

The Buried Seed

The Buried Seed: Generational in D.H. Lawrence's *Th*



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Abstract

D.H. Lawrence's novel *The Rainbow* follows three generations of the Brangwen family as they experience problems of identity while trying to navigate a changing world. The identity issues in the novel can be understood as symptomatic of what clinical psychologists term Narcissistic Personality Disorder. Each generation embodies narcissistic traits that prevent them from living happy, full lives. The thesis focuses on the generational aspect of the novel and how the repeated narcissistic issues found in each generation build on and reflect one another, culminating in the character of Ursula. With this character Lawrence portrays the struggles necessary to transcend the narcissistic state.

I. Introduction

Upon my first reading of D.H. Lawrence's *The Rainbow*, I was instantly drawn to the issues surrounding selfhood and identity. This is a perhaps a common theme in twentieth century fiction because the rapidly changing world upset the status quo, causing

people to experience instability and to question their sense of themselves. In *The Rainbow*, this uncertainty is deeply felt by three generations of Brangwens, the central family in the novel. They are not sure who they are or where they stand in life; they feel fragile and unreal, and thus the Brangwens—Tom, Will, Anna, and Ursula—all seek an Other who can provide them with the sense of security and reality that they lack. However, the Brangwens have difficulty forming lasting, healthy relationships because they seek to absorb or be absorbed into these other people's identities. For the Brangwens, their sense of "unreality" can only be quelled by forcibly appropriating another person's identity. The Brangwens do not feel as though they are whole or complete; they feel fragmented. But why do the Brangwens feel this way? Why do their relationships inevitably turn caustic and destructive? Why can't they find completion outside of merging with other people? Why is it such a struggle for them to see others as separate human beings with their own lives and emotions?

Critics have viewed the subject of identity in *The Rainbow* through several different lenses. Evelyn J. Hinz, for example, in her article "'The Rainbow': Ursula's 'Liberation,'" looks at the struggle of the

character Ursula Brangwen in a metaphysical, spiritual light. She claims that Ursula's journey to discover herself is also a journey to understanding her spiritual beliefs. Ursula must reconcile the two worlds that she holds dear, the weekday world and the Sunday world. To do this, Ursula must accept a "schizophrenic" view of the world (Hinz 28) that accommodates both the spiritual and the physical. Through her relationship with her teacher and lover Winifred, Ursula gains the idea that religion is manufactured through man's own self-importance and fear. She comes to understand that religion is "an externalization of [man's] desire for power and self-preservation" that Hinz argues is a product of Ursula's "limited religions" (36). Instead, Ursula replaces Christianity with a religion of her own, "based on the principle of separateness" in which Ursula is a "god unto herself" (37). Through the rest of the novel, Ursula slowly comes to realize that she is a mere individual in a universe comprised of other individuals. Ursula cannot separate herself from the cosmos, and she learns to accept "the joyousness of dependence" (Hinz 42).

David Kleinbard, in "D.H. Lawrence and Ontological Insecurity," maintains that Will Brangwen's identity issues are caused by a

condition he terms “ontological insecurity,” in which a person “has the feeling that he is unreal and the related fantasy that he is almost entirely dependent upon other people for his reality as well as his personal identity” (155). According to Kleinbard, “in Will’s mind . . . the belief that another person supplies him with existence is complemented by the fear that another person will deprive him of his existence and separate identity” (155). This deep-seated fear creates a rift between Will and Anna, Will’s wife. Because Will believes that Anna is the only thing standing between his existence and “the flood” of unreality, he clings to her much too tightly. When Anna tries to break from Will’s clasp and rejoin the real world, Will lashes out in hurtful and destructive ways. Despite Kleinbard’s interesting insights into Will’s psyche, he chiefly ignores Anna and their daughter, Ursula, in his analysis. Both Anna and Ursula have their own identity issues regarding feelings of unreality that, while similar to Will’s, are not purely issues of ontological insecurity.

In The Moon’s Dominion: Narrative Dichotomy and Female Dominance in Lawrence’s Earlier Novels, Gavriel Ben-Ephraim argues that it is the problematic interactions between the characters that most

affect their inability to form cohesive selves. There is an imbalance between the masculine and the feminine in the relationships between the characters. The men, Ben-Ephraim argues, come to the women “in an indirect search for strength of self, hoping to be saved from a threatening disintegration. The women also suffer from this inequality because their force isolates them as it destroys, or nearly destroys, the men” (Ben-Ephraim 132). Ben-Ephraim highlights how moonlight imagery in the novel precedes acts of feminine control and destruction against their male counterparts. Ben-Ephraim associates water imagery with the male fear of disintegration, especially in terms of Tom’s death and Will’s fear of “the flood.”

In her book *D.H. Lawrence and the Art of the Self*, Marguerite Beade Howe uses ego psychology to argue that each of the three generations of Brangwens represents a different stage of ego development. Tom Brangwen’s relationship with his wife, Lydia, is reminiscent of an infant/mother relationship. In the second generation, Will and Anna Brangwen represent the next stage of child/mother, and their daughter, Ursula, is representative of the adolescent striking out on her own. Each generation, Howe argues, progresses to a more fully realized

state of individuality or selfhood. Ursula's ability to break away from Skrebensky rather than allow herself to make the same mistakes as her parents and grandparents "signifies the individual emancipating himself from his parents, his past, his society" (Howe 50). Unlike her parents, Ursula overcomes the need to merge with another person, and instead "[achieves] integrity" (Howe 50).

Lastly, Barbara Schapiro's *D.H. Lawrence and the Paradoxes of Psychic Life* explores the relationships between the characters using the concept of intersubjectivity. She focuses on how Lawrence's characters struggle to come to view others as individual subjects or separate selves. The difficulty the Brangwens all experience in achieving intersubjectivity is rooted in problems of narcissism. Tom, for instance, uses Lydia's "otherness" as a foreigner to secure his own sense of reality and give himself identity. He has difficulty experiencing Lydia as her own separate person with her own emotions. Lydia's "otherness" makes her distinct whereas Tom feels that he is merely a faceless figure in the ether.

In the next generation, as Schapiro explains, Will bombards Anna with his own will, and she "feels her own subjectivity negated and

denied” (87). Because of this, “the breakdown of mutual recognition [between Anna and Will] . . . takes the form of mutual aggression” (88). Both Anna and Will become absorbed in “omnipotent fantasies of devouring and being devoured” (88). Later their daughter, Ursula, struggles to discover “her own reality or sense of authentic being [which is] inextricably bound up with her struggle to discover the reality of the other” (89). Through her failed relationships with others, Ursula comes to realize that “if the other is only an extension or projection of herself—created out of her own desire—she will be trapped in her own inner world and its nightmare fantasies” (94). It is only through discovering her own limits, that “the self is not everything” (94), that Ursula can overcome her narcissistic tendencies.

I am most interested in exploring the condition of pathological narcissism in *The Rainbow* that Schapiro alludes to but does not examine in detail. The identity issues in the novel that initially so interested me can be understood as symptomatic of what clinical psychologists term Narcissistic Personality Disorder. In modern theories of narcissism, it is believed that narcissists are not merely “full of themselves” but rather experience deep feelings of emptiness or

void. As children, these people either experienced “overloving” parents that smothered them with attention, controlling their every move, or were “underloved,” emotionally neglected by their parents. Both roots lead to the child’s inability to emerge beyond the “primary narcissism” of childhood. As adults, narcissists suffer on a deeply personal level. They often have difficulty forming healthy relationships with others, yet still seek them out, often looking for partners who possess traits that they desire for themselves.

This paper is not meant to be simply a diagnosis of fictional characters; rather, I am interested in using the lens of contemporary narcissism theory to explore how this disorder can illuminate our readings of the novel’s characters and their relationships. I will be primarily using Heinz Kohut’s “self psychology” theory of narcissism, specifically his views of narcissistic transference, as well as Otto Kernberg’s description of narcissistic symptoms. Their views can help us see the patterns Lawrence’s characters exhibit in a more coherent light.

Although a practitioner of psychoanalysis, Kohut’s views of narcissism stray from those of Freud. Kohut does not view

narcissism as driven by Oedipal drives but instead by a disruption or corruption of pre-Oedipal object love. Margaret Black and Stephen Mitchell, in their book *Freud and Beyond*, offer the clearest, most succinct summaries of Kohut's views. As they state, essentially "something went awry in the basic way these patients . . . experienced themselves as selves" (*Freud and Beyond* 158). The problems of the narcissist, in other words, are not due to unresolved libidinal energies, as Freud suggests, but rather to underlying issues regarding the structure and sense of self. Narcissism to Kohut is a condition in which the patient experiences "painful feelings of personal alienation . . . terrifyingly separated from a sense of his humanness . . . moving through a life without meaning" (149).

Crucial to Kohut's theory of narcissism is his concept of selfobjects, which he defines as an object (or other) experienced as part of the self or used in the service of the self. The selfobject serves both idealizing and mirroring functions for the self. In healthy narcissism, a selfobject acts as a sort of role model, as a source of ideals, and gives meaning, structure, and value to the growing personality. In pathological narcissism, there is a failure of these selfobject functions; the

self feels deficient and fragmentary, fixated on idealized and mirroring others.

When a psychoanalyst treats narcissistic patients, a type of transference, which Kohut calls selfobject transference, occurs.

Transference, according to Freud, is when the patient “experiences intense, conflictual emotions from childhood toward the person of the analyst” (*Freud and Beyond* 152).

These intense emotions are often in relation to the patient’s first love objects, usually the parents. Selfobject transference is similar to Freud’s concept of transference in that emotions towards early selfobjects are transferred onto the analyst. There are three types of selfobject transference in Kohut’s model of narcissism: mirroring transference, idealizing transference, and twinship or alter ego transference. Each refers to the way in which the patient emotionally connects to the analyst and reflects deficiencies in the patient’s original selfobject relations. These transference patterns Kohut describes can help us understand the ways in which Lawrence’s characters relate to one another.

Mirroring transference, as Mitchell and Black explain, occurs when the patient “[establishes] a powerful attachment to the analyst based on a need for the analyst to grasp and reflect back their experience of

themselves, their excitements, their perceptions, as well as their disappointments” (*Freud and Beyond* 160). Through the use of the analyst as a “nurturing” figure, the patient begins “to feel more seen, more real, and more internally substantial” (161). Idealizing transference develops when the patient sees the analyst as “perfect and wonderful and feels himself to be increasingly strong and important by virtue of his connection to this powerful and important other” (161). Alter ego (or twinship) transference occurs when a patient “yearns to feel an essential likeness with the analyst” in order to strengthen an ideal of him or herself (161). Kohut argues that analysts should use these transferences to help narcissistic patients overcome deficits in their original selfobject relations and develop healthy selves by providing support while slowly administering tolerable doses of disappointment.

