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'Lawrence was clearly fascinated by the forces that shape a life: by fate and chance, by events which occur before we are born, and by the things we see, feel and respond to as we grow up.' Discuss with reference to two or more texts on the module.

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D. H. Lawrence was among the first English authors to write from direct experience of the British 'modern system of organized schooling for everyone', both as a working-class student educated through scholarships, and as a schoolteacher.[1] This essay focuses upon Lawrence's exploration of the ways in which the British educational system shapes individuals' lives in two of his novels, *The Rainbow* and *Women in Love*. As Joy and Ray Williams explain, Lawrence's opinions are never fixed, and:

> his arguments about education are inseparable from his arguments about life and society. Education, for him, is not a separate or specialised subject. It is a set of active decisions about how we shall live.[2]

Lawrence's engagement with education is always tied to social structures and ideologies. Of particular interest here is how attaining knowledge, and working as a student or teacher within the educational system, affects the individual and their engagement with the world.

Examining *The Rainbow* and *Women in Love* together provides an extended examination of the short-term and long-term consequences of increasing education across different generations. Although *Women in Love* portrays the Brangwen family's lives six years after *The Rainbow* ended, the novels differ greatly in tone, structure and in their engagement with the educational system. Lawrence's shift in his approach towards his imagined audience and role as a writer helps to explain these differences. Whilst he wrote *The Rainbow* with the hope of encouraging change in his readers, by 1916, when he began *Women in Love*, it was as 'a writer who had lost his audience and felt totally alienated from his society', following the prosecution of *The Rainbow* and during 'the most terrible year of the most terrible war mankind had ever seen'.[3] These profound changes would have undoubtedly influenced both novels. This essay shares Michael Bell's positioning of *The Rainbow* as Lawrence's 'major *Bildungsroman*', a fictional 'self-conscious project of rounded humanistic education' which 'reflect[s] on the process of formation', and of *Women in Love* as Lawrence's 'significant questioning of *Bildung'*, where the formative processes explored in *The Rainbow* are challenged.[4] *The Rainbow* explores three generations' formative years, most closely charting the protagonist Ursula Brangwen's development. By comparison, *Women in Love* investigates Ursula and Gudrun Brangwen's adulthood world, questioning the role of knowledge and institutional education in creating destructive individuals. Although each novel presents a multifaceted view of the world, there is an overall transition in *The Rainbow* from an idealistic conceptualisation of education as a gateway to self-improvement, to an increasing disillusionment with the flawed practice of the educational system and the types of knowledge it promotes. By *Women in Love*, the challenge to the educational system intensifies. Here, it is positioned as an obstacle to fulfilment, whilst knowledge is critiqued as a flawed ideal with significant consequences for the individual.

The question of the nature and role of education is postulated from the opening chapter of *The Rainbow*, 'How Tom Brangwen Married a Polish Lady' (itself a causative title that indicates Lawrence's interest in the influences upon an individual's life). The introductory structure initiates a transition from physical understanding and harmony with nature, to a quest for knowledge within a human-orientated world. Mark Kinkead-Weekes reads *The Rainbow* as 'fusing archetypal with historical vision' because its characters simultaneously represent humanity, yet are clearly situated within specific sociohistorical

[1] Joy Williams and Ray Williams, eds. *D. H. Lawrence on Education* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1973), p. 7.
[2] Williams and Williams, p.7.
[3] Mark Kinkead-Weekes, 'Violence in Women in Love', in *D. H. Lawrence's 'Women in Love': A Casebook*, ed. by David Ellis (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), p.222.
[4] Michael Bell, *Open Secrets: Literature, Education, and Authority from J-J. Rousseau to J. M. Coetzee* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), pp.179, 5, 179.

contexts, which change for each generation.[5] This essay applies his approach to examine the symbolic and socioeconomic significance of the initial Mrs Brangwen's decision to educate her children, a choice which has lasting ramifications across the two novels and reflects society's move towards mass education.

