

As If: The Construction of a Practical Fiction in D. H. Lawrence's *The Rainbow*.

By Jordan Sanderson

“There was a look in the eyes of the Brangwens as if they were expecting something unknown,” writes D. H. Lawrence in the second paragraph of Chapter One, “How Tom Brangwen Married a Polish Lady” (*Rainbow* 9). Not only does the line offer an impression of the Brangwens, it also introduces a stylistic device, the use of “as if,” that pervades the novel and clarifies Lawrence’s relationship with the “modern world,” highlighting his role in constructing a practical fiction as theorized by Hans Vaihinger. Lawrence, like the Brangwens, lived in a rapidly changing England: suburbs threatened the countryside¹, technological progress destabilized the dogmas of the land², gender roles quaked, and materiality took precedence over the inner life of the individual, all of which forced people to address the kinds of ontological questions Lawrence seeks to answer in *The Rainbow*. Through the use of “as if,” Lawrence writes a practical, modern fiction that resurrects the “unknown” in humanity and gestures towards a balance of Law and Love.

Hans Vaihinger’s *The Philosophy of ‘As If’* rests on the premise that we can never know reality; rather, we construct fictions that point toward reality and function as guides. He writes, “the object of the world of ideas as a whole is not the portrayal of reality – this would be an utterly impossible task – but rather to provide us with an *instrument for finding our way about more easily in this world*” (15). Thus, all ideas are fictitious. Vaihinger argues that “ideational shifts” occur in which fictions progress first to the level of hypothesis, then to the level of dogma; the process, then reverses itself, and the idea arrives back at the level of fiction(). It takes a supreme mind, Vaihinger claims, to avoid positing one’s fiction as a hypothesis or elevating it to the level of dogma.

¹ In *The Composition of The Rainbow and Women in Love: A History*, Charles Ross observes Lawrence revising the novel to emphasize “the hellishness of modern industry and the complete disappearance of the compromise between rural England and the collieries that he had described in (earlier texts)” (79). He claims Lawrence employs a technique in which he repeats “a sort of checklist of evocative adjectives, like ‘amorphous,’ ‘chaotic,’ ‘rigid,’ and ‘mathematical’” (79) to render the modern, industrial world.

² Georg Lukacs’ *Theory of the Novel* addresses this problem in aesthetic terms.

Lawrence writes *The Rainbow* from the rifts in an ideational shift in which conventional religious dogmas ceased to encompass human consciousness, finally arriving at their original status as fictions. The dissolving of the supremacy of traditional religious fictions created the need for new fictions. George Lukacs charts how this ideational shift destroyed the epic and identifies the novel as the appropriate form for modern human consciousness. In *The Rainbow*, Lawrence does not merely portray the exposed consciousness of modernity, but creates a new fiction to help human beings navigate the world.

Vaihinger sketches the use of “as if” as follows: “This formula...states that reality as given, the particular, is compared with something whose impossibility and unreality is at the same time admitted” (93). Later he simplifies the device, claiming that “as” sets up an equation between two things, and “if” “affirms that the condition is an unreal or impossible one” (258). Vaihinger locates the value of using “as if” in the fact that it allows human beings to act; it allows people to act “as if” a certain fiction were true.

Lawrence’s primary objective is to construct a state of being in which Law and Love not only exist on equal planes but are also ultimately synthesized. Lawrence asserts in *The Study of Thomas Hardy*, “It seems as if the history of humanity were divided into two Epochs: The Epoch of Law and the Epoch of Love,” concluding that “what remains is to reconcile the two”³ (123). Already Lawrence uses “as if” to introduce the terms of his theory, marking it as a fiction of the history of humanity. However, creating a fiction that synthesizes Law and Love directs humanity towards an organic state. The use of “as if” carries over into *The Rainbow*, establishing new grounds on which people can act.

When Tom Brangwen saw Lydia Lensky for the first time, he “felt as if he were walking again in a far world, not Cossethay, a far world, the fragile reality” (29). On one level, a Brangwen’s quest for reality begins; on another level, Law begins its pursuit of Love. As action happens in the physical world, metaphysical elements react; as the drama of the novel unfolds, so do Lawrence’s metaphysics. Lawrence places Cossethay and “reality” on the same plane, but leaves a “far” distance between them. Tom can come to understand his world in terms of this reality, but the inhabitation of that world remains impossible. The fiction, however, propels Tom along through the world, and the Epoch of Love continues towards the Epoch of Law.

³ It should be noted that Lawrence identifies Law as a feminine principle and Love as a masculine principle.

After Tom finally met Lydia, “a daze had come over his mind” (38). Lawrence describes the feeling: “It was as if a strong light were burning there, and he was blind within it, unable to know anything, except that this transfiguration burned between him and her, connecting them, like a secret power” (38). He compares the feeling to a strong light, which allows him to name the “connection” between Tom and Lydia a “transfiguration,” one of the central tropes of *The Rainbow*. If a “strong light” were burning inside Tom’s head, then transfiguration would be possible, and he *acts* as if it is true. Lawrence enters the realm of the impossible when he uses “as if,” yet this impossibility transfigures humanity on a metaphysical level.

