

Buoyant Celebration of Life and Blissful Blindness to Harsh Socio-cultural Realities: A study of D.H. Lawrence's Pre-War Novels

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Abstract

This article is an effort to explore D. H. Lawrence's pre-War novels vis-à-vis the way they are different from his post-war fiction. A close study of D.H. Lawrence's Women in Love and other post-war novels shows that Lawrence in these post-war novels was full of cynicism, pessimism and hatred for European and English people, society, culture and modes of life. These novels depict European people and society as showing a flux of corruption, decay and death. The novels are replete with imagery of death, decay, rottenness and impotency. Pre-war novels, on the other hand, do not show such distrust of life. These novels exhibit his buoyant celebration of life being blissfully blind to harsh socio-cultural realities. They are full of the images of life, fertility, nature and regeneration. There may be various reasons for Lawrence's changing vision and attitudes but war looks to be the main deciding factor which made such a striking contrast between Lawrence's Pre-war and Post-war novels. This study has less focused Lawrence's post-war novels; rather it is mainly concerned with his pre-war novels to show Lawrence's early zest for life and blindness to harsh socio-cultural realities.

Key Words: Pre-War Novels, Post-War Novels, D. H. Lawrence, Optimism.

Introduction

Contrary to his pre-war fiction writings, Lawrence's post-War novels placed an extraordinary emphasis on corruption and decay in the society (Clarke, 1969; Knight, 1961). It can be assumed that he was 'happily blind' to the socio-cultural crises that Europe was on the verge of in the years before the Great War. He was oblivious to the flux of corruption, decay, chaos and disintegration in that day European civilization and had not yet come to the torturing recognition that contemporary social life had already died. This 'happy blindness' vis-à-vis the sterility of life was offered no chances of fulfilment. This unawareness makes Lawrence overlook society and its predicament, celebrate life and express optimism, humanism and patriotism in his pre-War novels.

War is not a phenomenon to occur overnight. Rather, it takes years, even decades to set up the horrific stage of war. Anticipating such terrible happening, the literary writers try to warn the masses as well as the people at the helm of the affairs about the knocking-at-the-door conditions. The Great War, which is known as the War of the wars, also did not start abruptly. This article is mainly concerned with the 'happy blindness' of D. H. Lawrence – who is considered to be one of the most influential novelists of the modern times – towards the forthcoming Great War (1914-1919) that was fought between many nations and had devastating impact on human life. In other words, it is interesting to note that Lawrence's pre-War fiction is altogether different from his post-War one in that it failed to manifest the spirit of the time and had no alarming event or statement having an implication regarding the forthcoming Great War. However, it is equally important to note that his post-War novels record the effects of the Great War on a massive scale and one wonders as to how Lawrence failed to foresee the clouds of war gathering on the Asian, European, and American skies. Lawrence Critics (e.g. Freedman, 2014; Gilbert, 1983; Koh, 2003; Poplawski, 1996) have

pointed out the impact at almost all levels, whether physical or psychological. However, the difference between Lawrence's pre and post-War long-fiction has not been made a focus of a detailed scholarship. Gilbert (1983) explored the psychological effects on the sexuality of men and women in Lawrence's post-War fiction. As a feminist critic, she observed that the consequences of the Great War were more of psychological importance than physical and that post-War literature showed "gender-specific problems" in which female eroticism was (de-)shaped (423). However, Poplawski (1996) argued about the presence of financial and moral disaster in Lawrence's personal due to the Great War, he too ignored any narrative construct in Lawrence's pre-War fiction that could hint at the situation building towards the Great War. Koh (2003, p. 154) states that Lawrence's post-War novels represented an explosion of the forces of certain impulses and instincts peculiar to human psyche which were "denied expression by the prevailing value-system . . . [to] accumulate below conscious level, growing in strength". Freedman (2003), while tracing trauma in the modern British fiction, analysed the connections between psychological theories of Freud and Lawrence's fiction. Asher (2011) discusses Lawrence's fiction on philosophical level and posits that novel is more than a major contributor to the ethical knowledge of the reader. He hints at a demarcation between the pre-War and the post-War worlds by referring to Lawrence's post-War novel *Kangaroo*, the protagonist of which articulates the views of the novelist about the end of the 'happy days': "it was in 1915 the old world ended" (Lawrence, 1923, p. 220).