Symbolically, the opening chapter aligns the knowledge attained through education with eating the forbidden fruit from the Tree of Knowledge. As Terry Wright notes, *The Rainbow* engages with the Bible in its 'symbolism…plot and structure', opening by 'reproduc[ing] a number of features from the Book of Genesis, including an interest in genealogy'.[6] Eve's temptation to eat fruit from the Tree of Knowledge whilst in the Garden of Eden is due to the desire to have her 'eyes…opened, and…be as gods, knowing good and evil'.[7] Similarly, here, the archetypal 'woman' seeks 'education, this higher form of being…[for]…her children, so that they too could live the supreme life on earth…[and]…learn the entry into the finer, more vivid circle of life'.[8] Aligning education with a gateway is highly apt, for to 'discover what [is] beyond' requires turning away from 'the teeming life of creation' found on the Brangwen farm, where the men know 'the intercourse between heaven and earth' (*R*, 11, 10). Implicit in *The Rainbow's* rewriting of Genesis is both the desire to become a 'higher' being, to enhance one's life, and a repetition of humanity's turning away from an existence in harmony with nature, positioning the succeeding generations as living with the consequences of humanity's fall.

What is also evident here is a concern with the socioeconomic benefits of education, as the initial Mrs Brangwen wishes her family to gain the superior social status that she detects in the educated village vicar, which she believes is 'not [due to] money, nor class' but 'education and experience' (*R*, 12). Furthermore, she associates 'the freedom to move' and to experience places beyond one's locality with making 'a man's life a different thing, finer, bigger' (*R*, 12-13). Education is conceptualised as a way to enlarge one's life through expanding one's mind, as well as being socioeconomically fruitful by providing one with the social mobility to break the constraints of class and wealth. A sociohistorical reading of both novels does suggest a clear correlation between educational attainment and mobility. This is perhaps most obvious when comparing different generations of female Brangwens. Whilst the initial, uneducated Mrs Brangwen is confined to their farm and village, Ursula and Gudrun, the eldest daughters in the most modern generation, have the highest educational attainments, studying at the new University College of Nottingham and a London art school respectively, and travel not only across England but across Europe. Both are sufficiently qualified to teach, thus have financial independence, and can move beyond the domestic sphere. Their education also provides access to socially superior, intellectual circles such as that of the upper-class Hermione Roddice in *Women in Love*. Whilst the women's lives, outlooks and choices are not fully determined by their access to higher education, it is evident that it is influential in broadening both their social and geographical horizons.

However, the experience of education can have potentially devastating consequences for the individual, both in the short-term and long-term. Much of this is examined in Lawrence's essay, 'Education of the People', which rewrites a collection of unpublished articles written whilst revising *Women in Love,* shortly after the 1918 Fisher Education Act 'extend[ed] the education of non-academic children'.[9] As Bell observes, although the essay is 'hyperbolic', there is an 'underlying seriousness…arguing for an education for wholeness' instead of only prioritising knowledge.[10] Rodger Poole adds that the 'problem Lawrence faced in the education of children was the one he had already faced in society at large: the fate of the individual in the mass society'.[11] Both novels extensively explore Lawrence's concerns. In *The Rainbow*, Tom Brangwen experiences 'enlightenment …through feeling' but for 'mental things…was a fool' (*R*, 17), making him ill-suited to a school system orientated around the ideal of intellect. Consequently, he 'violent[ly] struggle[s]' to study, 'making himself pale and ghastly in his effort to…take in what he had to learn' (*R*, 17). Already, a lack of autonomy is evident within education; Tom learns what 'he had to' according to the system. Tom's 'struggle' to succeed requires

[5] Mark Kinkead-Weekes, 'The Sense of History in *The Rainbow'*, in *D. H. Lawrence in the Modern World*, ed. Peter Preston and Peter Hoare (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1989), p.136.
[6] Terry Wright, *D. H. Lawrence and the Bible* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp.84, 96.
[7] *The Holy Bible, containing the Old and New Testaments, King James Version*. (London: Collins, 1936), Genesis 3:4.
[8] D. H. Lawrence, *The Rainbow*, ed. by Mark Kinkead-Weekes (London: Penguin, 2007), p.12. Page numbers of subsequent references will be to this edition, and will be given in parentheses in my text thus: (*R*, p. x.).
[9] Bell, p.169.
[10] Bell, p.169.
[11] Roger H. Poole, *Lawrence and Education* (Nottingham: University of Nottingham Institute of Education, 1968), p.4.