Lawrence also acknowledges Tom’s usual world as a fiction in the days before the wedding. Tom “lived in suspense, as if only half his faculties worked, until the wedding” (55). Without Lydia, Tom lives “as if”; he also lives “as if” when he is with her. Tom Brangwen, therefore, lives between two fictions, one in which he feels incomplete and one in which he feels complete. Lawrence’s emphasis on feeling instead of action highlights the fact that the novel tracks the characters’ “being,” not what they do in the world but how they are in the world. Michael Bell claims that the language of *The Rainbow* has “an ontological subtlety” (51) that “always highlights the ‘subjective’ ontology of feeling that underlies ‘external’ description (55).

Tom and Lydia’s marriage initially problematizes the synthesis between themselves and between Law and Love. In an argument, Lydia declares to Tom, “You come to me as if it were for nothing, as if I was nothing there,” to which he replies, “You make me feel as if *I* was nothing” (89). Instead of becoming whole, both Tom and Lydia are desolated by the physical proximity of each other. The masculine and feminine principles seem to emerge only when the male and female approach each other. Love comes to depend on the presence of Law, and vice versa, for existence. Instead of Love retaining the effects of Law when the male leaves, it recedes, making Tom feel as if he “was nothing”; neither does Law retain the effects of Love in the absence of the male. The principles cannibalize each other in the same way that Tom and Lydia cannibalize each other in the early days of their marriage. Of course, Tom and Lydia feel “as if” this is the case. “Nothingness” is a state of being, a phase in the process of becoming. The desolation is necessary for synthesis; the two fictions, Love and Law, attract each other too strongly initially. No balance exists between the two, so they collide and disintegrate. From these fragments, Lawrence starts building his new fiction.

Anna embodies the next phase of Lawrence’s construction of the modern fiction, and the
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usage of “as if” increases in the context of her character. Though she was raised a Roman Catholic, “the English dogma never reached” Anna (97). Lawrence writes, “It was as if she worshipped God as a Mystery, never seeking in the least to define what He was” (97). Anna seeks to “experience” God without defining Him, but she cannot attain that reality. The avoidance of the conventional fiction (English dogma) leads to the construction of another fiction in which God is a Mystery. Though Anna does not seek to define God, she still labels him a “Mystery.” The speech act, as far as speech and ideas are related, produces fiction. The fiction of God as Mystery emerges as Lawrence writes it.

The narrator later claims that Anna “hated to hear things expressed, put into words” (99). The act of expression interrupts the experience of sensations, of reality, and fictionalizes them. “Whilst the religious feelings were inside (Anna), they were passionately moving. In the mouth of the clergymen, they were false, indecent,” Lawrence observes (99). Things, however, must be expressed. Otherwise, human beings exist in a chaos of subjectivity and become completely inert. Lawrence’s metaphysics demand a simultaneity of movement and stillness; thus, Anna must put things into words. Inert beings cannot synthesize; language produces the necessary movement to accomplish synthesis, but it simultaneously produces a fiction. Anna Brangwen needs the fiction to complete herself.

Charles L. Ross identifies “scenic echoing” as “the great and pervasive technical innovation of (*The Rainbow*)” (82). Lawrence echoes the scene in which Tom and Lydia first meet in the context of Anna and Will, using “as if” to further develop the ontological fiction. After Will left Anna at her parents’ house, his heart felt “fierce as if he felt something balking at him,” and he “wanted to smash through something” (108). One will remember that Tom felt “dazed,” “as if a strong light were burning” in his head (38). The violence of Will’s fiction resembles Tom’s, but the violent force “balks” at him from outside, whereas Tom felt the light inside of himself. Several critics claim that *The Rainbow* is about “breaking through” to a kind of “ontological core.”⁴ Though both Tom and Will experience the urge to reach the ontological core, the “Law” part of human nature, neither of them succeed in reaching it. The desire to “break through” emanates from the principle of “Love,” which seeks its completion in “Law.”

In the chapter “Anna Victrix,” it seems that Will and Anna finally succeed in casting

⁴ See Stewart Garrett’s “Lawrence, ‘Being,’ and the Allotropic Style” and Michael Bell’s study, *D. H. Lawrence: Language and Being*.

away the “rind” of the world and marrying Love and Law. Lawrence, however, sets up the scene with “as if”: “The next day, he was with her, as remote from the world as if the two of them were buried like a seed in darkness” (135). After introducing the fiction of the buried seed, Lawrence dramatizes Anna’s and Will’s states of being, tracking the internal transformations that result from acting as if the fiction were true. Will is “shed naked and glistening on to a soft fecund earth, leaving behind him the hard rind of worldly knowledge and experience” (135). Lawrence, then, attempts to unify motion and stillness: “Inside, in the softness and stillness of the room, was the naked kernel, that palpitated in silent activity, absorbed in reality” (135). In the Room of Law, the “kernel” of Love “palpitates,” reconciling the paradox of motion and stillness. Anna and Will, then, perceive themselves in “a core of living eternity,” a life not subject to the laws of time. To illustrate this state of being, Lawrence uses wheel imagery, placing Anna and Will at the “centre” and the rest of the world “at the rim” (135).

