



## Psychological treatment of women characters in ‘The Rainbow’: A study of Lydia Lensky and Anna Lensky’s character

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### ABSTRACT

*D.H. Lawrence is a famous English Novelist of his generation. That is why after thirty years of his death, he enjoyed more wide-spread popularity and esteem than he knew in his time. It was the time when English society was declining its moral values which created a sense of alienation in the people of that time. All this can be seen in the novel ‘The Rainbow’, how men and women characters are victimized by each other. Therefore, the present paper throws a light on the characters of Lydia Lensky and her daughter Anna Lensky in the perspectives of psychological treatment of all female characters in the other novels of D.H. Lawrence. In other words, women characters as has been observed in the study, serve mainly to reflect the psychic state of the protagonist in the novel. Furthermore, the study of this novel provides us many opportunities to touch the tensions and potentialities of a married life. Thus all the female characters in the novel represent an era and a feeling of sense which turns the novel into a masterpiece of English Literature.*

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### Introduction :

‘The Rainbow’ is a masterpiece of English fiction that arise a revolution in mind and Lawrence’s character (specially his women characters) fulfills his revolution towards society of that time. The revolutionary nature of this novel signifies the physical passion and awareness of consequences whereby man has lost his sense of community and there are no longer passions in the individuals for each other. In this sequence, D.H Lawrence highlights a psychological treatment of women characters as they represent the decline of moral values of the societies in that time. As we know, English people lost their sense of community and passion in life in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Here we will analyze the characters of Lydia Lensky and her daughter Anna Lensky to support the above said statement in the novel ‘The Rainbow’.

### Lydia Lensky:

Lydia Lensky was the daughter of a Polish land owner and his wealthy German wife. Her father died before the rebellion and she married, quite young. She is first introduced to us a Polish widow. She had married Paul Lensky, an intellectual educated at Berlin, who was a doctor and patriot. She also became a patriot and learned nursing as a mark of her emancipation. They had two children and they stood in the centre of the rebellion when it came. Her husband was eloquent and fiery and found himself in hot waters in Warsaw, so they crossed into the south of Russia. Her husband worked very hard till nothing remained of him but his eyes. Lydia followed him like his shadow and echoed his ideas. But when her two children died Lydia was plunged into darkness and moved about a silent and shadowy figure in the grip of terror. By the time their last child Anna was born, he was reduced to skin, bone and ideas. In silent dejection she nursed both and when her husband died, she felt relieved. England fitted her mood because she could live there alone in the crowd.<sup>1</sup>

When we first meet Lydia, she has a charming, fascinating personality. "Her face was pale and clear, she had thick eyebrows, and wide mouth curiously held." Her mouth is peculiar, it is an "ugly-beautiful", mouth and it is a great source of fascination for Tom.<sup>2</sup> There is a strange fascination about her, a curiously foreign look, and Tom is at once taken in by her. She has a strong resemblance with Frieda Weekly whom Lawrence himself had married and who was also a German lady and senior to him in age. Lawrence's special consideration for this character is also apparent from the fact that she shares her name with Mrs. Lydia Lawrence, the mother of D.H. Lawrence.



Lydia has come to Marsh as a housekeeper to the Vicar. It is at this juncture that she meets Tom Brangwen. Tom is first attracted to Lydia because he sees her as the fulfillment of his aspirations. A stranger, self-contained, self-absorbed, she seems to offer him that other life that so far has eluded him. When their eyes meet as they pass each other on the Nottingham road, Tom feels such a deep affinity with her that he cannot 'bear to think of anything', lest it break into his vision of the 'far world, the fragile reality' which she represents.

Tom's courtship of Lydia hardly happens on the level of ordinary human contact. His intimacy with her progresses indirectly, through a conversation with his own servant Tilly, through a brief encounter after Church with little Anna, through the purchase of butter for the vicar. In his mind, however, he has moved slowly but surely towards the decision to marry her. The scene of the proposal is evocative. Lydia hesitates for some time because the man was not of her sort, but she feels the rooted security that he offers and besides, he is fresh and young and 'the blue, steady livingness of his eyes she enjoyed like morning'. So she accepted the proposal and started the second phase of her life as Lydia Brangwen.