fighting his nature, which physically weakens him. The manifestation echoes the paleness of illness or ghostliness, both frequently associated with being 'pale' imitations of an individual. School affects Tom deeply, even if he does not consciously realise the extent; he is 'aware of failure all the while, of incapacity' and although 'too healthy…to be wretched', 'his soul was wretched almost to hopelessness' (*R*, 18-19). Lawrence's argument in 'Education of the People', that educators 'talk about individuality, and try to drag up every weed into a rose bush', is highly applicable to Tom's experience of education.[12] No matter how hard he tries, he cannot be the 'rose bush' required by the system, and he is 'glad to get back to the farm, where he was in his own again' (*R*, 19). Tom exemplifies the inability of the educational system to account for individual differences, and his experience critiques the system's narrow focus upon intellectual thinking above physical or emotional expression.

Conversely, in the third generation, Ursula embraces education, regarding it as an 'escape' from 'the narrow boundary of Cossethay, where only limited people lived' to instead 'walk amongst free souls' (*R*, 245-6). Whilst Tom seeks solace in the farm and 'hated books…worse than…any person', Ursula 'locked herself in to read', to protect and distance herself from the external pressure of the many 'children [who] hung on to her' (*R*, 17, 247). Again, whilst the male, Tom, looks towards creation, the female, Ursula, searches for knowledge. As befits a *Bildungsroman,* the novel is structured around Ursula's development, for which all of her educational phases are vital, from the village school to the High School, to teaching and University. Although a fluctuating influence, education is integral to Ursula's formation, and when she initially teaches it even overwhelms her identity, as she feels she 'was no longer Ursula Brangwen, daughter of William Brangwen. She was…Standard Five Teacher, and nothing else' (*R*, 362-3). As Ursula's intellect and experience of education increases, so does her dissatisfaction with the system, until she realises the reality of her 'illusion': that the 'professors were not priests initiated into the deep mysteries of life and knowledge' and instead, 'College was barren, cheap, a temple converted to the most vulgar, petty commerce' (*R*, 402-4). Indeed, 'the whole thing seemed a sham, spurious: spurious Gothic arches' (*R*, 403). As a product of its commercialised society, education too is commercial and the conceptualisation of education as the sacred gateway to a higher form of being is a lie; the very 'arches' of this gateway are false. The initial Mrs Brangwen's vision for her children is certainly not the reality that they are presented with, as the system is corrupt, commercial and false. Key to Ursula's development is the rejection of, and failure of, her final examinations; although she continues to teach, education is no longer a fundamental influence, and in *Women in Love*, she rejects the educational system altogether in search of personal fulfilment.

As the educational institution is fundamentally tied to the society that it is a product of, it reflects and perpetuates many of society's traits, including commercialisation, mechanisation and destructiveness. As Lawrence explains, 'the machine' is human-made, as 'the system…is…the outcome of the human psyche', therefore, education plays an important role in shaping a 'human psyche' that continues 'the machine'.[13] The ramifications of institutional mechanisation for the individual are perhaps most obvious at Brinsley Street School, where Ursula first experiences teaching in a poorer district. The system requires teachers to 'become an instrument…working upon a certain material, the class, to achieve a set purpose of making them know so much each day' (*R*, 356). The pressure of meeting regulations, controlling a class and preparing the students for examinations crushes individual spontaneity and necessitates mechanical efficiency. Furthermore, reflecting severe overcrowding in many schools, the 'inhuman number of children' drives the homogenisation and dehumanisation of students as 'a collective inhuman thing' (*R*, 350). Consequently, both teachers and students become mechanised; Mr Blunt is likened to 'a mechanism working on and on and on', syntactically replicating the repetitive mechanicalness of his teaching (*R*, 356). Equally, students 'mechanically' move and 'mechanically' read; they are already initiated into a society which is 'caught up' in 'serving the machine' (*R*, 378, 371, 325). Even schoolchildren's singing, usually expressive and spontaneous, has become 'mechanical' by Lawrence's later novel, *Lady Chatterley's Lover*.[14] Echoing Thomas Gradgrind's school in Charles Dickens' novel *Hard Times*, where children are viewed as 'little vessels…ready to have imperial galleons of facts poured into them until they were full to the brim', Lawrence's school also provides 'grim mechanical substitute[s]' for 'young imaginations'.[15] Philip Collins' discussion of Dickens' school is equally applicable here; both schools 'den[y]…[students]…any childhood, zealously suppressing their imagination and individuality'.[16]

