



**‘Each of us has two selves. First is this body which is vulnerable and never quite within our control. The body with its irrational sympathies and desires and passions, its peculiar direct communication, defying the mind. And the second is the conscious ego, the self I *know* I am.’ (Lawrence, ‘On Being A Man’, in *Reflections on the Death of a Porcupine and Other Essays*, ed. Michael Herbert [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988], p. 213).**

**How does the relationship between the body and mind function in two or more texts on the module?**

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Throughout his work, Lawrence has a fascination for exploring how the mind and body function differently for each of the sexes. He proposes a theory of duality, establishing male and female principles which if successfully adhered to should result in the balance which is sought after by each sex to create a unified and healthy relationship. The male principle is that of Love, in which his mental desire for completeness of being will be complemented by consummation with the female, whose principle is the natural Law of the body.<sup>1</sup> Lawrence asserts that in this ‘pure communion I become whole in love...burned into essentiality...driven...into sheer separate distinction’<sup>2</sup> from the female, resulting in a recognition by the sexes of the individuality of the self and the other.

This discussion is interested in the way Lawrence presents the breakdown of these principles when they are not equally balanced by each partner in a sexual relationship. With a primary focus on *The Rainbow*’s Will Brangwen and Peter Moest from ‘New Eve and Old Adam’, this lack of attainment of unity will be shown to result in a psychological and physical dependence of the males upon the females. The former strive for possession and knowledge of the women’s bodies which have a stable sense of being, according to Lawrence’s metaphor of the woman as the root of a plant; having a ‘Will-to-Inertia’ and growing downwards towards the ‘origin’. This is in opposition to the man’s stalk-like ‘Will-to-Motion’, which grows upwards towards ‘discovery’,<sup>3</sup> yet in these texts the polarities are disrupted as the characters predominately display the principles of the opposite sex.

Knowledge of the female body is shown to be the ultimate goal for the males in achieving independence from the women, yet Will and Peter fail to gain the fulfilling consummation required for their identity-formation, and feel that they own a useless or sickly body. Lawrence uses the concept of the *magna mater*<sup>4</sup> to feminise and therefore sexualise

<sup>1</sup> D.H Lawrence, *Study of Thomas Hardy and Other Essays* (London: Grafton Books, 1986), p. 123

<sup>2</sup> H.M. Daleski, *The Forked Flame: A Study of D.H. Lawrence* (London: Faber and Faber, 1965), p. 39

<sup>3</sup> Lawrence, *Study of Thomas Hardy and Other Essays*, p. 55

<sup>4</sup> Gavriel Ben-Ephraim, *The Moon’s Dominion: Narrative Dichotomy and Female Dominance in Lawrence’s Earlier Novels* (London: Associated University Presses, 1981), p. 21

certain places, elevating the importance of the female body and providing an abstraction of the male's desire for a re-birth as separate flesh from woman. The significant role of the female as both maternal and sexual means man orientates towards her throughout life. This is a 'sequence which...comprises the enclosure of the womb',<sup>5</sup> and a consideration of Lawrence's theory that man requires a 'second birth...that will deliver us into our own being'<sup>6</sup> will be related to the author's device of creating a heavily demarcated female space which overawes the male.

From the very beginning of *The Rainbow*, the earthy, 'local' Brangwen men are differentiated from both outward-looking women and men with 'range of motion [and] knowledge'.<sup>7</sup> Lawrence's theory of the male growth towards discovery in opposition to female inertia is shown not to apply to the Brangwens, who are satisfied with the 'heat of the blood...[and] dazed with looking towards the source of generation', in direct contrast to the straining of the women to know the 'active scope of man'. The weight of the muddy earth grounds the labourer to their place of origin so that they take root in the fertile soil. They control reproduction and even take on the maternal role of the female as 'the body of the men were impregnated with the day, cattle and earth and vegetation...their brains were inert'.<sup>8</sup> Rather than striving for mobility through a dedication to advancing the mind, a constant connection with the reproductive body is shown to pass down the Brangwen line. Will's lustful sexual desire manifests itself in a more socially acceptable early involvement with religion and the spiritual symbolism of church architecture.