At last Lydia and Tom get married to each other. Her married life was an alternating rhythm of love and hate, attraction and repulsion, quarrels and reconciliations. There is some tension between Tom and Lydia but there is not taunting or baiting as there is later between Will and Anna; each respects the independent life of the other, yet finds fulfillment of self through the relationship which 'contained bonds and constraints and labours, and still was complete liberty'.<sup>3</sup>

Slowly harmony between Tom and Lydia prevailed as she came to have his first child in her womb. The silence and distance between them followed and he was deposed. Her husband seethed with discontent and through her to be cold and cruel, but he respected her dignity. When the child was born she lost her connection with the past and her former self. She became now really English, really Mrs. Brangwen. But her vitality was lowered and could not fully gratify the desires of her husband. Thus, he sought comfort either in the company of his step daughter Anna or by going to the Red Lion to get drunk.

As time rolled on his sexual cravings increased and with the unerring instinct of an intelligent woman she understood his condition and gladly prepared herself for the gratification of her husband's desire. One day Tom visits the mistress of his brother. Lydia does not know about this particular visit but knows that he wants another woman. Thus for the first time Lydia opens up her tortured soul to him. He had earlier never realized that even she could be lonely, isolated and unsure inwardly. Hence the second union is a marvelous experience; it cemented their bond and transfigured them. The broken arches united and 'The Rainbow' of their harmony illumined their life.<sup>4</sup>

After the death of her husband Lydia withdrew herself from the business of the world, its rage, passion and endless fret and fever, she wished to enjoy the peace and innocence of age. She was only delighted in children and spent many pleasant hours with Ursula her granddaughter.

#### **Anna Lensky:**

Anna is the daughter of Lydia Lensky by her Polish husband, and she is transplanted in the Brangwen family at the Marsh when her mother re-marries Tom Brangwen. Her step-father loved her and made much of her. Anna also loved and adored Tom and regarded him as the ideal man, and all her ideas were based upon the life at home, peaceful comfortable and isolated from the world outside. As a child she hated ugliness or intrusion or arrogance. As a child she was rather rowdy and caused much trouble to all those who came in contact with her.

When Anna is first introduced to us, she is, "a child with a face like a bud of apple - blossom, glistening fair hair, and very dark eyes." She grew up into a tall, awkward girl, with dark quick eyes and a heavy mass of hair tied back. She was sent to a young ladies school, absorbed in her dream of becoming a lady. She was intelligent enough but not happy in learning. She was not happy at school and her mind constantly moved between pride and diffidence. She is encouraged by her father who stands like a rock between herself and the world. As a child, she is generally active and keeps on lightly flitting about the farm-yard. "She does not appear to be very happy but she is quick, sharp, absorbed full of imagination and changeability."<sup>5</sup>

At the age of nine, Anna is sent to the Dame's School at Cossethay. Here she patronizes teachers and displeases them with her indifference and lack of reverence. She was shy and wild and has a curious dislike for ordinary people: "The girl at once shy and wild. She has a curious contempt for ordinary people, a benevolent superiority. She is very shy and tortured with misery when people do not like her."<sup>6</sup>

She does not care much for anybody save for her mother, whom she still rather resentfully worships, and her father, whom she not only loves and patronizes, but upon whom she depends. Thus, we are told, "She deeply



hated ugliness, intrusion or arrogance. As a child, she was proud and shadowy as a tiger, and as aloof. She could confer favours, but save from her mother and father, she could receive none. She hated people who came too near to her. She mistrusted intimacy."<sup>7</sup>

At the age of seventeen she was touchy, spirited and moody, sudden and incalculable. She was tired of the hushed, peaceful atmosphere at home and wanted to go away. But nothing satisfied her. Going to Church on Sundays, reading books and visiting friends-all were tried and found tasteless in the end. She often quarreled with those in authority and believed that she was not as bad as she was made out. She wanted to be loyal like Alexandra, Princess of Wales. She even dressed up and behaved like her. Her father was sympathetic to her and allowed her to have her own way. It appeared that she yearned for a relationship that will liberate her from the pettiness of life and help her to a fulfilling merger with the infinite, the unknown.