[12] D. H. Lawrence, 'Education of the People', in *Reflections on the Death of a Porcupine and Other Essays*, ed. by Michael Herbert (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), p.96.
[13] Lawrence, 'Education', p.90.
[14] D. H. Lawrence, *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, ed. by Michael Squires (London: Penguin, 2006), p.152.
[15] Charles Dickens, *Hard Times* (England: Penguin, 1969), p.48.
[16] Philip Collins, *Dickens and Education* (London: Macmillan, 1965), p.144.

Experiences of the educational system, then, can be highly destructive. In addition to mechanisation, homogenisation and dehumanisation, violence is reproduced and reinforced within the institution. This can have lasting effects for the individual, for instance, Tom is 'bullied' into hitting his Latin master's head with a slate, an action that haunts him into adulthood (*R*, 18). Gerald's experience is also of 'education through subjection and torment', which has likely reinforced and perpetuated his own destructiveness and oppressive rule of his colliers.[17] Directly juxtaposing visions of freedom in *The Rainbow*'s opening, the school system is frequently aligned with a 'prison', as it oppresses individuals and controls their behaviour (*R*, 343, 346-7, 378). Attending school is likened to 'death' by Gerald, and indeed education frequently involves the demise of individuals' old selves, literally evoked by Tom Brangwen's 'pale and ghastly' ghostlike response to being a student (*WL*, 221; *R*, 17). The oppressive and mechanical teaching environment changes Ursula, as despite hopes of forming personal relationships with the children and making them '*so* happy', she must 'brutalise herself' and beat pupils to impose her authority (*R*, 341, 377). Success comes 'at a cost'; her 'soul of a young girl' is replaced with 'a hard, insentient thing, that worked mechanically according to the system imposed' (*R*, 372, 367).

Knowledge itself can also be destructive, with long-lasting consequences for the individual. As Adam and Eve learn shame and lose their natural affinity with nature and their place in the Garden of Eden after eating the forbidden fruit, here, increased knowledge changes individuals' selves, relationships with others and engagement with the world. Knowledge can bring socioeconomic 'freedom', but at least for Ursula, also a 'more profoun[d] aware[ness] of the big want' (*R*, 377). Attaining knowledge involves loss; the spirituality of Latin prayer diminishes for Anna Brangwen upon learning its translation, whilst Ursula's professor, Dr Frankstone, cannot see any 'special mystery to life' at all, reducing it simply to what is known, 'physical and chemical activities', rather than feeling any wonder at 'the undiscovered and the undiscoverable' (*R*, 408, 153). Especially in *Women in Love*, knowledge is regarded as 'dead understanding', and frequently associated with 'death' and 'powerful, consuming, destructive[ness]' (*WL*, 297, 41, 90). In contrast, non-intellectual understanding and experience, such as sensuality and physicality, are connected with life, 'rich peace, satisfaction' and 'wholeness' of being (*WL*, 314, 345). If, as Lawrence has suggested, the 'highest quality is living understanding – not intellectual understanding', then the educational institution's instilment of knowledge can prevent achieving 'living understanding'.[18] This limits individuals' achievement of what is 'variously described [by Lawrence] as wholeness, singleness, and spontaneity' of the self, which, as Bell explains, is having 'a pure living purpose not dependent on other orders of value or belief'.[19] Although Birkin's voice does not go unchallenged in *Women in Love*, he strikingly compares humanity's thirst for knowledge to the forbidden fruit from the Tree of Knowledge. He argues that humanity is a 'dry-rotten…dead tree' 'of lies', whilst people are like 'apples of Sodom…[with rosy exteriors but]…insides…full of bitter, corrupt ash' (*WL*, 126). Humanity's obsession with knowledge has corrupted it and rotted all naturalness until, underneath healthy exteriors, all that was originally human is dead.

