educated and unsatisfied people-inwardly raging and mad" where Lawrence also sees the corruptive influence of bourgeois "scientific education", illustrated in Ursula's disillusion through her relationship with Miss Inger, the bourgeois "scientific humanist" - physically and spiritually corrupt.

In the novel we are shown "the mean village of Cossethey within the

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(125) Ibid. p. 15

(126) Ibid. p. 227

(127) Ibid. p. 243

sarded scope of Ilkestrun" (128). But Ursula's visit to Wiggiston provides the horrifying description of the effects of bourgeois industrialism. The imagery of death, sterility and corruption that is present throughout the novel, reaches its climax here: "The hideous abstraction of the town" (129), "the homogenous amorphous sterility of the whole suggested death rather than life". (130). The sprawling ugly town of Wiggiston presents the "hard, horny shell" (131) and scabby scene of the lifeless rind of bourgeois civilization: "the redbrick confusion rapidly spreading like a skin disease" (132).

Lawrence's vision of bourgeois society is devastating in its horror. "The mathematical colliery" (133), "the symmetric monster" (134) is personified: "The pit was the great mistress -the demon - like colliery with her wheels" (135); and man himself is depersonified, he becomes a "standing machine" (136).

Although smell is seldom used as a basis in imagery, since the

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(128) Ibid. p. 341

(129) Ibid. p. 346

(130) Ibid. p. 345

(131) Ibid. p. 346

(132) Ibid. p. 345

(133) Ibid. p. 346

(134) Ibid. p. 350

(135) Ibid. p. 349

(136) Ibid. p. 350

associations are personal, Lawrence's images seem always to evoke the right impression as in his imagery of corruption: "Their marshy, bitter ... sweet corruption came sick and unwholesome in her nostrils" (137). The machines corrupt even those who own it: "... husband, father, pit manager, warm clay lifted through the recurrent action of day after day by the great machine from which it derived its motion" (138) - a total degradation of the individual.

This degradation of the individual is clearly seen through Ursula who is brought up against the full reality of the bourgeois world. The "prison" imagery of, again, St. Philips School reveals the increasing devitalization of English society at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The school is a "forest of dry, sterile bricks" (139), "like an empty prison", a "torture-place", and at the end of the school term Lawrence points out: "the last term of imprisonment", "the irons were struck off, the sentence was expired, the prison was a momentary shadow" (140).

The general deterioration of English bourgeois society is reflected in the images drawn from commerce implying venality in the college episodes. The shell-image introduces ominous notes in Ursula's enthusiasm: "within the great whispering sea - shell... the echo of knowledge." (141).

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(137) Ibid. p. 351

(138) Ibid. p. 352

(139) Ibid. p. 367

(140) Ibid. p. 422

(141) Ibid. p. 431

Ursula is made to understand that "the religious virtue of knowledge has become to the god of material success"; and to see college as "a second-hand dealer's shop", "a little apprentice shop" "a warehouse" "the inner commercial shrine" (142) - nothing but a shop where one buys "money-brains". Lawrence boldly unmask "the commercial value of knowledge". His language penetrates with slashing accuracy under the surface and discovers venality and meaningless activity everywhere: "their good professors, their good clergymen, their good political speakers... So many performing puppets, all wood and rag for the performance" (143); or "the horrible clattering activity, a rattle like the falling of dry slag, cold and sterile" (144) of London. It is the same social system which school and college help to perpetuate which can be seen in the scarred landscape of Wiggiston and the spectre-like colliers; in the "huddled", "crawling school children" (145); in the "creeping spectre-like" people in London - the stamp and image of death everywhere. Lawrence's vision of English bourgeois society at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century is so devastating that it was inevitable that the novel should be banned.

As we have seen in this chapter, Lawrence's presentation of the background helps to establish an atmosphere of change. Society is changing from a rural community in which everybody was connected to the land and

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(142) Ibid. p. 455

(143) Ibid. p. 449

(144) Ibid. p. 451

(145) Ibid. p. 462



derived their powers from it, to an amorphous society made up of debased  
colliers, men oppressed by industrialization and pseudo intellectuals.

## Conclusion

In "The Rainbow" Lawrence traces the unbroken line of natural growth, with its eddies and returns over the generations of Brangwens unfolding the stage of human experience. From the opening chapter itself, the life of the Brangwens emerges as the image of a human norm, a dynamic norm, richly imagined symbol that assumes greater and greater force. Here is human being fulfilling itself within and in vital connection with the natural forces. The following chapters develop this image: the "dark" eternal forces of physical life, selfhood, marriage, the mutual implication of growth and decline, are all felt and realized.

Daiches had said: "Lawrence's aim is to project character and incident in such a way as force on the reader a radically new apprehension of the moulding of human personality and human relationships". (146) In this paper I have chosen part of Lawrence's imagery to illustrate how several themes are important to disclose the relations between the characters in each generation. For example the whole organic complexity of life which shows life and relations as continuity in time, continuity in change, evolution through conflict, creation and destruction which all together lead to the final and most important theme - the quest for harmony, expressed by the rainbow image.

The characterization of the main personalities also help us to understand the inner conflict of each of the main characters in the novel.

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(146) David Daiches, A critical history of English Literature  
Secker & Warburg, Revised edition, London, 1969.

The images of darkness and light, the images of nature, the arch images, and all the rest included in the chapter, help to achieve that goal. But as I said before Lawrence, purposely is not very clear in some of his imagery, he does not follow a clear pattern. That is because he wanted us instinctively to feel in our blood how every character reacts to life, how every character reacts to the change from rural society to industrial society, how every character lives and thinks.

The background imagery of the novel helps us to understand the different periods in which the action takes place and of course the reaction of each character to the changes going on in that period. Lawrence's descriptions of the background of the novel help the reader understand the position of the individual in society and his relations with one another. The picture is devastating. One sees the corruption, the death, the mechanization of the individual, the "blackness" of life.

And to end this paper, which, I hope has brought something of Lawrence's spirit, I would like to quote a passage from a letter of his:

"Because the source of all life and knowledge is in man and woman, and the source of all living is in the interchange and the meeting and mingling of these two: man-life and woman-life, man-knowledge and woman-knowledge, man-being and woman-being". (147)

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(147) J. R. Smittson, The letters of D. H. Lawrence, Gerald Duckworth & Co. Ltd. London, 1960, p.20

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