Though Otto Kernberg differs from Kohut in his views on narcissism, as he retains Freud’s drive theory, his extensive descriptions of the narcissistic personality disorder can help to support my assessment of the three generations of Brangwens in *The Rainbow*. For example, Kernberg claims that narcissists suffer from an inability to experience other people as independent

selves. This is a key issue with the Brangwen characters. Narcissists—and the Brangwens—see other people as “lifeless, shadowy people” (Kernberg 233). This description matches both Anna and Ursula Brangwen’s views of others. Kernberg says the narcissist sees other people as containing “potential food inside” and is “hungry, enraged, [and has an] empty self” (233). This accurately describes Will Brangwen. Likewise, Kernberg asserts that the narcissist’s “greatest fear . . . is to be dependent on anybody else, because to depend means to hate, envy, and expose themselves to the danger of being exploited, mistreated, and frustrated” (235). This is characteristic of Lawrence’s depiction of Will. Finally, Kernberg states that narcissistic persons are incapable of simultaneously loving and hating and instead seesaw between the polar extremes in their relations with others. This is a pattern found in all three generations of Brangwens in the novel, particularly in the characterization of Will.

The Brangwen family’s feelings of unreality begin with Tom. The first of his family to be formally educated, Tom is pressured by his mother to rise above his lot in life. However,

Tom does not connect with his education as is expected of him: “He could not learn deliberately . . . So he had a low opinion of himself. He knew his own limitations” (Lawrence 17). These feelings of inadequacy permeate every aspect of his life. Tom is the first of the Brangwens to feel “fragmentary, something incomplete and subject” (40). Tom does not attempt to combat these feelings but rather tries to numb them with alcohol. When he meets his future wife, Lydia, Tom believes that “. . . with her he would be real . . . she would bring him completeness and perfection” (40). Tom has a deep need to have Lydia recognize him as a man and as her husband in an unspecified way. He does not know how their relationship should proceed, or what his place in it is: “He did not feel like a master, husband, father of her children” (58). Although Tom and Lydia do eventually come to understand one another, Tom continues to struggle with his feelings of fragmentation and narcissistic inadequacy.

The second generation of Brangwens includes Tom’s stepdaughter, Anna, and his nephew, Will, who marry shortly after meeting. Anna, from an early age, has difficulty viewing other people as individuals; rather she sees them as the

“shadow people” that Kernberg describes. She also becomes irrationally annoyed and angry when people do not conform to her expectations: “She half respected these people, and continuous disillusion maddened her. She wanted to respect them . . . Those she knew seemed always to be limiting her, tying her up in little falsities that irritated her beyond bearing” (94).

While Anna is proud, Will Brangwen suffers from an inner void and is over-dependent to the point where he is unable to function without having another person to attach himself to (initially his mother, then his wife, then his daughter). Will, like Tom, feels fragmented and incomplete, but rather than succumb to this state, as Tom does, Will lashes out in anger at Anna, whom he despises for his dependency on her. Will’s narcissism is the most destructive in the novel.

The two previous generations culminate in Ursula, who shares similar patterns of behavior with her predecessors. Ursula also sees other people as “shadow people,” like her mother, and searches for someone to “complete” her, much like her father and grandfather before her. She spends most of her early adult life searching for an Other who represents what she strives to be, who has qualities that she herself desires. When

these attempts fail, Ursula tries to fill those needs with work and education, neither of which she can enjoy or benefit from because they cannot fill her narcissistic deficiencies. When Ursula's fantasies don't align with reality, she gives up on them. She suffers from the same narcissistic sense of incompleteness that both Anna and Will experience, but she strives throughout her portion of the novel to overcome this narcissistic state, to see herself as an individual human being without need of idealized or mirroring others to complete her.

This thesis will focus on the generational aspect of the novel and how the repeated narcissistic issues found in each generation build on and reflect one another. Like Howe, I believe that each generation is progressing towards something more, that each one builds off the last's triumphs and mistakes, culminating in the character of Ursula. This notion is furthered by Lawrence's repetition of specific imagery with each generation, specifically the image of the inner self as a "naked kernel." The characters in each generation struggle to become independent selves—through transference-like relationships with others—but only one, Ursula, actually achieves this in the end. Literary critics have disagreed over whether

or not Ursula actually transcends her problematic identity and dependency issues (or, in my terms, narcissism). I will argue that Ursula does succeed in breaking out of her imprisoning narcissism at the end. Although Ursula makes several attempts throughout the novel to either become more independent or revel in her dependence, at the end Ursula sees herself as a “clear, naked kernel thrusting forth the clear powerful shoot . . . the world . . . cast off” (Lawrence 456). This is the same image that Lawrence uses in both Tom’s and Will’s narrative portions of the novel in relation to their own desires to “cast off” the world and their insecurities. However, neither Tom nor Will achieves this level of self-awareness and acceptance.

With both Tom and Ursula, Lawrence shows psychological growth not as a linear, forward-moving course, but as a back and forth movement of breakdown and repair. While the characters change and grow, that growth is not always permanent, as in life. Though the characters do, in some ways, move towards progress, they also often fall back into old narcissistic patterns after an emotional injury or personal failure. Psychological development is not a steady ascent; there are starts and stops, a moving forward and a sliding backward. Lawrence’s

characters in *The Rainbow* dramatically and insightfully portray this phenomenon.

II. Tom Brangwen

Tom Brangwen is the first of his family to fall into narcissistic patterns. The generations previous to Tom that Lawrence describes are far more content than those who will come after: “There was a look in the eyes of the Brangwens as if they were expecting something unknown, about which they were eager . . . So the Brangwens came and went without fear of necessity, working hard because of the life that was in them, not for want of money” (Lawrence 9). Tom’s mother, however, is not content with her family’s lot in life, and she pressures her boys to go to school. Tom, along with his older brother Alfred, are both sent to school with their mother’s hopes pinned to them. Although Alfred does fairly well in school, he does not go very far in life and remains angry and frustrated about his work throughout his life. Tom, on the other hand, does not take very well to school. Young Tom is quite distraught over his failures, but only continues to go because his mother wishes it. He desperately wants to make his

mother happy to the point where “If he could have been what he liked, he would have been that which his mother fondly but deucedly hoped he was. He would have been clever, and capable of being a gentleman” (Lawrence 17).

Very early on, then, we see Tom struggling to conform to an idea that another wants for him. He makes “a violent struggle against his physical inability to study” and fears that “his mind simply did not work He had not the power to controvert even the most stupid argument so that he was forced to admit things that he did not in the least believe. And having admitted them, he did not know whether he believed them or not; he rather thought he did” (17). His inability to reach the potential that his mother thinks he has irreparably damages Tom’s sense of self-worth. In his first and strongest childhood friendship with a “warm, clever boy” (19), Tom imagines himself the “server” in their relationship because he “never felt equal with his friend, because the other’s mind outpaced his own” (19). This need to please another and to fulfill their expectations and wants—despite the fact that the acts performed to do so are emotionally painful—becomes a pattern for later Brangwens, particularly Anna, Tom’s stepdaughter, and Ursula, his granddaughter.

This pattern fits Otto Kernberg's descriptions of narcissism. Cold parental figures that encourage an idea of "specialness" in their children can produce a narcissistic child (Kernberg 265). This concept of "specialness" arouses in the child an "ideal self" which Kernberg defines as "the fantasies and self images of power, wealth, omniscience, and beauty which compensated the small child for the experience of severe oral frustration, rage, and envy" (265). Kernberg also explains that the child develops an "ideal object" derived from "the fantasy of an ever-giving, ever-loving and accepting parent in contrast to the child's experience in reality" (265). Tom is the first of his family to struggle with this issue due to his mother's need to foist greatness onto her sons, and thus Tom, because of his inability to conform to his mother's desires, spends his childhood and young adulthood searching for a mother figure who will give him the acceptance and love that he was denied.

When Tom loses his virginity to a prostitute, he has difficulty understanding how to connect sexually or romantically with women. He cannot process his attraction because "For him, there was until that time only one kind of woman—his mother and his sister" (Lawrence 20). Yet,

paradoxically, Tom does associate the women he is sexually attracted to with his mother, mainly in his deep-seated fears of being despised and rejected: “there was a slight sense of shame before the prostitute, fear that she would despise him for his inefficiency; there was a cold distaste for her, and a fear of her” (20). As Tom attempts to find a “nice girl,” he is met with a similar problem: he cannot bear to think of the girls in a sexual manner, believing it to diminish them in some capacity that he owes to his “instinctive regard for women” (23).

As Gavriel Ben-Ephraim puts it, “Molded by women, Tom lacks confident maleness, let alone assertive sexuality. The over influence of women in his formation leads to a deficiency not only of manhood but of being. Tom relies on women for his ‘stability’ . . .” (134). Despite his difficulties in connecting sexually or romantically with women, Tom still desperately wants a wife. He seems to believe marriage to be the solution to his feelings of loneliness and despair: “He wanted something to get hold of, to pull himself out. But there was nothing” (Lawrence 26). As Tom continues to fail to find such a woman to “get a hold of,” he throws himself into drink. Alcohol provides Tom with “this kindled state of oneness with all the world . . . obliterating

his individuality that which it depended on his manhood to preserve and develop” (28). Only by getting extremely drunk and literally losing himself can he find peace. For Tom, then, peace is loss of self, and to find peace in the form of a woman, Tom must also be able to lose himself in her. This desire is paradoxical in that while Tom desires to lose himself in another, he also greatly fears this self-annihilation.

When Tom first lays eyes on Lydia, he sees her as this marvelous, curious creature who exists in a world not his own: “He felt as if he were walking again in a far world, not Cossethay, a far world, the reality . . . He moved within the knowledge of her, in the world that was beyond reality” (29). Yet Tom still feels a connection to Lydia, a “feeling that they had exchanged recognition . . . a curious certainty about her, as if she were destined to him” (29, 32). A large part of Tom’s attraction to Lydia can be attributed to her “foreignness.” As Schapiro notes, Tom finds Lydia’s “impenetrable otherness” to be a restorative force, reassuring him of his own sense of reality (80). Lydia’s remote self-containment makes Tom feel that there is structure to his own person, and so he pursues her romantically in order to hold fast to that feeling: “He must admit that he was only

fragmentary, something incomplete and subject . . . he sat small and submissive to the greater ordering He was nothing. But with her, he would be real” (Lawrence 40).