As he becomes more sexually aware of Anna, Will unconsciously deflects his desire for her into carving the Creation of Eve 'with trembling passion'.<sup>9</sup> Again, a Brangwen man is described as metaphorically giving birth to woman by creating her form; she is a work issued from his body like the image on the wooden board. Yet the imagery of the 'bird on a bough overhead, lifting its wings for flight, and a serpent wreathing up to it' acts out the predatory nature of his sexual urges as the phallic, earth-bound snake is moving to pull down and be sated by the bird who would instead resolve to move upwards to freedom and discovery. Will unconsciously wishes to consume Anna; to take her body into his in the hope of completing himself, but Anna later jeers at his efforts to master her. Will lacks the balance of mind and body that Lawrence hypothesises is essential for a healthy relationship and has 'dark-souled desires' meaning a dominance of the body element which leads him to fight his wife 'frantic in sensual fear'. After she mocks his carving by pointing out "It is impudence to say that Woman was made out of Man's body...when every man is born of woman",<sup>10</sup> his unconscious has been made conscious by Anna and he can no longer retain the previously unacknowledged fantasy of possessing her body.

Similarly, Peter Moest seeks completion of his body by agonisingly appealing to his wife to fulfil her traditional subordinate role as 'flesh of my flesh'.<sup>11</sup> Like Anna, Paula can see into the male unconscious and reveals Peter to himself using the Adam and Eve motif which aims to deny the female of a singular existence. Both women have an independence and insight that their partners lack, and the recognition of this by both sexes results in a battle of wills as the men struggle to affirm their position in the traditional masculine role as head of the household. Will feels 'impotent, or a cripple, or a defective, or a fragment'<sup>12</sup> and Peter

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 21

<sup>6</sup> Lawrence, *Study of Thomas Hardy and Other Essays*, p. 40

<sup>7</sup> D. H. Lawrence, *The Rainbow*, Mark Kinkead-Weekes, ed. (London: Penguin, 2007), p. 11

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., p. 10

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p. 112

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., p. 162

<sup>11</sup> D. H. Lawrence, *Love Among the Haystacks and Other Stories*, John Worthen, ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), p. 182

<sup>12</sup> Lawrence, *Rainbow*, p. 174

'had been mechanical and barren with her...his body felt like a piece of waste'. The women's reactions to their husbands' self-loathing do not help alleviate the matter, as Anna drives Will into the spare bedroom and Paula exclaims, 'It is you, you who are too paltry to take a woman',<sup>13</sup> as they continue to attempt to break down the barriers of the male unconscious mind by voicing hidden insecurities which are preventing the natural equality and unity of each relationship. Ben-Ephraim suggests that 'the need to achieve erection...causes men to approach sex with the unconscious knowledge of potential incompleteness',<sup>14</sup> placing the male at a disadvantage even before the attempt to achieve the 'perfect consummation of marriage'<sup>15</sup> which is so difficult for Lawrence characters. Paradoxically, the more the male endeavours to assert himself the more he feels emasculated. He desperately seeks confirmation of his individuality by trying to possess the woman's body, and the new Eve will resist this to the last.

In order to combat this, Will and Peter are unconsciously affected by their feminisation and sexualisation of buildings, which become a metaphor of the womb. The Cathedral scene in *The Rainbow* reveals Will's insecurities as a male and his lack of fulfilment in being able to attain the body of his wife for perfect consummation.