Lawrence, though, reminds his readers that this scene is a part of the fiction; he writes,

it was as if they were at the very centre of all the slow wheeling of space and the rapid agitation of life, deep, deep inside them all, at the centre where there is utter radiance, and eternal being, and the silence absorbed in praise: the steady core of all movements, the unawakened sleep of all wakefulness. (135)

Anna and Will, ultimately, return from this state and count “the strokes of the bell” outside of their room. Lawrence still clearly demarcates the external world and the internal state of being, but allows the “inner reality” to “temper” Will and Anna, leaving them “unalterably glad,” at least for the moment (135). The importance of the scene lies in the development of the fiction of being that started with Tom and Lydia. Anna and Will’s intercourse echoes that of Tom and Lydia, but Lawrence describes their internal states much more extravagantly and desperately than he does the joining of Tom and Lydia. Lawrence intensifies the echoing scene. This acceleration into the stillness of being begins to solidify the fiction and establish its practical value: thinking of intercourse in the terms that Lawrence uses, the language of being, allows Anna and Will to enter external reality “unalterably glad.” Thus, the effects of the fiction emerge more clearly in the new generation of Brangwens, and it draws the “something unknown” that they expect in the first chapter closer to them. The experience of inner realities increases, but the consummation of internal and external realities does not occur.

Anna and Will come to depend on each other in much the same way that Tom and Lydia depend on each other and fear each other’s absence. Lawrence writes, “If he should leave her?

That would destroy her” (155), and claims that Anna “knew she was immutable, unchangeable, she was not afraid of her own being. She was only afraid of all that was not herself” (155). Anna embodies the principle of Law, the principle of the inert. Her relationship with Will (who embodies the principle of Love, of movement), however, makes her instable, and she frets “over the lack of instability” (156). Lawrence dramatizes the interaction of Law and Love, of internal and external, of female and male, but does not yet locate them in the same being. Anna, and by extension Law, depends on Will (Love) for her wholeness. At times, Will lends her motion and she feels complete, and she lends him stillness, which temporarily completes him; however when they withdraw from each other, they fail to maintain this sense of wholeness. Ultimately, Anna and Will live either in temporality or eternity, but they do not achieve the synthesis of the temporal and the eternal, which function as distinct fictions. Lawrence strives to synthesize the two fictions.

After Ursula’s birth, Will feels “attended by a sense of something more, something further, which gave him absolute being. It was as if now he existed in Eternity, let Time be what it might” (179). Here, Will follows the pathway of Anna into the eternal, but loses his sense of Time. Synthesis of the two fictions in one being, again, fails. Vaihinger argues that the eternal or infinite “owes its origin entirely to the imaginative faculty and possesses no objective value whatsoever” (62). Will’s entry into the internal fiction severs his relationship with the fiction of the external. Regarding the fictitious nature of time, Vaihinger writes,

The strongest proof of the subjectivity of time and space lies in their being infinite, and the ordinary concepts of space and time are thus unmasked as fictional, as mere auxiliary ideas, helpful pictures, developed by the logical function to bring order into reality and to understand it. (62)

Ultimately, the two fictions must be realized together. Will and Anna, however, cannot achieve this synthesis. To achieve his desired synthesis, Lawrence must allow a single character to understand the fiction of infinity and the fiction of time simultaneously and independently of anyone else.

The character in whom Lawrence tries to achieve the simultaneity of internal and external, Law and Love, is Ursula. Her birth marks the next phase of the fiction of being, and *The Rainbow* shifts its focus to her for the last half of the book. Spatially, Lawrence devotes roughly one quarter of the novel to Tom and Lydia and another quarter to Anna and Will, leaving the rest of the novel to attempt the realization of his fiction of being in a single character, a

member of the new generation of Brangwens. Lawrence writes in the chapter “The Widening Circle” that the child Ursula

lived a dual life, one where the facts of daily life encompassed everything, being legion, and the other wherein the facts of daily life were superseded by eternal truth. So utterly did she desire the Sons of God should come to the daughters of men; and she believed more in her desire and its fulfillment than in the obvious facts of life. (257)

Ursula, here, is “confused, but not denied” (257). Nor is Lawrence denied in his quest for the fulfillment of his fiction of synthesis in Ursula.

It is no coincidence that the use of “as if” becomes most prolific in connection with Ursula. Lawrence shifts the proximity of Law and Love by placing Ursula, female and so the natural embodiment of the feminine principle, “with her father” (256), who embodies the principle of Love. Like him, she admires the mystery of the architecture of the church, hearing the voice of “the visionary world” there. She feels “as if the church itself were a shell that still spoke the language of creation” (256). The church, referred to in the Bible as the bride of Christ, symbolizes the feminine principle, which the creative voice, symbolizing the male principle, penetrates. Thus, Ursula acts as if synthesis already exists in the world of the church, yet she relegates that world to a separate realm from the “facts of daily life,” which creates the dual world in which she lives. The rest of the novel concerns itself with reconciling the duality in Ursula and goes to great stylistic lengths to achieve this synthesis.

The Chapter “First Love” contains more instances of the use of “as if” than any other chapter in *The Rainbow*. In the opening paragraphs of the chapter, the world of the church becomes for Ursula a “myth, an illusion, which, however much one might assert it to be true in historical fact, one knew was not true—At least, for this present-day life of ours” (263). Ursula concludes, “The Sunday world was not real, or at least, not actual. And one lived by action” (263). By separating the duality and emphasizing the value of action, Lawrence establishes the framework in which his new fiction must exist. Vaihinger argues,

Aesthetic fictions serve the purpose of awakening within us certain uplifting or otherwise important feelings. Like the scientific, they are not an end in themselves but a means for the attainment of higher ends...Just as the introduction of scientific fictions gave rise to a violent controversy, both in general and as regards particular concepts, so in the case of the aesthetic fiction...there has been a bitter conflict. (82-83)

Vaihinger further argues that the value of an aesthetic fiction lies in its “practical value” (83).