In search of a liberating influence, Anna turns to the oedipal love of her father that discomfits and exasperates as it gratifies. As Anna grows up, she suffers from a sense of inner boredom and returns to the sanctuary of the home especially to the love of her step-father. We are told earlier also that Tom dissatisfied with Lydia, particularly during the last months of her pregnancy, diverts his attention to Anna and she too responds to him with great openness. The two of them make a little life together. She goes with him to the market and then to the public house and becomes a known figure in the market.

Anna is dissatisfied with life and it is in this state of mind that she comes in contact with William Brangwen, her cousin. The attraction between them is mutual and they begin to meet secretly but fearlessly to taste the sweets of their first love. It is "In him, she sought an escape; in him the bounds of her experience were transgressed. It was a new reserve, a new independence that she found in him."<sup>8</sup>

In spite of Tom's dislike of William's relationship with Anna, he gave way and they both were married. For a few days they lived in a state of bliss, forgetful of the world and its business, aware only of their present moment which was their eternity. But as they descended to the solid heart their differences came to the surface and the result was a fierce and prolonged duel between them in which the palm was always won by Anna. William's total dependence on Anna is unmanly. Anna ceases to respect him because he ceases to represent anything beyond her. The religious values which appear so complete to Will stifle her freedom. Thus, they frequently quarreled, then made up the quarrel, loved each other passionately for some time, and then quarreled again. Their love lacks spirituality and hence, when physical desire is partly stated, they have no real point of meeting; they are unable to communicate to Anna about the things that matter to them. When Will tries to talk to Anna about his wood-carving he is lost for words: 'He could not tell her any more. Why could he not tell her anymore? She felt a pang of disconsolate sadness.' William's real torment came when Anna became pregnant and refused to sleep with him, because life for him was impossible in separation from her; she was his solid rock amid the stormy ocean of the world outside. But Anna at last succeeded in making him submissive to her wishes.<sup>9</sup>

Anna finds her own self-confidence and power over Will through her motherhood; it is perhaps not surprising that she gradually lapses into a 'long trance of complacent child bearing'. The children become the centre of her attention and her joy. Will, on the other hand, continues to struggle against being dominated, against seeing his spirit as subservient. Like Tom he too turns to his daughter for satisfaction.

Though Anna loved her husband as the father of her children and gave him whatever physical satisfaction she could provide. But a time came when her husband got tired of his dull domesticity and conventional union with his wife. He stayed out one evening, had an escapade with a girl and returned home with strange fire in his eyes. Anna, noticed the change, understood its meaning and roused herself to meet the new challenge which her husband was offering her. Instead of restraining or admonishing him, she eagerly instigated him to start the game of lustful intercourse in which there was no love, tenderness and moral consideration, but savage animal desire to enjoy the whole mystery of the body and all the natural and unnatural delights which its several parts could yield. With this Will was reborn as a man who could really attend to his social life and this gave the desired freedom to Anna.

#### **CONCLUSION:**

Now concluding the discussion we can say that D.H. Lawrence's treatment of love through female characters in 'The Rainbow' falls in the category of masterpiece in English fiction throughout the Europe. Therefore, the study of women characters on psychological basis provides us an opportunity to touch the tension and potentialities of married life and these female characters are victims of Oedipus complex. Furthermore, D.H.



Lawrence's psychological treatment of women characters in 'The Rainbow' appears to examine the gradual decline of moral values in English Society. The story of 'The Rainbow' relates D.H. Lawrence with the problem of Love and Marriage in ways peculiar to their temperaments and social context. However, there is a sense of discontinuity and over - elaboration when in the third generation too much space is devoted to Anna's childhood, girlhood, her love, courtship and marriage in the perspective of psychological order as depicted in the novel 'The Rainbow'.

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