His soul leapt up into the gloom, into possession, it reeled, it swooned with a great escape, it quivered in the womb, in the hush and gloom of fecundity, like seed of procreation in ecstasy.<sup>16</sup>

Lawrence attempts to put Will's feeling into words as he enters the 'perfect womb' of the Cathedral, releasing his soul to allow it to search for a higher, spiritual knowledge of the female body. In a passage which is heavy with allusion to the sexual act, Will successfully ejaculates into the womb as acted out by the placing of commas to create a rhythmic pulsing effect, whilst also mimicking the echoic reverberations of sounds within the building's solid, lofty interior. This is a purely functional consummation, shown by the language of the land with its emphasis on seeds, 'germination' and procreation, allowing Will to experience the impersonality of the climax that he requires in order to become individualised, as 'before he can exist himself as a separate identity, he must allow and recognise...distinct existence'<sup>17</sup> from the female. The Cathedral is a serious, solemn place with the rhyming of 'gloom, swooned and womb' mirroring the form of the building with its cold stone and 'brooding' height over the town, as well as its deep foundations ensuring rootedness in the ground. Here, Lawrence permits the attributes of the female and male principles to re-align to the correct gender, which is why Will is finally able to recognise 'the climax of eternity' he has sought for in Anna's body. However the Cathedral is an abstraction, meaning the couple have not physically achieved the balance of body and mind, spiritual Law and bodily Love that would allow them to unite and then become distinct from one another. Will must resort to 'tend[ing] it for what it tried to represent [as]...in spirit, he was uncreated'.<sup>18</sup> Anna again mocks Will's passionate attention to the church that he personifies as female and is resistant to its rigid enclosure. She feels a 'sense of being roofed in' and wishes to 'tear herself away like a bird on wings',<sup>19</sup> recalling the imagery of the Adam and Eve board and indicating her masculine will-to-motion.

<sup>13</sup> Lawrence, *Love Among the Haystacks*, p. 164

<sup>14</sup> Ben-Ephraim, *The Moon's Dominion*, p. 21

<sup>15</sup> Lawrence, *Study of Thomas Hardy and Other Essays*, p. 123

<sup>16</sup> Lawrence, *Rainbow*, p. 187

<sup>17</sup> Lawrence, *Study of Thomas Hardy*, p. 61

<sup>18</sup> Lawrence, *Rainbow*, p. 191

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 189

In parallel to this, Paula exercises her right to independent movement in contrast to Peter's inability to travel much further than a mile away from home, which again emphasises the crossover of the male and female principles that Lawrence delineated. Paula 'could not bear the close, basic intimacy into which she had been drawn'<sup>20</sup> both literally in terms of the confined space of the top storey flat as well as the attachment of the parasitic husband 'always sucking at her blood'.<sup>21</sup> To highlight the alienation that exists between the couple, Lawrence continually places them at a 'lonely height' to make literal their middle class detachment from functional social life down on the ground alongside the soldier, the workers and the 'noise of traffic from the town beyond'. The pair have no knowledge of their own neighbours and travel within the building via a lift which further insulates them from interaction with others. They exist amongst an accumulation of crossed telegraph wires- an outlook which emulates their scrambled communication- and a single seagull that is as free to sail as Paula later proves to be.

Paradoxically, Peter installs his wife in the attic rooms of a house and she becomes maddened by his will to possess her, yet it is the man himself who becomes the victim of his own retention. Lawrence brings his female character out of the nineteenth century and allows her liberation from the confined space by enabling her to take up Peter's own threats of escaping to Italy, and it is the rooms of the flat that enclose the man as 'a caged thing...as if he were in a mesh, and could not get out...he could not breathe'.<sup>22</sup> Peter has to flee from the feminised space with its abundance of pinks, flowers, soft furnishings and delicate ornaments chosen by his 'queenly' wife; to the neutral space of a theatre or the 'business-like' hotel room, the falsity of which is more comfortable to him than the overpowering attachment he feels to the flat and its proximity to Paula. To Peter the flat represents Paula's body, as its rooms are 'something placed around him, like a great box' which he struggles within and cannot become free from. He fails to match her in status as 'he *knew* he was no king' and the way she can manipulate his bodily movement so that he feels 'pained and insignificant...like her lordliest plaything'<sup>23</sup> demonstrates that he appears to be living in the doll's house that the 'tragedienne' Paula reigns over, constructing a drama of her own choosing.