These feelings of unreality are quite common in narcissistic persons, and the feeling is prevalent within the Brangwen line. Both Kernburg and Kohut acknowledge this attribute. Kernberg describes “a marked incapacity to perceive oneself . . . as a total human being” (316), much as Tom articulates about himself above. Tom embodies Kohut’s “Tragic Man,” a condition in which one is unable to “experience him/herself as center of initiative and suffers from despair, shame, boredom, complains of feeling empty, depressed, and at times, unreal. There is a constant fear of boundary loss, of potential fragmentation; Tragic Man expends his energy in keeping intact and protected what little sense of self he has” (*Narcissism and the Text* 1). Tom needs a distinct Other to ground him in his own sense of being. He desires a merging of sorts, a way to remain connected to this Other to counteract the sense of emptiness and unreality. Since he has lost his mother to death and his sister to marriage, he seeks to make Lydia his new anchor.

Tom's relationship with Lydia indeed resembles the idealizing narcissistic transference that Kohut describes:

. . . the state in which, after being exposed to the disturbance of the psychological equilibrium of primary narcissism, the psyche saves a part of the lost experience of global narcissistic perfection by assigning it to an archaic, rudimentary (transitional) self-object, the idealized parent imago. Since all bliss and power now reside in the idealized object, the child feels empty and powerless when he is separated from it and he attempts, therefore, to maintain a continuous union with it. (Kohut 37)

Because Tom's primary narcissism has been disturbed by his having been "let down" by his mother, he transfers his need for idealized "recognition" to Lydia, making her the idealized self-object on which he depends. However, Lydia is not content to have this sort of relationship with Tom. She herself was once dangerously dependent on her late husband, and it took losing him and having to struggle on her own to realize her own personal strength. She does not wish to

be in an idealized or a co-dependent relationship with Tom, but rather to have a secure partnership of equals.

Tom's feelings regarding Lydia's separateness from him oscillate between contentedness and despair. Sometimes Tom uses Lydia's separateness to reassure himself of his own separate being, such as when they lie together and Tom "[lifts] her with his breathing He did not interfere with her The strange inviolable completeness of the two of them made him feel as sure and as stable as God" (Lawrence 46). Other times, however, Tom frets over the fact that "They were such strangers, they must forever be such strangers" (48). In these instances, Tom despairs over never truly being able to know or understand Lydia's emotions, history, and culture. Sometimes, however, this despair turns to enraptured devotion: "a sort of worship, holding her aloof from his physical desire, self-thwarting" (55). Tom sees Lydia not as she is in these instances but rather as an ideal to be worshipped, and in his worship, he expects to in some way gain a piece of her: He "knew she was his woman, he knew her essence, that it was his to possess" (58), but he never truly can possess her, which is his main frustration.

During Lydia's first pregnancy with one of Tom's children, she turns significantly away from Tom, leaving him hurt and angry. Lydia does not attempt to coddle or reassure him during this time, but rather focuses on their unborn child. While "sometimes his anger broke on her," Lydia fights back (61). A similar dynamic is seen in the second generation of Brangwens, but Tom and Lydia have a far different result. As the birth of their child draws near, Lydia is overcome with memories of her late children and husband. Rather than be angry that she is remembering people outside of his knowledge, as he had in the past, Tom accepts that "he must stand back, leave her alone This is sacred to her, and he must not violate her with his comfort" (63). The fact that Lawrence has Tom come to this realization on the same page that Tom admits to feeling "like a broken arch" but has "remained himself . . . saved himself from crashing down into nothingness, from being squandered into fragments, by sheer tension" is significant (63). Here we see Tom's ability to accept his own and Lydia's separateness through Lydia's "rejection" of him. Later, when Lydia lies in childbirth, crying in pain, Tom acknowledges and accepts that the pain is not his own, but separate unto Lydia. He also acknowledges and accepts the emotional pain of Lydia's

young daughter, Anna, who is tired, frightened, and craving her mother's company. Tom not only acknowledges Anna's pain, but he successfully soothes her, marking the beginning of a strong bond with the child. These are crucial steps for Tom in working through his narcissism, but he could not have come to these realizations without Lydia's help.

According to Kohut, the only way to treat narcissism-based transference issues is for the analyst in the role of the idealized self-object to allow the patient (analysand) to keep that connection and then work toward the repair of that broken bond.

If the child experiences the traumatic loss of the idealized object . . . or a traumatic (severe and sudden, or not phase-appropriate) disappointment in it, then optimal internalization does not take place. The child does not acquire the needed internal structure, his psyche remains fixated on an archaic self-object, and the personality will . . . be dependent on certain objects in what seems to be an intense form of object hunger. (45)

Through a series of gradual disappointments, the analyst enables the patient to come to accept an imperfect reality and imperfect self. The analysand comes to terms with the idealized self-object's lack of perfection and his or her own subsequent feelings of inadequacy.

This is what Lawrence dramatizes with Tom in relation to Lydia's rejections. Tom is able to acknowledge Lydia's separateness from him as a person and is forced to learn to cope in her absence. When Tom sees that he hasn't fallen apart without her, he becomes more stable. However, Tom is not fully "cured" of his narcissism; Lawrence instead gives us a realistic depiction of psychological struggle. This struggle is repeated by nearly all of the characters of the novel. In doing this, Lawrence reflects how real people toe the line between maturity and dysfunction, progress and regression. Thus despite his advances here, Tom, too, will falter in the continuation of the novel.

After Lydia's self-imposed, pregnancy-based isolation ends, she and Tom start to make love again, which rekindles Tom's desire to fully possess her. During Lydia's pregnancy with her and Tom's second child, she pushes him away again, which leads to

his frustration once more. Lydia confronts Tom with his selfish, childish need to have all of her attention all of the time. She accuses him of not realizing her as a person: “You came to me as if it was for nothing, as if I was nothing there. When Paul came to me, I *was* something to him—a woman, I was. To you I am nothing” (89). Tom responds that Lydia’s attitude towards him equally makes him feel as if he were nothing. This marks the beginning of an understanding between Lydia and Tom, where they both begin to recognize each other as people and work to keep the other happy. Ben-Ephraim suggests that in Tom and Lydia’s subsequent sexual encounters, Lydia is trying to bolster Tom’s confidence and sense of masculinity, attempting to wean him off of his need for her: “She amplifies him by showing him his own male power. This is not an artificial bolstering, but the realization of Tom’s potential” (139). Ben-Ephraim explains that “Lydia stubbornly refuses to allow Tom to bow, in awe, before her femaleness. She demands that they enter the darkness as equals, that he maintain self-possession, for only the man who has himself can lose himself in something greater” (139). Lydia is forcing Tom to stand on his own two feet and rely on her less by “[leading] Tom to the vivid insight that the satisfying, regenerating

relation to the greater beyond depends on first acknowledging the beyond in the other person . . . both are temporarily and fruitfully obliterated” (140).

Ben-Ephraim argues, however, that Lydia’s attempts are in vain and that Tom never truly grows as a separate person, that “he continues to blur the distinction between himself and the people close to him. . . not only in relation to Lydia but toward their daughter, Anna” (141). I must disagree with Ben-Ephraim on the grounds that Tom’s early relationship with Anna indicates his ability to view others as individuals who exist in relation to him, not as a part of him. Tom’s relationship with Anna is not purely one of narcissistic transference. Tom does not see Anna only as an extension of himself, nor does he set impossible ideals for her. This is not to say that their father-daughter relationship is entirely healthy, as we shall see, but it certainly isn’t a wholly narcissistic one, as Tom is devoted to improving Anna’s separate life and happiness.

In fact, Tom’s first major interaction with Anna, while Lydia is in labor, best demonstrates Tom’s acceptance of this fact. In the scene, a frightened Anna is crying for her mother and refuses to cooperate with

Tilly the maid's attempts to dress her for bed. Tom is himself tired and frustrated, but rather than demand Anna's silence, he instead opts to allow her to cry: "Let the mother cry in labour, let the child cry in resistance, since they would do so. Why should he fight against it, why resist? Let it be, if it were so. Let them be as they were, if they insisted" (Lawrence 74). In trying to calm Anna, Tom takes her to the barn and holds her while he feeds the animals. Standing in the "softly-illuminated stillness and calmness of the barn" (75), Tom feeds the animals in a slow and calming rhythm until Anna relaxes and falls asleep. Schapiro compares the barn setting to the womb: "The characters are enveloped in a rhythmic, warm and secure space, a place of animal satiation and mindless, bodily contentment" (83). Schapiro argues that in placing Tom in this womb-like environment after he has been shown to accept Lydia's separateness from himself, Lawrence demonstrates Tom's own identification with maternal nurturing qualities: "[He] discovers the maternal within himself and assumes the role of tender, soothing nurturer" (83). This is what makes this scene so poignant and telling of Tom's progress; for the first time in his life, Tom is the provider of comfort rather than the needy child clamoring for it. He gives this comfort not out of personal

need but rather to soothe a troubled child. The scene also marks the beginning of Tom's lifelong devotion to his daughter.

At the start of "The Girlhood of Anna Lensky," we are told that "Tom Brangwen never loved his own son as he loved his step-child Anna" (78). At this point in the novel, Lydia and Tom are struggling to recognize one another as individuals, and so Tom "[forms] another centre of love in her child, Anna. Gradually a part of his stream of life was diverted to the child, relieving the main flood to his wife" (79). While this might seem to imply that Tom forms a narcissistic attachment to the child, this is not the case. While Tom enjoys and values his time with his stepdaughter, he does not feed on it in the manner of a narcissistic parent. Instead, he dedicates himself to her pleasure. He sings to her, plays with her, and takes her on trips into town. This does not mean that Tom is a perfect parent—he does make significant mistakes in his parenting. One such mistake, which will be examined further later, occurs on Tom and Anna's outings. When a townspeople asks Tom if Anna is his child, Tom responds, "It belongs to my Missis" (83). At this point in their relationship, Anna has begun to attach herself to Tom in the way that she formerly was attached to her mother, and Anna's

perception of Tom's denial of their connection deeply irritates her and reminds her of her "alienation" (83) from him. However, Tom's attachment to Anna is one of genuine love and desire for her welfare, rather than merely narcissistic need.

Tom wants only the best for Anna, believing that "If she chose to be royal, royal she shall be. He stood between her and the world" (96). Tom sees it as his personal duty to see to Anna's happiness. This is why Tom becomes so angry after a teenaged Anna announces her engagement to her step cousin, Will Brangwen. Tom can see through Will's thin veneer as a civilized and decent man. He can see that Will is not an appropriate match for his daughter and thus he is resistant. This causes Anna to lose her temper and angrily declare that Tom isn't her real father, and thus he has no real control over whom she marries. This shatters the fragile self-image that Tom has spent nearly twenty years cultivating. He begins to doubt the validity of his life's work and is shocked to find himself old enough to have a married daughter.