Analysis and discussion

Taking Lawrence's protagonist Sommer's (in his post-War novel *Kangaroo*) reflection about the end of the old world as a point of departure, this part of the article discusses the 'happy blindness' that existed on part of the novelist towards the circumstances the world had to see in the form of the Great War. The early pre-War novels such as *The White Peacock*, *The Trespasser* and *Sons and Lovers*, demonstrate indifference to society and its sickness. In these novels Lawrence is mainly pre-occupied with autobiographical material, such as his own psychological dilemmas and their influence on his subsequent life. These poetic and pastoral novels neglect social issues. This lack of interest in social world indicates that Lawrence, at this time, has no feeling of resentment against society. He simply ignores it because as yet he believes that it does not play any significant role in his characters' life. The early novels are a blend of lyricism, romanticism and provincialism. These novels are elegies and they deplore the decline of pastoral and agricultural England. They express only some annoyance for industrialism and regret the loss of old rural England but even then this disaffection is not so dominant and demoralizing as it is in the post-War novels. These novels do not display social pessimism. Here is found inarticulateness and scarcity of dialogues. As language is a social tool so this inarticulateness or reducing dialogues is one of the techniques, which Lawrence employs to remove his characters from the everyday socially conditioned world. The early novels, as influenced by Thomas Hardy and others, reveal interest in nature and countryside and pay no heed to the outer social world. These novels exhibit a sense of the overwhelming enormity of universe and of the insignificance of man in the cosmos. *The Trespasser*, like Hardy's novels, eulogises man's limitedness in the universe, as is explicit in the following passage of the novel: "Amidst the journeying of oceans and clouds and the circling flight of the heavy spheres, lost to sight in the sky, Siegmund and Helena, two grains of life in the vast movement, were travelling a moment side by side" (Lawrence, 1983, p.50).

The White Peacock is marked by a lack of concern for society. It is a personal tragedy like *The Trespasser*, not a condemnation of society. Leslie Tempest is a societal man, yet as with Gerald in *Women in Love*, here Lawrence does not load the moral dice too heavily

against him. He only pities rather than reproaches this advocate of machinery. Criticism of society is very rare in this novel. *Sons and Lovers* predominantly deals with psychological problems of oedipal drives, and it traces the journey the hero of the novel follows to come out of his mental illness. Society is rarely depicted but never emphasized and there is no highlighted denunciation, loathing and criticism of society.

Lawrence's early novels are personal tragedies, not social ones. *The White Peacock* is a tragedy of wrong choice; *The Trespasser* is a tragedy of ill-matched marriage, while *Sons and Lovers* is the psychological tragedy of a damaged child torn by oedipal drives. All these novels are tragic depicting the failure of relationships. The characters are never the victims of society as in the post-War novels. Therefore, Lawrence's early novels deal with rise and fall of human passions, not with society and how it affects human beings. However, in *The Rainbow*, society slowly creeps in to play the determining role in a character. Ursula rejects natural background and looks outside to a more sophisticated social setting, but towards the end she realizes the purposelessness of social activity and escapes from society. Skrebensky is a social being accepting its norms and conventions and Ursula's rejection of him is her rejection of society itself. But up to this time Lawrence and Ursula do not lose hope about society and its renewal. They still believe that a rebirth of society will take place. Therefore, one may say that the society is partially rejected in this novel. There is no overarching rejection of society as is to be found in *Women in Love* and the other post-War novels.