As a consequence of this sense of mental and physical dependence on the wife and submission to the overawing power of the feminine space, Will and Peter appear to become engrossed by the figure of 'man's unconscious mind',<sup>24</sup> the *magna mater*. According to Ben-Ephraim, this archetype would account for 'man's experience of woman as enveloping, overwhelming and essential for life',<sup>25</sup> and therefore these women appear as dominant a force as the male characters feel they are. In response to this they fear inadequacy, and reduce themselves to an empty body and disengaged mind, unconsciously seeking confirmation of their physical and mental existence through absorption of the female body. Paradoxically, by willing for this possession they immerse themselves in a space which they have defined as female and therefore endow the wife with the power that they seek themselves. The omnipresence of the female as both mother and lover during the lifetime of the male gives the *magna mater* precedence as the figure of man's unconscious. She is a life giver, and Lawrence makes clear the requirement that man has of her by drawing attention to the importance of space and structure, 'No man can endure the sense of space, of chaos, on four sides of him...He must be able to put his back to the wall. And this wall is his woman...She supplies him with the feeling of Immutability, Permanence, Eternality'.<sup>26</sup> Her physical

<sup>20</sup> Lawrence, *Love Among the Haystacks*, p. 172

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 170

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 179-80

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 181

<sup>24</sup> Ben-Ephraim, *The Moon's Dominion*, p. 21

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 21

<sup>26</sup> Lawrence, *Study of Thomas Hardy*, p. 54

presence secures his being, and the unconscious threat of rejection from the female makes Will and Peter seem as dependent as infants. Their search for a re-birth from women's flesh in maturity would allow them separation from the female through the formation of an individual identity.

However, this can only be attained by the equal balance of the male and female principles of body and mind, and the incompatibility of the couples in these respects make for a troubled partnership- one that the *magna mater* conception cannot resolve as it would offer the female hegemony. The abstractions of the Cathedral and flat as the womb convey Will and Peter as metaphorically inhabiting their wives just as they once lived inside their mothers. They unconsciously expect their wives to help them conceive their sexual maturity too, yet crucially, and in a further irony, she rejects this position of authority and tries to negotiate equilibrium. Paula desires a declaration of love and unconstrained passion from Peter, whereas Anna realises Will 'would never develop and unfold whilst he was alive in the body',<sup>27</sup> having an intense blood lust which dominates his unconscious life and leaves little room for the conscious mind to move outwards to discovery. Both women have in common a desire to be independent from their husbands- and more crucially, for their husbands to recognise themselves as separate beings too. This directly refutes Widmer's view that 'the selfish independence of modern woman is at fault...the witch-like destructive power of Woman'<sup>28</sup> is a contradiction of Lawrence's portrayal and aim in presenting her as one half of a duality. Lawrence has the ability to create an equal perspective of the sexes by characterising them so that the reader is able to maintain objectivity throughout the narrative and adopt the stance of each gender. This style emulates the quest for balance of the gendered principles, enacting what the characters fail to achieve in their marriages.

Lawrence creates 'New Eves', allowing the female to rise out of the ashes of the early repressive Victorian era by developing the later concept of the New Woman. She is able to demand an advanced and more equal consideration of the female marital role, but not at the expense of her husband. Both sexes are endowed with bodily desire and the freedom to critique the mind of the other, so that the rainbow is the hopeful symbol of 'oneness'<sup>29</sup> which overarches the novel. The short story's reworked narrative of humankind's creation similarly provides an equalised account of the potential for unification between the sexes in the modern world.

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<sup>27</sup> Lawrence, *Rainbow*, p. 195

<sup>28</sup> Kingsley Widmer, *The Art of Perversity: D.H. Lawrence's Shorter Fictions* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1962), p. 103

<sup>29</sup> Daleski, *The Forked Flame: A Study of D.H. Lawrence*, p. 102

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