This is where I agree with Ben-Ephraim's assertion that Tom ultimately fails to develop "a precise, definite sense of self" (141). From this point on in the novel, Tom

is “plagued by a continuing sense of vulnerability” (141). He reverts back to the feelings of unreality that he experienced as a youth, previous to his breakthroughs with Lydia. He exhibits what Kernberg describes as the narcissist’s “inability to come to terms with old age, to accept the fact that a younger generation now possesses many of the previously cherished gratifications of beauty, wealth, power and, particularly, creativity” (312).

Even Tom’s death assumes narcissistic qualities. Tom returns home drunk to the Marsh during a storm that heavily floods the farm. Tom’s drunkenness here is intentional. From the beginning of the novel we remember that drinking was Tom’s way of coping with his feelings of unreality in his pre-Lydia world. The loss of his sense of self following Anna’s engagement has thrown Tom back into this unreality, and thus he has taken up his old comfort. In this state, Tom wanders down a flooded path to attempt to find the source of the flood, slips and falls. Lawrence describes Tom’s drowning: “He fought in a black horror of suffocation, fighting, wrestling, but always borne down, borne inevitably down. Still he wrestled and fought to get himself free, in the unutterable struggle of suffocation, but he always fell again, deeper” (229). The

language that Lawrence uses here for Tom's death is similar to language used to describe Tom's feelings of unreality and his fears of a fusing self-annihilation earlier in the novel. Later, Lawrence uses this same flood imagery to describe Will Brangwen's narcissistic character. Ben-Ephraim explains Lawrence's use of water imagery for these two characters: it "produces a consistent association between that element and the male tendency toward disintegration . . . water seems to indicate both the man who fails to distinguish himself from this [natural, primitive] power and the power itself in its annihilating dimension" (142). In other words, the water not only serves as a metaphor for the unreality experienced by Tom (and later Will), but also for his own masculine power that he fails to realize and properly wield.

Thus imagery of Tom's death exemplifies his lack of an autonomous self. Despite his progress as displayed in his relationships with Lydia and Anna, Tom's death signifies his ultimate inability to transcend the narcissistic state. While Tom shows moments of acceptance of the separateness of self and others, ultimately he is unable to move beyond a narcissistic fantasy of merging. The merging and self-annihilation that Tom experiences in the flood is freeing

and euphoric, but equally terrifying and destructive. Tom is not the last of the Brangwens to succumb to a narcissistic state. As previously discussed, these patterns of behavior repeat throughout the generations, and the second generation of Brangwens is by no means exempt from Tom's struggles.

III. Anna and Will Brangwen

With Anna, the Brangwen family officially becomes a line of narcissistic persons. Her relationship with Tom is perhaps the direct cause. While Tom doesn't place unrealistic expectations on Anna, as his mother before did to him, Tom does encourage a deep sense of personal importance in Anna and encourages her grandiosity. As previously mentioned, Tom insists that Anna can be and have whatever she wants. As such, Anna develops a strong bond with her adoptive father. She comes to rely on him for both comfort and recognition of self. Much like Tom's relationship with Lydia, Anna's relationship to Tom takes on a narcissistic idealizing element.

Initially, Anna maintains a very close and possessive relationship with her mother. She

“seemed cold, resenting her mother, critical of her. It was: ‘I don’t like you to do that, mother,’ or, ‘I don’t like you to say that’” (65). Yet at the same time, Anna becomes inconsolable when her mother is away for too long. While Anna can be clingy towards her mother, she can also be kind and caring: “She was curiously hard, and then passionately tender-hearted. Her mother was ill, the child stole about on tip-toe in the bedroom for hours, being nurse, and doing the thing thoughtfully and diligently” (68); however, “Another day, her mother was unhappy, Anna would stand . . . glowering” (68). Lawrence takes care to tell the reader that Anna is “difficult with her affections” (67). Despite her later closeness and narcissistic attachment to Tom, Anna is initially very hostile towards Tom and his attempts to create a relationship with Lydia. She angrily confronts Tom in his and Lydia’s bed, asserting that her mother only sleeps with *her*. Tom’s attempts to compromise with all three of them sharing a bed are met with Anna’s whining protests. When Tom asks Anna if she likes Lydia now having a husband, she replies “No . . . I don’t *want*” (65).

Anna remains resistant to Tom for some time, arguing that she doesn’t live with him but rather with her mother. As Lydia grows

more distant due to her pregnancy, Anna becomes restless. She demands to go “home” (69). Despite herself, however, Anna “gradually, without knowing it herself . . . clung to [Tom], in her lost, childish, desolate moments, when it was good to creep up to something big and warm, and bury her little self in his big, unlimited being” (66). As the distance between Anna and Lydia grows, Anna begins to shift her attentions to Tom. After the barn scene previously described, Tom’s presence and approval become deeply important to her.

Validation through Tom becomes exceedingly important to Anna. Because Anna holds her father in such high esteem, she assumes that he is an important person to all and that her association with him in turn means that “she [is] installed beside him on high” (81). We are told that “she did not like the people who saluted [Tom] and did not salute her” (81), meaning that Anna feels that due to her connection to her father—whom she deems to be an important man—she too is special and deserving of respect and admiration. When this notion is contradicted, Anna grows angry. For instance, when Tom refers to Anna as solely Lydia’s child, Anna takes this as a personal insult: “Anna was very conscious of her derivation from her mother, in the end, and

of her alienation” (83). Anna does not like being reminded that she is not really Tom’s child. Because she has shifted her affections and narcissistic attachment from her mother to Tom—whom she sees as a more reliable source of validation—she wishes to be viewed as Tom’s child rather than Lydia’s.

Because Anna feels in doubt over whether or not Tom views her as his own child, Anna fears abandonment, such as when Tom takes Anna into town and leaves her unattended at the pub while he does business. Anna immediately worries that he has abandoned her: “A deep, gathering coldness of isolation took hold on her. He was never coming back. She sat on, frozen, unmoving” (83). This fear of abandonment and isolation, as both Kohut and Kernberg describe, is at the core of the narcissistic condition. In Tom’s absence, Anna revels in the attention afforded her by the patrons of the pub. Because the men play and joke with her, Anna accepts the attention gladly.

Anna’s interactions with people who are not family members are important to understanding Anna’s narcissistic nature. For instance, the narrator tells us that “Anna did not care much for other children. She domineered them, she treated them as if they were extremely young and incapable, to her

they were little people, they were not her equals” (80). This line of thinking persists throughout Anna’s life. As an adolescent, she attempts to make friends at her finishing school only to “[come] to a speedy conclusion; they galled and maddened her, they were petty and mean” (94). Though Anna initially “thought all the girls . . . very ladylike and wonderful” (94), they inevitably fall short of her expectations. Anna has “a curious contempt for ordinary people, a benevolent superiority. She was very shy, and tortured with misery when people did not like her” (92). This is typical of the deep sense of inadequacy and insecurity, and the consequent defensive grandiosity, of pathological narcissism.

Anna is also unable to recognize other people as “real people” (93). Anna’s definition of “real people” aligns with Tom’s vow to make Anna “royal”; she defines the “real world” as “where kings and lords and princes moved and fulfilled their shining lives, whilst queens and ladies and princesses upheld the noble order” (93). Anna’s “real world” is made up of beautiful and important persons, a vastly different place than the Marsh. She despises “ugliness or intrusion or arrogance” (92) in other people. “Very few people whom she met were significant to her. They seemed parts

of a herd, undistinguished” (92). Anna refuses to see the everyday people who make up her young life—Tilly the maid, her younger brother Fred, and the man who sells nuts—as fully realized individuals. Though Anna eventually comes to accept Tilly as “belonging to the household” (67), she fails to recognize her as an individual. Anna “adores” (92) her younger brother, Fred, “but did not consider [him] as a real, separate being” (92). Anna does, however, view the elderly Baron Skrebensky as “real” despite the fact that they only ever meet once and he never speaks a word of English to her. Perhaps the idea of the Baron as a “real” person persists because of his lack of interaction with her. Lawrence gives us this insight into Anna’s way of viewing people:

She had a curious shrinking from commonplace people, and particularly from the young lady of her day. She would not go into company because of the ill-at-ease feeling other people brought upon her. She half respected these people, and continuous disillusion maddened her. She wanted to respect them. Still she thought the people that she did not know were wonderful. Those she knew seemed always to be limiting her,

tying her up in little falsities that irritated her beyond bearing. She would rather stay at home and avoid the rest of the world, leave it illusory. (94)

Anna's worldview almost exactly matches Kernberg's description of the worldview of the narcissist:

This devaluated concept of self can be seen especially in narcissistic patients who divide the world into famous, rich, and great people on the one hand and the despicable, worthless, 'mediocrity' on the other. Such patients are afraid of not belonging to the company of the great, rich, and powerful, and of belonging instead to the 'mediocre,' by which they mean worthless and despicable rather than 'average' in the ordinary sense of the term. (234)

Anna upholds ideals of what people should be and how they should act. Actually interacting with other people shatters her concept of who and what people are supposed to be. Other people are found to be imperfect and flawed, which opens Anna up to the possibility that she is also imperfect

and flawed. Because this notion goes against the idea of “specialness” that has been ingrained in Anna by Tom, Anna feels the need to reject the idea that other people are actual people. It is instead easier to pretend that they are “illusory.”

As Kernberg explains, “the intrapsychic world of these patients is populated only by their own grandiose self, by devaluated, shadowy images of self and others, and by potential persecutors representing the non-integrated sadistic superego forerunners, as well as primitive, distorted object images onto whom intense oral sadism has been projected” (282). Therefore, Anna’s devaluation of the people around her is a preemptive strike against their possible rejection of her. The narrator states that “The people she met outside seemed to begrudge her her very existence. They seemed to want to belittle her also She was never quite sure, in herself, whether she were wrong or whether the others were wrong” (Lawrence 95). Yet “She still kept an ideal: a free, proud lady absolved from the petty ties, existing beyond petty considerations” (95). Thus it is clear that Anna has chosen to continue to devalue others in order to preserve her ideal, grandiose sense of self, the royal “lady” that Tom encourages her to be.

Despite this devaluation of others, Anna still seeks other “special,” “real” people with whom to share her life. Anna’s marriage to Will is, in fact, one of these attempts to create a partnership with another real person. She seeks the seemingly easy marriage that her parents have: “a potent intimacy that existed inarticulate and wild, following its own course” (99). Anna quickly learns, however, that Will is a deeply flawed individual whose view of marriage and partnership is very different from her own.