The Rainbow is a dirge for pre-industrial paradise. It displays disaffection with society but it does not make ruthless social criticism as is manifested in *Women in Love* and other post-War novels. The novel, like other pre-War novels is cold to society. Here Lawrence is pre-occupied with psychological tribulations. The characters are the victims of unconscious forces, not of the social forces as in the post-War novels. For example Tom's Oedipal drives so frustrate him that he is unable to establish a satisfactory relation with his wife. However when he recovers from this sickness, he is a success in his relation with Lydia Lensky. In the early passages of the novel lyricism and the celebration of the natural beauty indicates Lawrence's unconcern with society and its diseases. Brangwens reside at the marsh away from industrial society and its effects. Similarly Anna and Will live alone in pure sensuousness, not affected by and happily indifferent to society. Society is ignored and rejected, not depicted and criticized as in post-War novels. There is a slight accusation of society in the novel; for example Anna and Ursula reject social conventions; but on the whole the characters do not express repugnance against society, because as yet society is considered as an outsider playing no role in human life. The novel does not depict river of corruption in society because up till now Lawrence did not come to this pungent consciousness.

The novel gives no sense of decay, barrenness, impotency and dissolution, but a sense of potency, eagerness and tenderness. Here the people are not lifeless, decayed and sterile as the characters in post-War novels are. They show vigour, freshness and vivacity. Their vitality is indicated by the imagery of flowers and trees. For example Anna, sitting with Will in their lonely abode is described as "a daisy opened out of the dew" (Lawrence, 1993, p.138). And when Tom visits their home he finds "them both very glowing like an open flower" (Ibid.). Other images of birds, buds, fountains, spring, summer, etc. are recurrent in the novel to indicate life, growth, youth, energy and potency. For example there is a beautiful image of life and tenderness when Ursula examines a minute unicellular plant under her microscope and is thrilled by its tiny movement, thriving and pulsating with tender life. The images of rats, beetles and other insects signifying rotteness, as are recurrent in *Women in Love*, are not found in this novel. Decay is associated only with a few characters such as Skrebensky. But on the whole the general atmosphere is that of freshness, not of bareness.

Majority of the characters display vitality and vigour, e.g. Ursula resembles the primitive Africans in her “dark, powerful under life” (p. 419).

The novel does not make severe criticism of society. Social self has its own importance. Society is not rejected; rather its value is acknowledged. Social work can also give fulfilment, as Will, after his naked sensuality with his wife, gets consummation in social work. He develops a purposive social self and is “very happy and keen in his new public spirit” (p. 220). Generally speaking the novel demonstrates indifference to society, but Ursula’s regular allusions to and her desire to go and participate in the man’s world outside hints to society gradually crawling in towards the conclusion of the novel. But here the condemnation of society is not as relentless and dominant as it is in the post-War novels. Ursula is disillusioned in the school where she confronts “hard stark reality” (p. 346). She criticizes evil system of the school but she does not escape and resign, rather she wants to face up to the social problems. She determines that “she would never submit” (p. 378). She is discontented with the intruding industry and bewails the vanishing of pre-industrial England. She rejects the mechanization of society but as yet rigorous denunciation of encroaching industrialization is absent. Skrebensky is also displeased with industrial society: “He too realized what England would be in a few hours’ time—a blind, sordid, strenuous activity, all for nothing, fuming with dirty smoke, and running trains and groping in the bowels of the earth, all for nothing” (p. 432).

The early novels do not repudiate society and its conventions. Here the characters dread and revere social norms. That is why there is no blunt treatment of sex and blasphemous attitude to religion. In post-War novels, on the other hand, Lawrence becomes more outspoken and unconventional where the picture of the emancipated women Like Ursula and Alvina Houghton, is actually denunciation of the conventional society. Lawrence’s revulsion at the impoverished lives bred in an industrialized community is explicit only in parts of *The Rainbow*. It becomes central and dominant in *Women in Love* and other post-War novels. In the former novel Ursula displays social hope and reforming fervour but in the later one her rage at the social tyranny of the industry has increased almost to revulsion and disgust.

As in pre-War period Lawrence was indifferent to harsh social realities and their crushing influence on individuals’ life so in pre-War novels he celebrates hope and sanguinity. He was a born optimist. In his early youth he had a youthful passion for life as his pre-War novels and letters bear witness. According to Moor (1962, p. 152), he criticized Conrad “for being so sad and for giving in”. Likewise he was repelled by Arnold Bennett’s resignation. In pre-War years Lawrence endorses a romanticism which “carries him”, as Lee Horsley (1990, p. 93) observed, “towards affirmations”. Hence, naturally and temperamentally Lawrence was an optimist, not a cynic, but the War made him a pessimist.