Therefore to make his fiction of being valuable in the modern world in which Ursula lives, Lawrence must make the “Sunday world” practical. His treatment of it as a fiction allows him to

treat the “week-day world” as a separate fiction. Lawrence’s ultimate goal is not to reify an old religious fiction in a factual, technological reality, but to construct a new fiction in which the spiritual and the physical co-exist, enabling human being to act “as if,” which guides them toward reality proper.

Lawrence begins this phase of the new fiction in his usual manner, by sparking a romantic relationship. The scene in which Ursula meets Skrebensky echoes the previous scenes during which Tom and Lydia met and Anna and Will met. Lawrence writes, “It was as if she were set on a hill and could feel, vaguely, the whole world lying spread before her” (269). She awakens to something outside of herself as Will did when he met Anna. However, the violence that both Will and Tom experienced does not manifest itself in Ursula. The other world lies “spread before her”; it neither blinds her nor balks at her. This world invites entry.

Another difference between Ursula and Skrebensky’s courtship and the others’ lies in the effect he has on her. Some unknown force draws Tom and Lydia and Anna and Will together, a desire that no degree of nearness can sate; in fact, the closer they get to each other, the closer they want to be. Lawrence writes of Ursula, “It excited her to feel the press of him upon her, as if his being were urging her to something” (275). Prior to this exciting repulsion, Lawrence shows Ursula in a world in which “Everything seemed wonderful, if dreadful, to her, the world tumbling into ruins, and she and he clambering unhurt, lawless over the face of it” (275). Ursula remains unharmed, fully intact, unlike the earlier Brangwens who seem threatened by annihilation as their relationships develop. The world, here, tumbles into ruins, the kind of destruction in which begins possibilities. Lawrence’s use of “lawless” highlights the metaphysical implications of the scene. The feminine principle is absent in spite of Ursula’s presence, and no inertia anchors the couple. Ursula and Skrebensky reach a state of pure motion, but like magnets approaching each other with the same charge, he repels her. Only the masculine principle acts in the scene, and similar poles do not attract. In Ursula’s fiction, Skrebensky repels her both into herself and into the world.

After Skrebensky and Ursula make out for the first time, she feels “as if she were supported off her feet, as if her feet were light as little breezes in motion” (278), and goes to bed “feeling all warm with electric warmth, as if the gush of dawn were within her, upholding her” (278). Ursula continues to embody the masculine principle of Love (motion), but she begins to merge with the natural world. Generally, people have feminized the natural world when

personifying it, and while Lawrence does not so much personify the world as he naturalizes Ursula, nature (breezes and dawn) function as the feminine principle. Lawrence's use of similes in which he compares Ursula to nature inserts the principle of Law in her, so she moves towards acting as an embodiment of both Law and Love, independent of Skrebensky. Lawrence also gestures towards joining the modern, technological world with the natural world when he progresses from "electric warmth" to "the gush of dawn." His fiction moves towards including the "week-day world" and the "Sunday world."

Later, Ursula feels "rich and augmented" by Skrebensky's presence, "as if she were the positive attraction and he the flow towards her" (280). Lawrence feminizes Skrebensky in this inversion, erecting Ursula as the positive (male) attraction that creates motion towards it. His literal gender "augments" Ursula, reinforcing her metaphysical position as the principle of Love. The two of them go outside and "play at kisses." The narrator asks, "And after all, what could either of them get from such a passion but a sense of his or her own maximum self, in contradistinction to all the rest of life?" (281). In the act of love, Ursula approaches her "maximum self," which is female, "infinitely desirable and infinitely strong" (281). So already embodying the masculine principle, Ursula approaches her femaleness.

The next day, she and Skrebensky take a walk and enter the church where Ursula attains the same kind of dominance over Skrebensky that her mother attains over Will in the chapter "Anna Victrix." The scene echoes the scene in which the pregnant Anna dances. Lawrence writes, "And radiant as an angel she went with him out of the church, as if her feet were beams of light that walked on flowers for footsteps" (282). Skrebensky's reaction to this angelic scene closely resembles Will's reaction to discovering Anna dancing nude, and he finds her radiance "bitter." The rapidity with which Ursula achieves dominance over Skrebensky demonstrates the manner in which Lawrence intensifies the echoing scenes, propelling the construction of a fiction of synthesis to further degrees each time.

Garrett Stewart calls Lawrence's language in *The Rainbow* a "process prose" (222), which works against the "crippling limitations on our ideas of unity and oneness" (225). Each time Lawrence establishes a boundary, he crosses it in an echoing scene. Neither Tom and Lydia nor Anna and Will retain the effects of the other in the absence of the other, though they come not to need each other constantly as their relationships develop. Ursula does not need Skrebensky almost from the moment they meet, and when he goes away, she does not see him go

because “a light, which was of him” fills her (284). She possesses the pieces of him she needs for completion without needing him. She has her “oneness” and her liberty, and Lawrence writes, “She was happiest running on by herself” (284). Upon Skrebensky’s return for a wedding, he feels confused, “as if he were losing himself and becoming all vague, undefined, inchoate” (286). Ursula’s presence imposes on him in such a way that it blurs his very identity. Although Anna may have been victorious, she never achieves the ontological stature that Ursula wields without much of an attempt.