There is very little to say about Will as an individual because he lacks an individual self in a far more significant way than the other Brangwens do. Whereas Tom and Anna lack whole selves, they still retain a core sense of being. Will, however, does not. Will is defined primarily by his hunger for reality and unity only within or through another person. While Lawrence gives us substantial descriptions of Tom, Anna, and even Ursula outside of their searches for an Other to merge with, he does not provide much information about Will outside of this search. In fact, one could argue that Will’s “self” *is* comprised entirely of this search. As Schapiro writes, “Will’s inner void, his lack of a coherent or authentic experience of self, dooms the possibility for mutual

recognition in his relationship with Anna” (88). It is as though Will’s “self” is exactly what he fears it is: unstable, fragmentary, and entirely dependent on others. As Kleinbard explains using Laing’s theory of ontological insecurity, Will experiences “the feeling that he is unreal and the related fantasy that he is almost entirely dependent upon other people for his reality as well as his personal identity” (154).

This is a similar state to that of Tom at the beginning of the novel. Lawrence even repeats his description of Tom’s state of unreality in Will’s narrative by reusing the flood metaphor. In this instance, however, Will has a rock to cling to in the “heaving flood” (173) of the outside world: Anna. Without Anna, Will fears that he will cease to be.

Was he impotent, or a cripple, or a defective, or a fragment? . . . What was he afraid of? Why did life without Anna seem to him just a horrible welter, everything jostling in a meaningless, dark, fathomless flood? . . . This horrible slipping into unreality drove him mad, his soul screamed with fear and agony. Yet she was pushing him off her . . . thrusting him off, into the deep

water, into the frenzy and agony of uncertainty. (174)

Will is ashamed of his need for Anna to provide him with substance as a man. This is consistent with Kernberg's descriptions of the narcissist's romantic/sexual relationships: "The greatest fear of these patients is to be dependent on anybody else, because to depend means to hate, envy, and expose themselves to the danger of being exploited, mistreated, and frustrated" (Kernberg 235). Will is putting his existence, so to speak, in Anna's hands, and thus he sees her "thrusting him off" to be a betrayal of that trust. In Anna, Will had hoped to find a sort of "a hand-in-glove union, not a relationship between two separate people" (*Freud and Beyond* 160); as we have seen before, the narcissistic Brangwens often "envision their ideal partner[s] as extensions of themselves, as intensely needed, functional aspects of their own subjective experience[s]" (160). Whereas Tom's relationships closely resemble those described in Kohut's idealizing transference, Will's resemble the mirroring transference.

Kohut describes the mirroring transference as the "regressively altered editions of a child's demands for attention, approval, and

for the confirmatory echoing of its presence, and they always contain an admixture of . . . tyranny and over possessiveness” (Kohut 124). Essentially, the narcissist in the midst of the mirroring transference seeks to have the object in some way reflect his or her own person. The narcissist desires—or imagines—a deep similarity in feeling, thought, and action in the object of their “affections” (or perhaps more aptly, their obsession). Will desires Anna to share his need to be one. When she spurns this idea, it drives him into a rage; he needs her to fuel his own sense of self and identity, something that he feels he lacks without her presence. As Kleinbard puts it, “Clinging to Anna . . . Will feels that his life and identity are submerged in hers” (157).

This brings us to Will’s woodcarving of the creation of Eve. In this carving, we get some insight into Will’s feelings about the relationship between men and women. “The carving does reflect Will’s view of woman as a link between God . . . and man, a figure looking for salvation through woman” (147), Ben-Ephraim notes. As previously discussed, Will clings to the idea that Anna supplies him with substance and purpose. Without her, his life lacks order or meaning. But Will does not need Anna, per se, but simply a woman: “A woman, he must have a

woman. And having a woman, he must be free of her. It would be the same position. For he could not be free of her” (173). Despite Will’s desire for a woman to complete him, he also fears his dependency on her. Terror or shame at one’s overdependence on another is a hallmark of the narcissistic personality. Many Lawrencian scholars argue that Will sees Anna as a replacement for his mother and thus places her—and other, later female figures in his life—in the role of the pre-oedipal mother-figure. Disturbances in early development can lead to resentment, hatred, or even fear of the mother-figure. In Will’s case, he suffers from a fear of destruction by the mother-figure—Anna. Judith Ruderman discusses this phenomenon in her book *The Devouring Mother*: “The pre-oedipal tension between the desires for merger and for separation, and the fear of the mother as an ego destroyer, may lead to the child’s perceiving the mother as a wild animal who will eat him up” (10). Essentially, although Will desperately wants to merge with Anna, he also recognizes on a basic level that merging will eradicate his own self. His fear and hatred of the “devouring” maternal figure defends against his desire to merge with her.

Yet Will still desires a female counterpart to whom he can cling and “feed” from, to use Kernberg’s language. Later, in lieu of Anna’s reluctance to serve this purpose, Will seeks other “food,” first from a young woman he meets at the theater, and then his own daughter. No matter whom he preys upon, Will still needs some form of surrender from the female Other in order to be satisfied and to feel dominance over his “other half.” In his relationship with Anna, his failure to dominate disturbs him. Because Anna does not seem to need him, Will feels deeply ashamed:

He was afraid. He was afraid to know he was alone. For she seemed fulfilled and separate and sufficient in her half of the world. He could not bear to know that he was cut off. Why could he not be always one with her? . . . Why must he be set in this separateness, why could she not be with him, close . . . as one with him? She must be one with him. (166)

This shame quickly turns to anger once Anna becomes pregnant. Anna’s pleasure and happiness in her pregnancy only serves to remind Will of the obstacles that now stand between him and his fantasies of

merging with her. “He was cruel to her. But all the time he was ashamed. And being ashamed, he was more cruel. For he was ashamed that he could not come to fulfillment without her” (169). Will fears that Anna has gotten all that she needs from him—specifically, a child—and thus he will now be cast aside. Like a child throwing a tantrum, he lashes out in the most harmful ways that he can muster. Will’s shame and defensive reaction exemplify what Kernberg describes as the deepest sense of the narcissistic character:

The narcissistic character defenses protect the patient not only against the intensity of his narcissistic rage, but also against his deep convictions of unworthiness, his frightening image of the world as being devoid of food and love, and his self-concept of the hungry wolf out to kill, eat, and survive.
(Kernberg 276)

Because Will depends so heavily on Anna for a sense of wholeness, her rejection causes him to project his own “hunger” onto her. He casts her as the exploitive partner in their relationship; she has taken from and “fed” from him. He makes himself a victim to protect himself from narcissistic injury:

“to him she was a flame that consumed him. The flame flowed up his limbs, flowed through him, till he was consumed, till he existed only as an unconscious, dark transit of flame, deriving from her” (Lawrence 121).

It is this hunger for unity and wholeness through another human being—specifically, a woman—that creates such a strain in Anna and Will’s marriage. Going as far back as the gathering of the sheaves scene, one can see how Lawrence foreshadows Anna and Will’s later relational dynamics. In that scene, Anna and Will are moving in tandem on opposite sides of the field. They both feel the rhythm, but Will grows impatient: “Gradually, a low, deep-sounding will in him vibrated to her, tried to set her in accord, tried to bring her gradually to him, to a meeting, till they should be together, till they should meet Why was there always a space between them Why was he held away from her?” (115). Eventually, Will breaks out of the rhythm and comes to Anna. When they meet, they kiss passionately. It is after this moment that Will sets his sights specifically on not only marrying Anna, but on totally possessing her. “He wanted her, he wanted to be married to her, he wanted to have her altogether, as his own forever. And he

waited, intent, for the accomplishment” (117). The narrator makes a point to tell the reader that “[Will] felt he could not alter from what he was fixed upon, his will was set. To alter it he must be destroyed” (118).

Will has fixated on Anna as necessary for his existence. The fixation is similar to that of Tom’s on Lydia; both are described as a much needed savior and bringer of unity. However, Will’s fixation on Anna is even stronger than Tom’s on Lydia. Once married, Will imagines his and Anna’s union as utopian:

. . . it was as if the heavens had fallen, and he were sitting with [Anna] among the ruins, in a new world, everybody else buried, themselves two blissful survivors, with everything to squander as they would . . . they were the only inhabitants of the visible earth, the rest were under the flood. And being alone in the world, they were a law unto themselves . . . it was as if they were at the very centre of all the slow wheeling of space and the rapid agitation of life . . . they were at the heart of eternity.
(134-135)

In Anna, Will sees not only a means to merge with another person, thus gaining a long sought sense of reality, but also as a means to escape the outside world. With Anna, Will hopes to avoid outside responsibility and simply exist with her and her only: “[he] wanted to be done with the outside world, to declare it finished forever” (140). This, of course, cannot come to pass, not only because such an existence is impossible, but because Anna does not want to live that life. Anna wants to rejoin the world with Will by her side, but Will fails to see this move as an attempt to start their lives together. Instead, “It made him frightened and furious and miserable. He was afraid all would be lost that he had so newly come unto . . . she might have been perfect with him, and kept him perfect . . . Now he must be deposed, his joy must be destroyed, he must put on the vulgar, shallow death of an outward existence” (140). Will sees Anna wanting to rejoin the world as a personal betrayal that deprives him of his opportunity to be “perfect.” To Will, a man who so fears that he is imperfect and unsubstantial, this is the ultimate betrayal. Now, Will begins to hate Anna.

One of the hallmarks of the narcissist, according to Kernberg, is his or her inability to simultaneously love and hate a person.

Because “The [person] wants to maximize pleasurable experiences with good objects and to destroy bad objects who provoke unpleasurable experiences” (*Freud and Beyond* 175), encountering another person who provides both pleasurable and hurtful experiences is confusing. The narcissist needs to divide the world into pleasurable and painful, important and insignificant; not to have a clear cut difference between the two is distressing. This split condition is the hallmark of the borderline personality disorder that Kernberg believes also underlies pathological narcissism. According to Kernberg, “the borderline personality is developmentally able to distinguish between images of self and others, but defensively retreats from the capacity to knit together good and bad affects and object relationships” (*Freud and Beyond* 175).

For Will in particular, this split condition is the cause of much of his anguish in relation to Anna. Her rejection of his attempts towards unity deeply wounds him, but his need to devote himself to her is so great that even hating her hurts him. Thus Will hates himself for hating Anna because he feels that he has irreparably separated himself from the one person he believes has the power to make him whole. But Will finds

that he cannot hate Anna forever, and so when the memory of the injury passes or his need to be close to her becomes too much for him to bear, he swings back to love again. Will seesaws between loving and hating Anna, which only serves to confuse and anger her.