Lawrence’s pre-War novels express his buoyancy and passion for life. These novels are full of the images freshness and liveliness. *The White Peacock* and *The Trespasser* are marked by sadness, pity and elegy, but they do not depict horror, fear, disgust, depression and pessimism as are portrayed in post-War novels. In the pre-War novels even death is taken optimistically. It is not extinction as it is in post-War novels. For example the death of the gamekeeper in *The White Peacock* is celebrated as part of the whole cycle of destruction and creation. It is here and also in *The Rainbow* a means of rebirth, indispensable autumnal process, and part of the general life cycle. Similarly in *The Trespasser* the death of Siegmund is tranquil like that of Tom Brangwen in *The Rainbow*. Thus the death in pre-War novels is not hideous as in post-War novels. According to a letter written by Lawrence in January 1919 (as cited in Boulton and Robertson, 1984, p. 316), he himself believed it to be consummation; while in post-War novels, it became extinction and obliteration:

There is a great consummation in death or sensual ecstasy as in *The Rainbow*. But there is also death, which is the rushing of the Gadarene swine down the slope of extinction. And this is the War in Europe. We have chosen our extinction in death, rather than our consummation.

Sons and Lovers displays a buoyant conclusion. Paul Morrel is ultimately liberated from his psychological sickness, which had crippled him. Clara Dawes leaves a therapeutic influence on him. At the end of the novel together they receive “the baptism of life, each through the other” (Lawrence, 1989, p. 439). Clara provides him with a measure of self-esteem and assurance of his own sexual abilities. He returns back to the town to take active part in social life. According to Alastair Niven (1979, p. 58), “Paul Morrel’s decision to re-enter a responsible social life gives a pleasing positive tone to the end of *Sons and Lovers*”. The novel depicts a journey towards Paul’s maturity and liberation. It is not a pessimistic novel because it has no depressing end. The end stresses upon a need for a purposive social self, not withdrawal from society.

The characters in all these pre-War novels, inspite of their frustrating experiences, finally celebrate appetite for life. They eventually achieve a purposive social self. They do not escape from society. Later novels, on the other hand are depressing because the characters in these novels have to reject society and after this rejection they are left with only desperate choices. Hence in pre-War novels the characters’ re-entrance in active social life gives a sanguine savour to these novels.

The Rainbow opens with a note of optimism unlike *Women in Love*, which begins with a note of depression, despondency and pessimism. The very title of the novel points to affirmation, tradition and promise. The life of the Brangwens is full of hope for future and anticipation for a better life:

There was a look in the eyes of the Brangwens as if they were expecting something unknown, about which they were eager. They had that air of readiness for what would come to them, a kind of surety, an expectancy’ the look of an inheritor. (Lawrence 1993, p. 5)

Here the atmosphere is not dreary as it is in *Women in Love* because the characters are full of gusto and heaven and earth are “teeming around them” (p. 5). The images of fruition, fertility and potency recur throughout the novel. The characters express no despair, no depression and no sense of inadequacy as in *Women in Love*. Brangwen men enjoy contentment and self-sufficiency; it is enough for the men that they live “full and surcharged, their senses full fed” (p. 6).

At the beginning of the novel natural beauty is celebrated in lyrical terms. The characters exhibit youthful passion for life. For instance Lawrence says about Tom Brangwen: “The young man grew up very fresh and alert, with zest for every moment of life He had naturally a plentiful stream of life” (p. 16). Lydia and Tom have love-hate rhythms and fluctuations in their relationship, but on the whole they are a success. They live a happy, sensuous and full life, not a dull life as the characters do in *Women in Love*. They get satisfaction in their work. For example Tom is pleased to do his work “and the zest for life” is “strong in him” (p. 66).