When she and Skrebensky happen upon a barge, she boards it, and the man watches “her as if she were a strange being, as if she lit up his face” (292). This description functions to establish Ursula as the central character of the new fiction of being, “a strange being” who boards a stranger’s barge and inspires them to name their child after her. As she and Skrebensky leave, she feels that he has “created a deadness around her, a sterility, as if the world were ashes” (294). Skrebensky envies the man because he “communed” with Ursula with his body and soul, whereas his desire is completely physical. These feelings persist until they arrive home for supper.

The fire-lit night at the party after dinner makes Ursula feel she is “a new being” (294), the “quarry” and the “hound” (295). This self-pursuit leads Ursula to want to flee the “chaos of people” to “the hill and the moon” (296). She wants “consummation” with the moon (296). She experiences Skrebensky as “the dross” (296), but finally acquiesces and the two of them dance. Ursula, however, treats the dance as “a kind of waiting, of using up some of the time that intervened between her and her pure being” (297). Not only does Skrebensky not complete Ursula or urge her towards completion anymore, but he actually interferes with “her and her pure being.” Thereafter, she remains rather indifferent to Skrebensky; he goes off to war, and the turn of the century finds Ursula transitioning from dependence on her parents to pursuing a career as a school teacher, hoping to gain financial independence.

Lawrence uses “as if” only occasionally in “The Man’s World,” the chapter during which Ursula takes a job teaching and learns to acclimate herself to a world much different from the one in which she grew up. Lawrence writes, “She was nobody, there was no reality in herself, the reality was all outside of her, and she must apply herself to it” (347). Ursula, here, finds herself at the other extreme of being. Her inner being ceases to manifest itself, and external reality demands that she adapt herself to it. The most logical explanation for the near complete

absence of “as if” in “The Man’s World” is that the chapter approaches the world from its usual fiction in which the inner reality cannot exist in the modern world. Lawrence plunges readers back into the either/or of modernity. One must choose between two realities: a religious one or a secular one. The problem is that neither choice allows humanity to reach its apex of being. This is the world Marvin Mudrick envisions when he argues that Lawrence’s intent was to write a novel that “would encompass and illustrate in the lives of a family the great social and psychological changes of our century” (28). “The Man’s World,” however, is the only chapter that unfolds almost exclusively in the external world. The chapter functions as a tipping of the scales towards the material on the fulcrum of being.

On Ursula’s last day at the school, she feels “as if the walls of the school were going to melt away” (392), which marks the continuation of the quest to join inner and outer realities. Ursula joins her family in Scarborough after her first year of college. As she looks out over the sea, thinking, “There are so many dawns that have not yet risen” (401), she feels “as if, from over the edge of the sea, all the unrisen dawns were appealing to her, all her unborn soul was crying for the unrisen dawns” (401). Lawrence places Ursula on the brink of becoming in this scene. Already she has experienced all of the transformations her parents and grandparents experienced, worked for her own living, and entered the academy, a once completely male institution. In this scene, the natural world again beckons to Ursula, and she feels as if “all the unrisen dawns” have entered her. This state of being differs greatly from the previous state in which she felt the dawn inside of her. Her current state exceeds the earlier one in magnitude, she feels multiple dawns in this scene though they appeal to her from outside of herself, and in orientation. These dawns have never been before; they are “unrisen.” Ursula’s future lies buried in the dawns yet to come, and she pursues this future throughout the rest of the novel.

After her experience at Scarborough, Ursula reaches a crisis of being in which she experiences modernity in all of its gravity. Ursula sees “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” (404). The narrator comments that Ursula “seemed always negative in her action” (405), then, offers extended commentary on her nature and her relationship to the modern world, a passage worth quoting at length:

That which she was, positively, was dark and unrevealed, it could not come forth. It was like a seed buried in dry ash. This world in which she lived was like a circle

lighted by a lamp. This lighted area, lit up by man's complete consciousness, she thought was all the world: that here all was disclosed for ever. Yet all the time, within the darkness she had been aware of points of light, like the eyes of wild beasts, gleaming, penetrating, vanishing. And her soul had acknowledged in a great heave of terror, only the outer darkness. The inner circle of light in which she lived and moved, wherein the trains rushed and the factories ground out their machine-produce and the plants and the animals worked by the light of science and knowledge, suddenly it seemed like the area under an arc-lamp, wherein the moths and children played in the security of blinding light, not even knowing there was any darkness, because they stayed in the light. (405)

This passage, more than any other, illustrates the modern condition in which Ursula has come to live. The dark/light binary described here does not warrant the use of "as if" because it simply, though effectively, encapsulates the ontology of modernity; these are the ashes from which Ursula and, by extension, Lawrence's fiction must rise.