This cycle of loving and hating becomes a pattern for Anna and Will. At first, Anna shrinks away from Will's temper and laments how the intimacy and peace from their early days has gone. But eventually Anna begins to fight back. She also begins to find her own triggers for hatred towards Will. Particularly, Anna despises Will's love of the church and other symbols of reverence. For Will, "The church had an irresistible attraction for him . . . the church teaching itself meant nothing to him . . . In church he wanted a dark, nameless emotion, the emotion of all the great mysteries of passion" (Lawrence 147). In the church, Will seeks the same sort of escape and merging that he looks for in Anna. As Howe suggests in *D.H. Lawrence and the Art of the Self*, "Will wants, quite simply, to return to the womb" (43), and "The cave, house, and woman are patent womb symbols" (43) to which Will has become attached.

On the one hand, Anna is “furious at [Will’s] psychological and emotional dependency on her, which she experiences as suffocating and oppressive” (Schapiro 88), but on the other hand, she “is narcissistically enraged by Will’s failure to recognize her” (84). When Anna and Will visit the cathedral or when he is caught up in a book of religious art, Will ignores Anna’s presence and allows himself to be swept up in the symbols. In these objects, Will finds the absolution that he has been seeking, a unity with something beyond himself. Ben-Ephraim summarizes the nature of this dynamic:

Both the church and Anna’s body allow Will to lose his identity into something exterior. Anna opposes Will’s religious adoration because of its relation to the merging need that plagues their marriage. At the same time, Anna’s antagonism to Will’s belief is her way of being destructive . . . she shows her contradictory possessiveness by trying to deny areas of experience within which he fails to need her. (147)

Anna and Will have differing opinions on the concepts of freedom and the soul.

Whereas Anna sees her soul as “intimately mixed up with the thought of her own self” (Lawrence 148), she sees Will’s as “a dark, inhuman thing caring nothing for humanity . . . [that] in the gloom and mystery of the church . . . lived and ran free” (148).

Because Anna sees the soul as a part of herself that cannot be parted from her, she is disturbed and even angered by the possibility that Will’s soul can be free of his body and thus of her: “He was very strange to her, and in this Church spirit, in conceiving himself as a soul, he seemed to escape her. In a way, she envied it him, this dark freedom and jubilation of the soul . . . It fascinated her. Again she hated it . . . she despised him, wanted to destroy it in him” (148).

We must not forget that the novel portrays Anna as a narcissistic figure as well. It is easy for her tendencies to be overshadowed by Will’s overtures of pathological and destructive narcissism, but Anna is equally destructive in their relationship. Rather than encourage Will to seek pleasure in things outside of their marriage—especially given that she feels she is being “borne down by him . . . by the clinging, heavy weight of him” (172)—Anna is instead insulted that Will should express interest and devotion to something or someone not herself. As much

as Anna worries about Will wanting to “devour her” (172), and as hard as she fights to maintain a self separate from him, she is unable to do so. Anna, bound by her own narcissistic demands, still needs Will to bolster her own fragile self.

Anna realizes that “he was a dark opposite to her, that they were opposites, not complements” (157), and thus sets up Will as a foil to herself. She defines herself as the opposite of Will: strong, dominant, good, victorious, independent. In a sense, Anna, too, is seeing Will in terms of a mirroring transference, but as an opposite to her rather than as an exact duplicate much as a mirror reflection reverses the image. Anna refuses to lapse into reverence of symbols as Will does because Anna defines herself as a woman of reason; symbols carry no meaning for her. So when she does experience moments of fascination with these objects that Will so reveres, she unwittingly begins to align herself with him; he ceases to be her foil, which in turn deeply angers her:

What was he doing? What
connection was there between him
and the lamb in the glass?
Suddenly it gleamed to her
dominant, this lamb with the flag.
Suddenly she had a powerful

mystic experience, the power of the tradition seized on her, she was transported to another world. And she hated it, resisted it . . . And dark, violent hatred of her husband swept up in her. (Lawrence 148-149)

Instead of losing her sense of self in the Other as Tom does in Lydia, Anna destroys Will's beliefs, thus saving herself from the possibility of being transported to and lost in Will's world. She also destroys the objects that Will loves because "Anna is so fearful of Will's absolutism that she denies the possibility of all spiritual experience" (Ben-Ephraim 151). She fears Will "devouring" her, forcing her into merging with him, thus losing her much protected sense of separateness from him and the world.

In destroying Will's sacred objects, Anna leaves Will only herself and, later, their daughter, Ursula. This only makes Will hold tighter to Anna because she is the only thing that he has left, which in turn makes Anna push him more forcefully away. This cycle constantly repeats. The result is a battle for dominance between two narcissists who are quick to suffer injury from the other's attempts to absorb the other. As Howe observes, "The struggle between male and

female, to overwhelm before one is overwhelmed, is central in the love relationship of Will and Anna” (45). First, Anna refuses to respect or acknowledge Will as an authority figure. “Was she not herself? How could one who was not of her own kind presume with authority?” (Lawrence 154). In the same haughty manner that she had as a child, Anna dismisses Will as someone unimportant, one of the shadow people who exist outside of the “real world.”

Will senses this lack of respect, and at first it galls him. He continues trying to “impose himself on her . . . He must beat her, and make her stay with him” (158), but to no avail. His dark moods and temper have no effect on Anna other than to further anger her, pushing her to be even crueler to him. Eventually, “He ceased to fret about his life. He relaxed his will and let everything go . . . She had conquered” (192). Will “learned to submit to Anna. She forced him to the spirit of her laws, whilst leaving him the letter of his own” (194); “he served his wife and the little matriarchy . . . he gave up trying to have the spiritual superiority and control, or even her respect” (193). Will stops trying; he has been beaten down by Anna and can no longer fight to have dominance over their joint life together.

This defeat prompts Will to try to carve out a separate self from Anna. Will comes into “his own existence . . . But it was a very dumb, weak, helpless self, a crawling nursling . . . He was there for her, all for her” (177). But despite Will’s assertion that this new self is free of need for other people, his actions say otherwise. His later attempts to control, dominate, and humiliate a girl at the theater, as well as his daughter Ursula, show that Will has simply moved on to other prey after finding Anna too difficult to possess. Will is at least partially aware of this lack of progress in his personal growth: “He was aware of some limit to himself, of something unformed in his very being, of some buds which were not ripe in him, some folded centres of darkness which would never develop and unfold whilst he was alive in the body. He was unready for fulfillment. Something undeveloped in him limited him” (195). Will knows at his core that he is not as free and independent as he claims to be; his new self is not only weak, it is, as the narrator states, “unformed.”

Anna, too, is presented with an opportunity to grow beyond her narcissism. As previously discussed, Anna “wanted her own life . . . She wanted her own, old sharp self, detached, detached, active but not absorbed” (186). After the birth of her first

child, Anna begins to feel something pulling her away. She imagines a door half open to her, and on the other side lies the rest of the world. She becomes aware that it is “something she had not, something she did not grasp, could not arrive at. There was something beyond her” (181). Anna can step through that door and join the rest of the world. She has the opportunity to begin to care about the people and the world around her. But instead “she could not go, when [the world] called, because she must stay at home now. With satisfaction she relinquished the adventure to the unknown. She was bearing her children” (182). Anna continues to reject the outside world, to refuse to acknowledge that she is a part of it, and instead she focuses solely on her children. The children, however, are only important to her for as long as they physically need her. As Ben-Ephraim explains, “Anna’s ‘victory’ is hollow; settling entirely for the pleasures and responsibilities of the flesh, she gives up the exploration of the world beyond her individual, physical self, and is limited” (150). Thus Anna perpetuates her narcissism by rejecting all that is not herself or directly related to herself.

IV. Ursula Brangwen

Anna and Will's daughter Ursula is affected by her parents' narcissism from a very young age. Will has perhaps the greatest influence on Ursula since he "took Ursula for his own" (197) above his and Anna's other children. As Schapiro notes, "The portrayal of Ursula's relationship with her father is a moving and psychologically astute account of a child's relationship with a narcissistic parent" (90); it is one that we haven't quite seen at earlier points in the novel. While I have argued that Tom's narcissism helped to shape Anna's own narcissistic tendencies, there is a distinct difference in the ways in which Tom interacts with Anna and how Will interacts with Ursula. As Schapiro argues, "Unlike Tom in relation to Anna . . . Will is unable to respond to Ursula as a suffering subject in her own right; she is to him only a narcissistic projection of his own infantile dependency, of his own intolerable vulnerability and helplessness" (89).

In Ursula, Will sees an opportunity to replace Anna as his primary love object. He believes that he can mould Ursula to suit his adult demands and psychological needs. He wants "the child to become his, to look at him and answer him" (197). But the narrator

tells us that Ursula “was awakened too soon. Too soon the call had come to her . . . her sleep-living heart was beaten into wakefulness by the striving of his bigger heart, by his clasping her to his body for love and fulfillment” (205). Ursula is much too young to understand the emotional demands being made of her, much less meet them. Kleinbard notes that “The demands that [Will] makes for confirmation and support from Ursula are the sorts that one would expect a child to make on its parent rather than the other way around” (Kleinbard 160), and because Ursula is a mere child, she is, of course, incapable of fulfilling said demands. Her inability to do so makes Ursula feel a sense of “smallness and inadequacy” (205) brought on when she fails to fulfill some meager command of her father’s. She feels as if “She could not do anything, she was not enough. She could not be important to him” (205). Will, meanwhile, simply becomes angry. His “black” anger from earlier in the novel returns and is turned against his daughter. The narrator describes how he “[smashes] into her sensitive child’s world” (207) and disrupts her moments of separate happiness at every turn. As Ben-Ephraim writes, “Will’s object with his young daughter is to match his will against hers: to dominate the

girl as he had been dominated” (154). Will is, in some ways, ultimately successful.