Lawrence, in pre-War period, was not disillusioned with society and its people. Therefore he did not make distressed quest for alternatives to a comatose modern world. Consequently in pre-War novels there is no dreariness and distraction. These novels do not

portray universal desolation and hopelessness. The characters may be tragic but not rotten and sterile. *The Rainbow* does not display general despair. The characters are not complete failures. They somehow get their fulfilment, as Will gets consummation in the Cathedral and in wood carving and Anna gets satisfaction in child bearing; to her “the baby was a complete bliss and fulfilment” (p. 191).

In *The Rainbow* Lawrence considers the positive side of everything. Even death is taken positively. There is nothing depressing about death; as Barbara Hardy comments: “There is pain and terror as well as affirmation. But the novel though relating deaths, has no tragic death” (p. xxiv). Here death is calm and it leads to rebirth and consummation not to extinction and annihilation as in post-War novels. The dead Tom Brangwen is described thus: “He was perfectly calm in death, and now he was laid in line, inviolable, unapproachable. To Anna he was the majesty of the inaccessible male, the majesty of death. It made her still and awe-stricken, almost glad” (p. 232).

Ursula exhibits great zeal and enthusiasm for life. She celebrates life and the beauty of things. “There was always the marvellous eagerness in her heart, to climb and to see beyond” (p. 249). She is hopeful about her future. She waits for the sons of god. “She clung to the secret hope, the aspiration” (p. 256). Her desire to participate in man’s world outside indicates her urge for life, even for social life. Her youthful aspirations, her fervour and appetite for life are made explicit in the following passage: “She wanted so many things. She wanted to read great books . . . She wanted to see beautiful things . . . She wanted to know big, free people; and there remained always the want she could put no name to” (p. 377). She finds hope in quickly changing seasons; “the autumn passed away, the winter was at hand” (p. 381). Here the autumn is not lasting as in post-War novels but it is a transitory deferment of spring which is sure to come, in the words of Shelley: “If winter comes/Can spring be far behind” (as cited in Hutchinson, 1971, p. 579). Ursula is not anaesthetized by the autumn. She is thrilled by the anticipation of the spring. “She was staunch for joy and happiness” (Lawrence, 1993, p. 382). She is not without hope about men. She believes “there are many men in the world one might love—there is not only one man” (Ibid.). Hers is the ambition for more in life, not flight from the already existing world. Her voyage is not of escape and resignation. It is of zest and expectancy for more in life: “She was a traveller on the face of the earth . . . She must go on and on, seeking the goal that she knew she did draw nearer to” (p. 387). Ursula is not an escapist; she exhibits great ambition for life; “She wanted to go away, to be free to fly her kite as high as she liked” (p. 389). She is overjoyed to see fecundity in nature around her. She is expectant and waits with keen heart for what would come to her:

And she turned to spring and the opening buds. There was a large pear-tree by a wall, and it was full, thronged with tiny, grey-green buds, myriads. She stood before it arrested with delight and a realization went deep into her heart. There was so great a host in array behind the cloud of pale dim green, so much to come forth—so much sunshine to pour down. (p. 390)

Towards the closing stages of the novel the episode of horses symbolizes Ursula’s vitality and her unswerving enthusiasm for life. She encounters them when she has provisionally lost her zest for life after her deadening experience with Skrebensky. Now her natural passion for life asserts itself in the form of horses and she sheds away her temporary sickness. Horses symbolize potency and vitality, which Ursula desires to find in her partner. Just before the episode she gives in to deadness by deciding to become a social wife to Skrebensky, but after the scene she experiences rebirth and repudiates all social bindings. Her resurrection after transient numbness is described thus:

She was the naked, clear kernel thrusting forth the clear, powerful shoot, and the world was a bygone winter, discarded, her mother and father and Anton and college and all her friends, all cast off like a year that was gone by, whilst the kernel was free and naked and striving to take new root, to create a new knowledge of eternity in the flux of time. And the kernel was the only reality; the rest was cast off into oblivion. (p. 457)

Here the images of buds, kernel and shoots are signs of life, fertility and regeneration. The stress is on rebirth not on destruction as in the post-War novels. In the post-War novels there is only a fragile hope of rebirth, but here in this novel rebirth has actually taken place and Ursula can feel it:

When she woke at last it seemed as if a new day had come on the earth. How long, how long had she fought through the dust and obscurity, for this new dawn? How frail and fine and clear she felt, like the most fragile flower that opens in the end of the winter. (p. 458)

Thus for Ursula winter ends; she comes out of dismal situation and is hopeful about her future. She recovers the same earlier and natural appetite for life:

When she looked ahead, into the undiscovered land before her, what was there she could recognize but fresh glow of light and inscrutable trees going up from the earth like smoke. It was the unknown, the unexplored, the undiscovered upon whose shore she had landed, alone after crossing the void, the darkness which washed the new world and the old. (Ibid.)

Ursula has a strong faith in regeneration. She believes that the people are capable of rebirth. She thinks that the corruption is fragile and temporary and believes that it will surely give birth to new germination:

She saw the people go by in the street below . . . walking each in the husk of an old fruition, but visible through the husk, the swelling and the heaving contour of new germination The confidence of the women was brittle. It would break quickly to reveal the strength and patient effort of the new germination. (p. 459)

She was sad to see the corruption of the houses and the factories around but she knew that this corruption was not deadening as in *Women in Love* but brittle like the old horn, which conceals tender life in its dead exterior. That is why at the end of the novel she finds a rainbow in the sky and is hopeful about the rebirth of man and society:

And the rainbow stood on the earth. She knew that the sordid people who crept hard-scaled and separate on the face of the world's corruption were living still, that the rainbow was arched in their blood and would quiver to life in their spirit, that they would cast off their horny covering of disintegration, that new, clean, naked bodies would issue to a new germination, to a new growth, rising to the light and the wind

and the clean rain of the heaven. She saw in the rainbow the earth's new architecture, the old brittle corruption of houses and factories swept away, the world built up in the living fabric of truth, fitting to the over-arching heaven. (p. 460)

Thus the novel ends with a triumphant promise of regeneration. According to Randall Stevenson (1993, p. 30), the end of the novel celebrates a "satisfying vision of life [. . .] In the novel's optimistic, almost mystic, conclusion", Stevenson comments, "a vision of its balanced, over-arching shape suggests the possibility of restoring and reintegrating the whole squalid industrialized society, which stands beneath" (p. 35).

All through *The Rainbow* Ursula exhibits cheerfulness, only with some intermittent moments of temporary disappointment. She believes in the goodness of man, in man's capacity for rebirth, and in society's ability to come out of old decayed husk and experience regeneration. She has her moments of disenchantment but on the whole her appetite for life is never abated, as Keith Sagar (1979, p. 55) observes:

Her story is of disillusionment, but also of the courage, which transcends it, replacing broken dreams not by cynicism or conformity, but by new, more robust and more jealously guarded dreams. Her faith in life is never shaken.

Similarly Lawrence's faith in life is never traumatized up till now. But later on it wavers as is obvious in post-War novels.

In *The Rainbow* corruption is prevalent in society but the emphasis falls on rebirth. The hope of regeneration is strong, not nervous as is seen in *Women in Love*. Thus in pre-War novels are found solid, confident and sure hopes while in post-War novels there are fragile, timid and wavering hopes. Images of promise, anticipation and expectancy are recurrent in *The Rainbow*. The novel is full of the images of trees, buds, flowers, birds, fountains, spring and summer. Such imagery highlights vitality, energy, fecundity and potency in pre-War novels. In the post-War novels, on the other hand, images of decay, rottenness, sterility, and impotency are more frequent.

During the early months of the War Lawrence was hopeful about it. He considered it a "great necessary disintegrating autumnal process" (as cited in Zytaruk and Boulton, 1981, p. 424), which would wash away old dead England. His letters of the time express his alternating hope and despair. He told Lady Cynthia Asquith in October 1915: "If the War could but end this winter, we might rise to life again, here in this our world . . . Oh God what tender timid hopes one has—then the cursed blackening frost" (p. 420). But he could not sustain this hope due to the long duration of the War. After the suppression of his novel *The Rainbow* in November 1915 he lost all tender hopes he had cherished up till now. He wrote to Herbert Thring – secretary of the 'Society of Authors' whose assistance Lawrence sought during the persecution of *The Rainbow* – in 1915: "I feel so sad at the present time that I cannot be optimistic. I feel as if some hope were broken in my chest that has never been broken before" (p. 433). Now he was utterly disappointed in his hopes of rebirth, which he had celebrated in *The Rainbow*. This disillusionment prevails in all the post-War novels.