Upon Skrebensky's return, Ursula becomes indifferent to the world of light and turns again to the darkness of herself and recognizes the darkness in the world. She thinks that London "rests upon the unlimited darkness, like a gleam of coloured oil on dark water" (415), and the people remind her of "the Invisible Man, who was a piece of darkness made visible only by his clothes" (415). At home, Ursula experiences "a sense of freedom among them all, of the under-current of darkness among them all" (417). She enters "the dark fields of immortality" (418) and develops "another, stronger self that knew the darkness" (418). Lawrence writes, "As for her temporal, social self, she let it look after itself" (418). In her supreme, dark self, Ursula is untouchable, inviolable by either "the young man of the world, Skrebensky," or anyone else.

As the above quoted passages evince, Lawrence elides "as if" from the descriptions of Ursula's latest exploration of the darkness. Lawrence does not use "as if" when he explores a single pole of a binary, all of which he categorizes under the Love/Law binary. The new fiction must include the darkness in the light; the two must merge. At this point in the novel, the "minor" syntheses of the older Brangwens have occurred in Ursula, and she has traversed the pole of modernity, represented by light; she turns, now, to the opposite pole, the pole of immortality, of the infinite, of the Self, which Lawrence represents with darkness.

It is in Rouen that Ursula experiences, albeit briefly, the new synthesis and tries living according the new fiction. Prior to arriving in Rouen, she "began to think she was really queen of the whole universe, of the old world as well as of the new" (422). After enjoying the novelty of Paris, Ursula "must call in Rouen" (422); Lawrence writes, "It was as if she wanted to try its

effect on her” (422). It should be remembered, here, that Vaihinger designates practicality as the test of the value of aesthetic fictions, and this is precisely what Ursula is doing. She goes to Rouen to test the new fiction, to see if she can live as if the old world and new are one. Ursula turns to the cathedral in the modern city “as if to something she had forgotten, and wanted” (422). In the manner he uses throughout the novel, Lawrence marks the transition with “as if,” and the passage that follows extends from that usage. Lawrence writes, “This was now the reality: this great stone cathedral slumbering there in its mass, which knew no transience nor heard any denial. It was majestic in its stability, its splendid absoluteness” (422). Ursula sees the absolute in the modern, the darkness of the infinite in the transient light of the city, and the two co-exist in her fiction while she and Skrebensky are in Rouen.

Skrebensky fails to perceive the absolute in Rouen and has “a cold feeling of death” (422). After returning to London, Skrebensky experiences his own crisis. Lawrence writes:

He was as if mad. The horror of the brick buildings, of the tram-car, of the ashen-grey people in the street made him reeling and blind as if drunk. He went mad. He had lived with her in a close, living, pulsing world, where everything pulsed with rich being. Now rigidity, dead walls and mechanical traffic, and creeping, spectre-like people. The life was extinct, only ash moved and stirred or stood rigid, there was a horrible, clattering activity, a rattle like the falling of dry slag, cold, and sterile. It was as if the sunshine that fell were unnatural light exposing the ash of the town, as if the lights at night were the sinister gleam of decomposition. (423)

And thus ends Skrebensky’s life with Ursula. His lives according to a fiction that is incompatible with Ursula’s. Whereas she experiences the absolute in Rouen’s architecture, he only experiences decomposition and horror in the building of London. The modern world seizes Skrebensky, and he lives as if the world were “only ash.” No dark seed lies covered there for him as it does for Ursula. Though they remain in contact for a while afterwards, Skrebensky’s adoption of a fiction of ash reduces him to a mere gate through which Ursula passes. She turns against him and “all (his) old, dead things” (428), and the “sense of helplessness, as if he were a mere figure that did not exist vitally, (makes) him mad, beside himself” (428). Indeed, Skrebensky does not “exist vitally.”

Skrebensky becomes a “screen” for Ursula (430). Lawrence writes, “She took him, she clasped him, clenched him close, but her eyes were open looking at the stars, it was as if the stars were lying with her and entering the unfathomable darkness of her womb, fathoming her at last. It was not him” (430-31). Light and dark merge in Ursula. The “points of light” enter into her

darkness, and Lawrence tags this synthesis with “as if.” The next line is “The dawn came” (431). One of the “unrisen” dawns that called to Ursula in Scarborough appears after her consummation with the stars, and the beauty of the scene causes Ursula to cry: “Her face was wet with tears, very bright, like a transfiguration in the refulgent light,” writes Lawrence (431-32). Lawrence’s use of simile (“like a transfiguration”) extends from the use of “as if,” marking the scene as a part of Ursula’s fiction of synthesis. The light mixes with the dark moisture of Ursula’s tears transfiguring her; light and darkness merge to form her new being.

Ursula tells Skrebensky she thinks she never wants to marry (432), a revelation that perpetuates his own fiction of ash in which nothingness merges with materiality. The possibility of being with Ursula is the only thing that allows him to maintain a degree of control, and the loss of her leaves him “crying blind and twisted as if something were broken which kept him in control” (433). As Ursula’s fiction of being solidifies and propels her into a new, functional state of being, Anton Skrebensky’s fiction threatens him with “non-being.” He possesses not the darkness necessary for transfiguration; he lives completely in a world of light that turns to ash all that it touches. Ursula was his only hope for redemption, but Lawrence ends the cycle of joining male and female in order to join masculine and feminine principles. Rather, he removes the male and marries masculine and feminine principles in Ursula alone.