As a result of Will’s complete dominance over her life, the young Ursula has a difficult time dealing with the outside world. Her whole world consists of only her and her father: “The return or the departure of the father was the one event which the child remembered. When he came, something woke up in her, some yearning. She knew when he was out of joint or irritable or tired: then she was uneasy, she could not rest” (203). She begins to see the world as something incidental, something that happens outside of her and thus has no bearing on her as a person. Thus, she is only left with her own small world. In a scene where Ursula makes mistakes while attempting to help Will plant seeds in the garden, Will scolds the child by essentially telling her that her help caused more harm than good. This scolding shatters Ursula’s entire world. It opens her eyes to the fact that she and her father are separate entities, that “He had another world from hers” (206). The devastating news sends Ursula into a panic:

Her soul, her consciousness
seemed to die away. She became
shut off and senseless, a little fixed

creature whose soul had gone hard
. . . The sense of her own unreality
hardened her like a frost. She no
longer cared . . . She cut off her
childish soul from memory, so that
the pain, and the insult should not
be real . . . There was now nothing
in the world but her own self . . .
she came to believe in the outward
malevolence that was against her . .
. even her adored father was part of
this malevolence . . . she learned to
harden her soul in resistance and
denial of all that was outside her,
harden herself upon her own being.
(207-208)

The harshness of her father's words causes Ursula to "harden" herself and become "cut off." This same phrasing is used earlier by Will in relation to Anna's rejection of him during her pregnancy. Thus, one could argue, Will achieves dominance over his daughter and illustrates the cycle of narcissism and abuse that runs through the generations of the Brangwen family in this novel. However, Will's dominance is fleeting. The "hardening" of Ursula's soul leads her to ultimately reject her father's later attempts to "claim her" again. She offers only haughty smiles in response to his insults and jeers. Still "the child develops

profound feelings of inadequacy” (Schapiro 90) due to Will’s treatment of her. These feelings of inadequacy result in Ursula’s difficulties in connecting with others. She begins to regard other people as intentionally trying to hurt or insult her, and thus she has a hard time making friends with the other children in the village.

The narrator informs the reader that “She seemed to go with all her soul in her hands, yearning, to the other person . . . deep at the bottom of her was a childish antagonism of mistrust. She thought she loved everybody and believed in everybody. But because she could not love herself nor believe in herself, she mistrusted everybody” (268).

Throughout her childhood, Ursula feels “soulless, uncreated, [and] unformed” (271). Due to these feeling of inadequacy, she gravitates towards people whom she perceives as having a defined, stable sense of self (as opposed to her own amorphous one). First is Anton Skrebensky, who, in Ursula’s eyes “seemed perfectly, even fatally established . . . did not ask to be rendered before he could exist, before he could have [a] relationship with another person” (271). She also believes that “He was in possession of himself, of that, and no more. Other people could not really give

him anything nor take anything from him. His soul stood alone” (271).

With Skrebensky, Ursula sees an opportunity to reclaim reality. If Skrebensky can stand proud, separate, and complete in the world, then so can Ursula. Just as Tom is drawn to Lydia for her “foreignness,” Ursula is drawn to Skrebensky’s perceived “individuality” and separateness. She wants to use Skrebensky’s “individuality” to prop up her own fledgling self. She desires, as Schapiro says, “an ‘other’ against whom she can throw herself with wild, indeed, violent, physical and emotional abandon” (93). Ursula’s perception of his confidence boosts her own: “She was thrilled with a new life. For the first time, she was in love with a vision of herself: she saw it as it were a fine little reflection of herself in his eyes. And she must act up to this: she must be beautiful” (272). Ursula puts a great significance on Skrebensky’s opinion of her because she sees him as a pillar of personal strength, a pattern that she repeats with her teacher and lover, Winifred Inger. She wants to please him in order to maintain their relationship. With Skrebensky Ursula feels not only beautiful, but important. His very presence makes her feel “rich and augmented by it, as if she were the positive attraction and he the flow towards her”

(280). Skrebensky, however, is not as separate and individual as Ursula believes him to be; her attempts to “assert her indomitable, gorgeous female self” (Lawrence 282) only serve to annihilate Skrebensky: “She took him in the kiss, hard her kiss seized upon him, hard and fierce and burning corrosive as the moonlight. She seemed to be destroying him. He was reeling, summoning all his strength to keep his kiss upon her” (299).

This act of “annihilation” leaves Ursula “bruised” as if “she had hurt herself . . . in annihilating him” (300). Shortly thereafter, Skrebensky is called away by the army to a far off post and must part from Ursula. In his absence “she felt as if all, outside there in the world, were a hurt . . . against her. And something in her soul remained cold, apathetic, unchanging” (309). This failed relationship of supposed equals leads to Ursula’s next infatuation, her school teacher, Miss Inger.

As with Skrebensky, Ursula’s attraction to Winifred Inger comes from her perception that Winifred is a stable individual with her own complete sense of self. Following the loss of Skrebensky, Ursula loses her own sense of completeness and reality:

Her life at this time was unformed, palpitating, essentially shrinking from all touch. She gave something to other people, but she was never herself, since she *had* no self . . . But she shrank violently from people, ashamed she was not as they were, fixed, empathetic, but a wavering, undefined sensibility only. (311)

Ursula feels as though her offerings to others are spurned, that they take from her without giving anything in return. She believes in the “malevolent” outside, full of people who are somehow better adjusted than she. This trend continues when she meets Winifred.

[Winifred] was a rather beautiful woman of twenty-eight, a fearless-seeming, clean type of modern girl whose very independence betrays her to sorrow. She was clever, and expert in what she did, accurate, quick, commanding . . . She carried her head high . . . There was a look of nobility in the way she twisted her smooth brown hair . . . what Ursula adored so much was [Winifred’s] fine, upright, athletic bearing . . . She was proud and free

as a man, yet exquisite as a woman. (312)

Ursula is attracted to Winifred because she appears to possess the individuality that Ursula craves. As Ben-Ephraim observes, “the girl attempts to appropriate an identity through an admired model of the same sex” (162). Winifred also desires Ursula and they enter into a sexual and romantic relationship: “Their lives suddenly seemed to fuse into one, inseparable” (Lawrence 316).

While she is involved with Winifred, Ursula begins to adopt her lover’s ideas and beliefs, especially those of religion which in fact run counter to what Ursula believed in previously. Ursula wants to please Winifred and to emulate her as closely as possible. She exhibits the qualities of twinship (or alter-ego) transference as described by Kohut: “the patient assumes that the analyst is either like him or similar to him, or that the analyst’s psychological makeup is like, or is similar to, that of the patient” (115). Ursula, in emulating Winifred, is creating these “similarities” between them. She does not even seem to be aware that she is appropriating Winifred’s perspectives in this manner.

This perfectly describes Ursula's attachment to Winifred. When Ursula first meets Winifred, Ursula is struggling to gain a firm sense of self. Since she believes Winifred to be confident in herself, graceful, and exhibiting various other traits that Ursula covets, being with Winifred gives Ursula a way to assume those traits herself. As Schapiro notes, "The homosexual notes in Lawrence's fiction . . . spring from . . . the desire to merge with an other who is an idealized version of the self" (96). However, eventually Ursula begins to reject this merging. With horror, she realizes that "she was always herself. Never could she escape that: she could not put off being herself" (Lawrence 319). As in her relationship with Skrebensky, Ursula craves individuality while also needing an Other to merge with to bolster her weak and unsure sense of self:

She still adhered herself to Winifred Inger. But a sort of nausea was coming over her. She loved her mistress. But a heavy, clogged sense of deadness began to gather upon her, from the other woman's contact. And sometimes she thought Winifred was ugly, clayey . . . this heavy cleaving of moist clay, that cleaves because it has no life of its own. 319

As with Ursula's relationship with Skrebensky, the object of her love and desire for merger is a person who beneath the strong façade, also has a weak sense of self. Winifred uses Ursula in a similar but less destructive way than her father uses her as a child. Winifred appears to desire Ursula because of the girl's weak sense of self; it makes her easier for Winifred to mold to her own ways of thinking: "She wanted to bring Ursula to her own position of thought" (317). Eventually, Ursula arranges for Winifred to marry her uncle.

With Winifred at last cast off, Ursula is left with the reality that she is still as empty and unformed as before: "What was her life—a solid, formless, disintegrated nothing: Ursula Brangwen, a person without worth or importance . . . [she was] worthless and unvalued, neither wanted nor needed by anybody, and conscious of her own dead value" (332). Searching for meaning, Ursula writes to her old headmistress, who suggests that Ursula become a teacher and join the outside world. Ursula latches onto this idea:

She dreamed how she would make
the little, ugly children love her.
She would be so personal . . . She
would make everything personal
and vivid, she would give, give,

give all her great stories of wealth to her children, she would make them so happy, and they would prefer her to any teacher on the face of the earth. (341)

Ursula sees teaching as not only a chance to give her life meaning, but also to give herself importance. She envisions herself as the “gleaming sun of the school” (341) who will bring love to the “little ugly children.” She dreams of being the greatest teacher who has ever lived. This is a prime example of Ursula’s grandiosity, a grandiosity that, as both Kohut and Kernberg argue, defends against the underlying sense of worthlessness and nothingness.

Ursula’s grandiose dreams, unsurprisingly, do not materialize. The narration foreshadows this disillusionment in the train scene that precedes Ursula’s arrival at the school. In this episode, Ursula boards a train with other working people whom she sees as “unliving, spectral people” (342). At first, Ursula refuses to see herself as one of them, holding onto the notion that “her ticket surely was different from the rest” (343). Slowly but surely, however, the thought occurs to her that “she was also going to work. Her ticket was the same” (343). While Ursula tries to blend in with the other

working people, she feels a deep sense of fear, “an unknown, terrible grip upon her” (343). This uneasiness around “shadow people” is exhibited by other Brangwens and has been previously discussed in relation to the narcissistic condition. The same inability to view others as real people follows her to school, where the children become “a squadron . . . a collective inhuman thing” (350).

At the school, Ursula finds the education system to be a well-oiled and precise machine, a machine that Ursula despises and is reluctant to become a part of. The children and the staff, sensing her weakness, turn on her, forcing her to act the role of the harsh teacher as is expected of her. As the children continue to ignore and disregard her authority, Ursula realizes that her brand of personal teaching is not suited for this system: “She must . . . put away her personal self, become an instrument . . . working upon a certain material” (356). Ursula must become simply “Standard Five Teacher” and put aside her own self: “Over her flayed, exposed soul of a young girl who had gone open and warm to give herself to the children, there set a hard, insentient thing, that worked mechanically according to a system imposed” (367). However, this

approach is futile; Ursula still feels the slights of her students and colleagues.

Just as causing Skrebensky pain “bruises” Ursula, so does physically disciplining her students take its toll. Schapiro explains that the experience “[forces Ursula] to retreat back into the hard-shell defense she had developed as a child in relation to her father, a mode of being in which she denied her emotions” (97). As soon as her assignment is over, Ursula gladly leaves the classroom as a teacher and returns to school as a student, pursuing a college degree in teaching. Ursula makes the same mistake with college as she made before starting teaching: she idealizes it. Ursula imagines the college to be a “temple” (399) where “all the students . . . have a high, pure spirit, she wanted them to say only the real, genuine things” (399). Eventually the veneer fades and Ursula sees the “ugliness under everything” (403). Through these two episodes Ursula discovers that, as Hinz notes, “the somewhere-something she desires is more than a place or object” (38).