Hermione Roddice personifies an individual unable to grasp that 'you [can] have knowledge not in your head' but in 'the blood', which causes 'a deficiency of being within her', as she must 'make…[everything]…mental' (*WL*, 43, 16, 42). Interestingly, Hermione, who is herself associated with running a 'dead show', asks Rupert Birkin whether 'the children are better, richer, happier, for all this knowledge' or whether 'the mind…destroy[s] all our spontaneity, all our instincts? Are not the young people growing up today, really dead before they have a chance to live?' (*WL*, 306, 40-1). Throughout the novels, education has indeed been shown to have the potential to destroy students' individuality and spontaneity before they reach adulthood, with its violent instilment of obedience, failure to account for individual differences, and mechanised insistence on attaining knowledge above any other forms of non-intellectual understanding. Hermione, by epitomising all of the destructive hollowness of an individual obsessed with knowledge, adds a deeper layer to this argument. She herself believes that 'it is the greatest thing in life – *to know*' (*WL*, 86). Therefore, by arguing a point she does not believe, and has instead reproduced from another source (which is likely Birkin), she exemplifies a loss of meaningful engagement with the world.

This lack of 'living understanding' drives self-destruction and destructive relationships with others.[20] Educated people are often 'unsatisfied' with society and struggle to find their place; this is

[17] D. H. Lawrence, *Women in Love*, eds. by David Farmer, Lindeth Vasey and John Worthen (London: Penguin, 2007), p.205. Page numbers of subsequent references will be to this edition, and will be given in parentheses in my text thus: (*WL*, p. x.).
[18] Lawrence, 'Education', p.108.
[19] Bell, pp.168, 178.
[20] Lawrence, 'Education', p.108.

evident for Winifred Inger's intellectual friends in *The Rainbow*, who are 'inwardly raging and mad' (*R*, 318). By *Women in Love* this inward rage has intensified for intellectual, dissatisfied individuals, including Birkin, whose alienation is such that he longs for humanity's destruction. Kinkead-Weekes has highlighted that across the Brangwen generations in *The Rainbow*, conflict within relationships turns 'from creation to destruction'.[21] Tom Brangwen's experience of 'life and death and creation' with his wife sharply contrasts to Ursula's failed relationship with Anton, who feels the 'death of himself' when with her (*R*, 97, 428). Incorporating relationships from *Women in Love* makes this shift even more apparent, as this destruction physically manifests itself. Hermione tries to smash Birkin's skull, and Gerald attempts to strangle Gudrun before dying himself in the mountains. As Kinkead-Weekes has highlighted for Hermione's attempted murder of Birkin, her '[m]urderous impulse has sprung from hollowness, lack of centre', which is due, at least in part, to her obsession with knowledge.[22] This 'deficiency of being', then, leaves a 'terrible void' in individuals, which helps drive the destructive violence inherent within their society (*WL*, 16).

The ultimate and only solution offered, other than destroying humanity, is to escape the spiralling destruction by leaving society and its educators, in an attempt to establish a new Eden. Both Ursula and Birkin decide that '"[t]here's nothing for it but to get out, quick"', and so leave their roles within education to find fulfilment and wholeness (*WL,* 315). In a stunningly cyclical move, Ursula 'dreamed of a valley, and wild gardens, and peace' in a rejection of 'the world of cities and governments and the active scope of man', which had seemed 'like a magic land' to the initial Mrs Brangwen (*WL*, 315; *R*, 11). Instead, Ursula looks back, towards a rural existence with 'heaven and earth…teeming around them', which Mrs Brangwen attempted to free her children from (R, 9).

Imagining education as a gateway has been consistently apt throughout *The Rainbow* and *Women in Love*; it can expand the mind and socioeconomic horizons, but to cross the threshold simultaneously involves loss. Equally, education does not always free characters. In fact, it frequently constrains them, either within a mechanised system that demands obedience, or by obscuring other forms of understanding that are not intellectual, which prevents individuals from attaining wholeness or fulfilment.

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[21] Kinkead-Weekes, 'History', p.132.

[22] Kinkead-Weekes, 'Violence', p.225.