The crisis of being trampled by the horses constitutes the final phase of the construction of the new fiction, and in that way resembles William James’ theories on enlightenment.⁵ Lawrence, furthermore uses traditional enlightenment imagery in the scene, which echoes no other scene in the novel. As the horses thunder towards Ursula, she hesitates “as if seized by lightning” (452). The horses reduce Ursula to a state of powerlessness. In the aftermath, she begins the construction of what will be the final stage of the new fiction of being. Lawrence writes:

As she sat there, spent, time and the flux of change passed away from her, she lay as if unconscious upon the bed of a stream, like a stone, unconscious, unchanging,

⁵James argues that some tragedy or crisis, a devastating event, precipitates most spiritual enlightenments. The tragedy produces a psychological effect that allows the individual to reconcile herself to the world and create a narrative by which to understand her existence; i.e., the tragedy allows her to act “as if” her life were a path to spiritual enlightenment, which parallels Vaihinger’s *Philosophy of ‘As If.’* Though Vaihinger does not posit that a tragedy is necessary to construct of fiction by which to live, he does treat these fictions as means through which one comes to understand her life.

unchangeable, whilst everything rolled by in transience, leaving her there, a stone at rest on the bed of the stream, inalterable and passive, sunk to the bottom of all change. (454)

Lawrence joins motion and stability in this image. Ursula rests amid the flow of the stream, at the bottom of it, and she remains unmoved. The image proceeds from the premise that the stone and water co-exist in the streambed; the two exist independently of one another, but are joined together in the bed to form a wholeness, inhabited by both movement and stillness. Of course, this scenario is not reality, but a state of being elaborated around “as if,” which clears the way for Ursula to eventually act upon it.

As she lies in her bed at home, Ursula repeats to herself:

I have no father nor mother nor lover, I have no allocated place in the world of things, I do not belong to Beldover nor to Nottingham nor to England nor to this world, they none of them exist, I am trammled and entangled in them, but they are all unreal. I must break out of it, like a nut from its shell which is an unreality. (456)

This mantra extends from the stone imagery and operates in multiple ways: it disconnects Ursula from the external world and from the legacy of her family, it parallels the external world with the horses (a parallel already hinted at), and it re-establishes the seed imagery that has functioned as a symbol of becoming throughout the novel. Ursula emerges from the ash of the past, and becomes “the naked, clear kernel thrusting forth the clear, powerful shoot” (456). The world becomes a “bygone winter, discarded, her mother and father and Anton, and college and all her friends” are “cast off like a year that has gone by” (456). Ursula becomes “the kernel...free and naked and striving to take new root, *to create a new knowledge of Eternity in the flux of Time*” (456)(emphasis added). The kernel image “transfigures” the stone imagery; the kernel becomes a plant both rooted *and growing*. It remains stable in the “flux of time.” Ursula creates a fiction in which the eternal is present in the temporal, Law in Love, darkness in light.

Lawrence installs the last “as if” after Ursula’s realizations, categorizing them as fictions. He writes, “When she woke at last it seemed as if a new day had come on the earth” (457). She no longer needs anyone. Furthermore, she lost the child that connected her to Skrebensky, which sharpens the edges of her identity.⁶ She avoids defining herself according to her ability to reproduce as Anna does. Ursula’s identity emerges within herself, independent of children,

⁶ Freud argues that loss often plays a significant role in the construction of identity. Generally, these losses occur during childhood, so the fact the Ursula loses a child drenches the situation in irony.

parents, or lovers. She awakens to a state of being that depends solely on her.

Lawrence continues by examining the viability of the “new day” (read “new fiction”) through Ursula. He writes, “As she grew better, she sat to watch a new creation” (457). The word “grew” alludes to the kernel imagery and suggests that Ursula is living by her fiction, acting “as if” a “new day had come” bringing with it “a new creation.” Ursula sees “the new germination” through the husk of the world, recognizing that “the confidence of the women” would “break quickly to reveal the strength of the new germination” (458). Watching the urban sprawl and advancing industry nauseates Ursula. Then, she sees “a band of faint iridescence colouring in faint colours a portion of the hill” (458). She sees the rainbow, “its pedestals luminous in the corruption of new houses on the low hill, its arch the top of heaven” (458). The landscape recalls Ursula’s face when the dawn light intermingled with her tears, transfiguring her. Light and darkness interact to form the rainbow; light must pass through moisture to create a rainbow, so it is a phenomenon of both darkness and brilliance.

Lawrence writes, “And the rainbow stood on the earth” (458), which leads Ursula to believe the “sordid people” will “cast off their horny covering of disintegration, that new, clean, naked bodies would issue to a new germination, to a new growth” (459). The rainbow also yields visions of “earth’s new architecture, the old brittle, corruption of factories swept away, the world built up in a living fabric of Truth, fitting to the over-arching heaven” (459). The factories and houses remain, but their “brittle corruption” is “swept away.” The rainbow destroys neither the earth nor urbanity nor modernity; rather, it transfigures it. Heaven manifest itself on the earth, in the factories and houses. Darkness exists in light. The fiction of new being, symbolized by the rainbow, includes modernity and the infinite, which allows human beings to reach the apex of being in a world of accelerated flux. The fiction of the rainbow allows people to act as if the modern world has been transfigured.