Before the War Lawrence was unconscious to the fact that the people had an inherent death wish and perversity and that the individuals and states were engaged in a deadly struggle for power. Moreover he was as yet not disgusted with peoples' sterility and destructiveness. That is why in pre-War novels the characters do not display perversity and desire for dominance over other people and they do not engage in battle of wills. For example in *The Rainbow*, Tom and Lydia enjoy tenderness in their relationship. They do not

try to dominate each other as the characters in *Women in Love* do; rather they aim at the mutual fulfillment: "She waited for him to meet her, not to bow before her and serve her. She wanted his active participation, not his submission" (Lawrence, 1993, p. 87).

To some extent desire for power is present in Anna and Will but it is not as dominant and as full of violence, sadism and perversity as it is in Gudrun Brangwen and Gerald. Anna dislikes Will due to his submissive nature and dependence on her. At the end she gives him his identity and independence, which he lacked earlier. To some extent they try to dominate each other but at least they do not exert violence upon other people and things (nature, animals etc) as Gerald and Gudrun do. They are not a complete failure because they have their moments of fulfillment which Gerald and Gudrun never have. Their flaw is desire for merger with and possession of the object of love. They find no malicious satisfaction in defeating and torturing others. Anna is not happy to win the battle of wills; "She knew she had won. And an ashy desolation came over her" (p. 159). Will wanted "a strange absorption with her" (p. 185), which Anna resisted. This was the conflict between them, not some latent desire for control as Gudrun and Gerald demonstrate.

A sort of violence exists in Ursula-Skrebensky relationship. He is selfish and is incapable of tender love. She does not wish for his destruction; she is not happy when he is consumed in lustful sex. She wants his equal participation in love and sex, which he cannot achieve. She is sad at her triumph and his failure as a lover. She had won but "her soul was empty and finished" (p. 299). She feels no sadistic pleasure in victory, in defeating others. However Ursula and Skrebensky do not show violence against other people, while Gudrun and Gerald are sado-masochists and their hatred is extended to other people as well. Ursula has some perversity in her lesbian relation with her mistress Miss Inger but this is more a perversity of Miss Inger than that of Ursula because she is immature; it is a sign of her urge for full life. She wants fertility but Skrebensky "aroused no fruitful fecundity in her" (p. 439). In *The White Peacock* George exhibits some violence against nature and kills a bee, but in this novel there are protectors of nature as well such as Annable. Moreover, the violence here is directed only against nature, while in post-War novels such as *Women in Love* it encompasses nature, people and life itself.

Before War Lawrence was unaware of the hollowness of people; therefore, his pre-War novels indicate no signs of misanthropy. In his essay, "Art and the Individual," (1908) he held that the function of Art was to: "Bring us into sympathy with as many men, as many objects, as many phenomena as possible" (as cited in Moore and Robert, 1968, p. 226). His pre-War novels have pastoral settings and there is a lot of affection among the characters. If in these novels any character hates people, it is his personal hatred not that of Lawrence e.g. in *The White Peacock*, Annable's abhorrence of people is not Lawrence's because Annable wants people to live like pure animals, which Lawrence does not approve. Annable's loathing of people results from his personal experience; moreover his revulsion is directed to the civilized man since he is weary of all signs of civilization. If Lawrence displays any detestation of people in these novels, it is his disgust of the middle class social people because of their sterility. The working classes are treated with love and kindness. Hence in pre-War novels there is no wholesale hatred of the people of all classes, which later on emerges in post-War novels where it is extended to all strata of society; even the working class people are not exempted from Lawrence's indiscriminate and all-embracing disgust of humanity.