Renowned Lawrence scholar Mark Kinkead-Weekes argues,

Consciousness in time, in flux, in history, must always, for Lawrence, be married to, and transfigured by, consciousness of the timeless, the archetypal, and eternal. Nor man will perish from inadequate conception of his nature and his world. (38)

He further claims that “*The Rainbow* seeks also to recover a new language for ‘God’ out of the old scriptures” (33). The urgent need to experience both time and eternity produced *The Rainbow*; the novel conceives the nature of man (ironically in Ursula) and the world in new

terms because the old terms ceased to function. Scientific and philosophical developments (also fictions) exposed the fictitious nature of conventional, Christian narratives, ringing the death knell for God; thus, Kinkead-Weekes places God in quotation marks. Lawrence's language, some of it indeed recovered "out of the old scriptures," does not reinstate God in the universe, but it maps a path to the phenomena once labeled "God" in Christian mythology. Lawrence, however, does not undercut the value of the modern world at the end of *The Rainbow*; both modernity and eternity are necessary to create the rainbow.

Hans Vaihinger's life ended before he was able to fully examine the general role of language in fictions. However when his critics charged him with neglecting the role of language, he replied, "To language, then—to language alone—it is that fictitious entities owe their existence; their impossible, yet indispensable existence" (vi). This assertion recognizes the value of "a new language for 'God'" and implies that the fate of a fiction relates directly to the fate of the language. As the old language in which the grand narrative of Christianity was rendered grew brittle, so did the narrative. *The Rainbow* offers us a new language with which to order our existence. The prolific use of "as if" acknowledges the metaphysics of the novel as "impossible" and "indispensable." The dogmatized fiction has no value because it represents itself as reality instead of as a guide to reality; practitioners become disciples, and the dogma obscures reality.

Diane S. Bonds, in her deconstructionist treatment of Lawrence, argues,

If the Brangwen quest for wholeness is intimately linked to an increasing degree of articulateness, as the women's yearning toward the spoken world beyond implies, then the wholeness, like the ideal state of *balance* of which Lawrence writes in his study of Hardy is 'never to be found.' (54)

Bonds asserts that *The Rainbow* resists difference and attempts to unify signifier and signified, symbolically linking the two with the rainbow. The novel does not try to articulate wholeness, nor does the rainbow link signified and signifier. The language of the novel depends on its status as sign to accomplish its ends. Lawrence focuses on enabling people to *act* in truth, not speak the truth, and his study of Hardy suggests this. The old fiction (structure) fell with its signifiers; Lawrence recognizes that the signified has never changed. The signifiers simply lost the ability to point to the signified. The very act of writing a new fiction recognizes the gap between signifier and signified, treating the signifiers as arrows that direct action.

Vaihinger rejects the "principle of Pragmatism," which claims, "An idea which is found

to be useful in practice proves thereby that it is also true in theory, and the fruitful is thus always true” (viii). Vaihinger, rather, adheres to the principle of Fictionalism, which he defines as “An idea whose theoretical untruth or incorrectness, and therewith its falsity, is admitted, is not for that reason practically valueless and useless; for such an idea, in spite of its theoretical nullity may have great practical importance” (viii).⁷ The novel, then, seems the most logical place for modern peoples to turn for a guide according to which they may navigate their world.

Georg Lukacs claims in *The Theory of the Novel* that “the incongruence of interiority and the conventional world leads to a denial of the latter” (144) in the “novel of disillusionment.” The novel of disillusionment, of course, is a phenomenon of Romanticism and concerns itself almost exclusively with “interiorities.” The Abstract Idealist concerns himself with action, and the Humanist “demands a balance between activity and contemplation, between wanting to mould the world and being purely receptive towards it” (135). In these terms, *The Rainbow* is a Humanist novel. Lukacs, however, continues to lament the loss of the totality that produced epics and does not see the novel as an effective tool in restoring totality. He writes,

This world is the sphere of pure soul-reality in which man exists as man, neither as a social being nor as an isolated, unique, pure, and therefore abstract interiority. If ever this world should come into being as something natural and simply experienced, as the only true reality, a new complete totality could be built out of all its substances and relationships. (152)

Lukacs’ lust for totality would erect a new dogma, and “the only true reality” would not be a reality at all but a fiction mistaken for a reality. A totality is simply a universalized dogma, which is a perversion of a fiction.

The Rainbow does not fall for the illusion of totality. Lawrence writes a novel in which man can act as if he exists as both social being and abstract interiority simultaneously. The shattered totality of the epic no longer enabled man to act, and Lawrence recognized this impotence. Either human beings could, essentially, live in a state of psychosis, or they could live in a world with no meaning beyond the temporal world. The novel is the appropriate form for the new fiction because it does not depend on a totality for its usefulness.

⁷ The distinction for which Vaihinger calls closely resembles I. A. Richards’ plea in “Poetry and Beliefs” that scientific language and poetic language be divorced. Richards, too, recognizes the value of poetry in creating a “whole” or “balanced” human being; he simply thinks poetic (belief) faculties should be allowed to develop independently of scientific knowledge. It should be emphasized that neither Richards nor Vaihinger undermine the value of fiction and poetry.

The Rainbow succeeds in guiding humanity towards an inner state of being that does not depend on religious dogmas and towards a stable core in the flux of the industrialized world. It succeeds because it does not seek to mimic modern consciousness or reality. Lawrence's novel provides the handrails that steady humanity in its quest for reality, but it does not purport to be that reality. People can, however, act as if "the rainbow stood on the earth," as Ursula does, and discover a state of being that yields a sense of fulfillment.

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