There is no dehumanisation in *The Rainbow*. Man is man, not a beast. Here, Lawrence or his characters believe in man's greatness. They have faith in man's divinity and his superiority over other creatures. People are not compared with beasts but with angels. Tom Brangwen, in his speech at the wedding of Anna equates man with angels. The

characters consider man more important than religion and gods. Anna's rejection of the authority of the church and the conventional religion is a humanistic gesture. To her the church is not superior to human needs. Her view is just like that of William Blake. She gives more importance to human reason and aspirations. She mocks at Will's humble submission to the church, as it is a humiliation to man's integrity. Anna believes in man's goodness and his power of comprehension. She wants brotherhood among men; so she dislikes Will because he cares only for himself:

She was bitter against him that he let his mind sleep. That which was human, belonged to mankind, he could not exert. He cared only for himself She, almost against herself, clung to the worship of the human knowledge. Man must die in the body, but in his knowledge he is immortal She believed in the omnipotence of the human mind. (Lawrence, 1993, p. 160)

Ursula is also a humanist like Anna. She exhibits "fear and dislike of authority" (p. 251) and revolts against rules. Like Anna, she criticizes conventional religion. To both of them man's freedom is more important than the authority of religion, church, school etc. Ursula feels compassion for school children. She censures evil system of school, which suppresses children's will. She loves common people. She gives her necklace to the little daughter of a bargeman. Skrebensky gave her "a sense of the vast world, a sense of distances and large masses of humanity" (p. 271). She loves the company of people; She does not desire evasion from them; "she was glad to be on the station with a crowd" (p. 316). She is not like Rupert Birkin and Oliver Mellors who wish the extermination of the human species. She rejects the destroyers of mankind. She mocks at the cruel obliteration of mankind in Noah's Flood. She wished: "She had been a nymph. She would have laughed through the window of the ark and flicked drops of the flood at Noah, before she drifted away to people who were less important in their Proprietor and their flood" (p. 301).

In *The Rainbow* there is assertion of human liberty and rejection of religion and church if they curb man's aspirations. Throughout the novel Anna and Ursula criticize conventional religion and church, for crushing man's freedom, needs and desires. Ursula defends man's liberty to act and rejects Christian view of sin. To her: "Whatever God was, He was, and there was no need for her to trouble about Him. She felt she had now all licence" (p. 302). Ursula and Miss Inger humanize religion. To them human aspirations are more important than religion. Religion is for man, not man for religion:

Gradually it dawned upon Ursula that all the religion she knew was but particular clothing to a human aspiration. The aspiration was the real thing—the clothing was a matter almost of national taste or creed In philosophy she was brought to the conclusion that the human desire is the criterion of all truth and all good. (p. 317)

Before the War Lawrence did not need to withdraw from England and idealize non-European primitive cultures because as yet he was not aware of the deadness of the European culture. Consequently in pre-War novels he exhibits nationalism and patriotism. In these novels he expresses love of London and England, as his letter to Blanche Jennings (a socialist and suffragist who met Lawrence in 1907), written in 1908, illustrates: "I feel remarkably at home in London, remarkably cheerful and delighted" (as cited in Boulton, 1979, p. 80). These novels are known for lyricism and provincialism; they idolize English landscape and

countryside. All pre-War novels have English setting; there is no desire to escape the ugliness of England. *The Rainbow*, to some extent, displays denunciation of England. Ursula tells Skrebensky: "I shall be glad to leave England. Everything is so meagre and paltry" (Lawrence, 1993, p. 427). But in this novel Lawrence expresses only some dissatisfaction with European industrial civilization. Here the denunciation is restricted only to the mechanical aspects of this civilization. The wide-ranging condemnation of European culture does not appear at this point of time, which is to become evident in post-War novels.

Conclusion:

To sum up, a detailed study of Lawrence's fiction shows that in his pre-War novels he demonstrates blindness to the miserable condition of the people, society and the world. And this happy ignorance and unawareness makes him affirm life and celebrate love of man, England and Europe. Therefore pre-War novels express Lawrence's optimism, humanism, nationalism and a youthful celebration and affirmation of life. His post-War novels, on the contrary, manifest the devastating effects of the First Great War.

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