Whereas Hinz argues that this “somewhere-something” that Ursula desires is a oneness with the infinite, I believe that what Ursula desires is to finally feel at home and comfortable in her own skin. Again and

again, Ursula laments either her inability to feel like her own person or to escape herself. To me, this indicates that Ursula, like many people, just wants to feel grounded in her self. She desires a respite from the unreality and isolation of the narcissistic condition.

Disgusted by the school, Ursula's thoughts return back to Skrebensky, who she believes to be the only source of happiness in her life:

The memory of him was like the thought of the first radiant hours of morning . . . He held the keys of the sunshine . . . He could open to her, the gates of succeeding freedom and delight . . . He would have been the doorway to her, into the boundless sky of happiness and plunging, inexhaustible freedom which was the paradise of her soul.
(406)

Ursula believes that if she had stayed with Skrebensky, her life would have turned out better. When they meet again, Ursula thinks that Skrebensky is at last his own man, "balanced and sure" (410), an archetypal "Man" to counter her archetypal woman. Once again, however, Skrebensky fails to live up to that role. Ursula takes on the

dominant role in their relationship, taking and taking from Skrebensky, slowly draining him of agency.

While Ursula, as Hinz states, “planned to realize her individual infinitude” (40) through her relationship with Skrebensky, “what she discovers . . . is that as an individual she is limited to her individuality” (40). This leads to Ursula’s desire to “go.” She and Skrebensky part, but not before one last aggressive sexual encounter:

. . . she seized hold of his arm, held him fast, as if captive . . . she clinched hold of him, hard, as if suddenly she had the strength of destruction, she fastened her arms round him and tightened him in her grip, whilst her mouth sought his in a hard, rending, ever-increasing kiss, till his body was powerless in her grip, his heart melted in fear from the fierce, beaked, harpy’s kiss . . . till she had the heart of him. (444)

The language of the scene indicates Ursula’s domination and utter annihilation of Skrebensky. In this scene, Ursula overwhelms and destroys him, delighting in the havoc she wreaks. The episode ends with

both parties feeling ashamed, and it ultimately leads to the disintegration of their relationship.

Shortly after Ursula and Skrebensky part, Ursula becomes aware that she is with child. At first the thought frightens her, but then she decides to embrace it: “Only the living from day to day mattered, the beloved existence in the beyond, rich, peaceful, complete, with no beyond, no further trouble, no further complication . . . Who was she to be wanting some fantastic fulfillment in her life?” (448-449). Ursula plans to reunite with Skrebensky and marry him, throwing away her desire for something beyond that partnership. She writes him a letter, explaining her situation and her intent. However, the wait becomes too much for her and she becomes restless. One evening, she goes out for a walk in the rain and encounters a herd of horses.

At first, Ursula tries to avoid the horses: “She did not want to lift her face to them. She did not want to know that they were there” (451). The horses, however, offer her no such courtesy and charge at her: “the horses had burst before her . . . she was aware of their red nostrils flaming with long endurance, and of their haunches, so rounded, so massive, pressing, pressing,

pressing to burst the grip of their breasts, pressing forever till they went mad, running against the walls of time, and never bursting free” (452). She tries to run from them but “the horses thundered upon her . . . enclosing her . . . They were up against her” (453). The vigorous language Lawrence employs here is indicative of the intimidating and frightening power that the horses possess. Ursula fears that she will be overwhelmed and destroyed by them: “Her heart was gone, she had no more heart . . . her limbs were dissolved, she was dissolved . . . like water. All the hardness and looming power was in the massive body of the horse-group” (453). Ursula’s confrontation with the horses, however, does not leave her overwhelmed and destroyed; instead it forces her to acknowledge her own personal strength: “She knew she was strong” (453).

According to different critics, these horses symbolize different things. For Ben-Ephraim, the horses represent nature, disintegration, and the male principle. He postulates that the episode is meant to mirror earlier scenes where Ursula attempts to become one with nature (more specifically, with the moon) but instead uses that natural force as an amplifier for her own being. Furthermore, as a male force, the horse herd also presents a male presence that Ursula

cannot overwhelm and destroy. In this instance, Ben-Ephraim claims that the “capacity to confront the dark night and primitive maleness of the horses grants Ursula her long-awaited transfiguration” (171). In Ben-Ephraim’s reasoning, Ursula’s final confrontation with these forces that she has been pitted against throughout her portion of the novel, ultimately assures her of her own strength, giving her the courage finally to stand on her own two feet.

Hinz argues that the episode with the horses serves to teach Ursula about the power within herself: “First [Ursula] feels the weight of these black forces as something not only outside of her, but also as something within. Finally, she realizes the power of the horses, she fears them, and is aware of her fear. And from her fear of their power comes her own power to save herself from them” (Hinz 41). For Hinz, Ursula is able to overcome the horses and their power by accepting her own power, by recognizing herself in nature and the universe. Throughout her article, Hinz argues that Ursula’s journey is one based on discovering one’s place within infinity.

Schapiro argues that the horses are representative of a contradictory state: “Suppression and release, tight control and

chaotic discharge, are suggested at once in the description of the horse herd” (98-99). Here, the horses are symbolic of Ursula’s own destructive sexuality. Facing her destructiveness head-on forces Ursula back into herself, where she is forced to reflect on her relationship with Skrebensky and at last recognize her own limits.

My reading of the scene with the horses is a mix between that of Ben-Ephraim’s interpretation and Schapiro’s. While I agree with Ben-Ephraim’s reading of the horses as a symbol of male sexual power, I disagree with his interpretation of them as also being symbolic of disintegration and natural forces. I read the horses as a male force that Ursula cannot overwhelm or destroy, one that she can push back against without fear of annihilating it. However, it is also a force that Ursula survives and thus it cannot annihilate her. I agree with Hinz that Ursula’s ability to survive the horses’ power proves to Ursula her own personal strength (as well as how it is possible for her to assert herself against the male without destroying him in the process).

Following the horse scene, Ursula falls into a fever dream in which she confronts her relationship with Skrebensky: “Why must she be bound . . . to Skrebensky and

Skrebensky's world: it became in her feverish brain a compression which enclosed her . . . The compression was Anton and Anton's world . . . the Anton she did not possess, that which was owned by some other influence" (Lawrence 456). While in this dream, Ursula denounces her worldly connections that bind her to another: her relationship to her parents, Skrebensky, her home, her unborn child. As these connections break and fade away, she becomes aware of a change in herself: "She was the naked, clear kernel thrusting forth the clear, powerful shoot, and the world was . . . discarded . . . all cast off . . . whilst the kernel was free and naked and striving to take new root . . . And the only reality: the rest was cast off into oblivion" (456).

This change is the realization of the potential that Tom Brangwen first saw in himself at the beginning of the novel. It is the germination of the same "seed" of self, the solidification of self that each generation of Brangwen has sought, finally realized in Ursula. A new woman thinks of Skrebensky and the folly of having tried to change him. She realizes that "she had created him for a time being. But in the end he had failed and broken down . . . It was not for her to create, but to recognise a man created by God" (457). When she looks out her window at

the people below, Ursula no longer sees “shadow people” but instead “colliers, women, children, walking each in the husk of an old fruition, but visible through the husk . . . [in] a sort of suspense, a waiting in pain for the new liberation” (458). Both of these realizations indicate that Ursula, at least for the moment, is transcending her narcissism. In recognizing that she cannot make a man out of her own fantasies and desires, she is accepting that others must be allowed to be themselves, apart from herself. By recognizing the people outside her window as individuals with their own troubles and desires, Ursula escapes her earlier narcissistic sense of the outside world as either shadowy and unreal or as a malevolent force bent on destroying her.

In his article “Utopian Mentality in George Eliot’s *Middlemarch* (1871/2) and in D.H. Lawrence’s *The Rainbow* (1915),” Hans Ulrich Seeber argues that the novel’s final scene is Lawrence’s depiction of a utopia brought about by the individual’s rejection of society:

The individual soul must find its fulfillment, its Utopian goal, in the very depths of its own psychic and sensual and sexual experience. Utopia, therefore, undergoes a

reductive process. No longer do systems offer recipes for redemption. The pre-ordained harmony between the individual and society or rather the total immersion of human beings in a dominant social pattern is precisely the condition which Lawrence and his female protagonist denounce as “social self.” Only by recovering his “true vital self” can the individual, acting in a sphere of privacy, hope to achieve freedom and fulfillment. (37-38)

While I agree that Ursula’s journey does entail her discovery of her “true vital self,” I disagree with the notion that this discovery can only be made through the rejection of society. Ursula does not reject society in these final pages; rather, she embraces it. Ursula spends much of her section of the novel rejecting society and trying to flee from it. Her vision at the end of the outside world of individuals like herself, each in a “husk” waiting for liberation, represents an alliance with the social world, not a rejection of it.

V. Conclusion

Narcissism issues, as I have argued, are found in each generation of the Brangwens. Ursula, as the representation of the last generation, does seem to overcome her narcissism in the novel's final pages. Nevertheless, in *Women in Love*, Lawrence's sequel to *The Rainbow*, Lawrence continues his exploration of narcissism and the destruction it causes. According to Lydia Blanchard in "*Women in Love: Mourning Becomes Narcissism*," "*Women in Love* is centrally concerned with narcissism and narcissistic rage . . . all four major characters are isolated, unable to connect with others. All have either broken with their past or live in an unhealthy relationship to it" (106-107). This would suggest that Ursula's transcendence of narcissism at the end of *The Rainbow* is not permanent.

All of the Brangwens indeed show progress at times towards overcoming narcissism and yet still slide back into old patterns. This back and forth movement of growth and regression, as previously noted, is typical of human psychological life. Tom finds that he cannot stand on his own as a man and a father once he has lost the latter role due to Anna's rejection of him. Anna decides to

bury herself in bearing children and enjoying pleasures of the flesh rather than following her instincts to move “beyond.” Will displays a strong façade but needs to feed off others in order to bolster his weak sense of self. Ursula encounters the most starts and stops in trying to become an individual without the need for merger with an idealized Other. Eventually Ursula finds her faith in the stability of herself and others.

According to Kohut, the “self [is] ‘the core of the personality,’ the center of human initiative with its own motivational force aiming toward ‘the realization of its own specific programme of action’” (*Freud and Beyond* 164-165). In *The Rainbow*, the “kernel” that is in each Brangwen represents and dramatizes that core. The entire arc of the novel is centered around the idea that the core self must stand on its own. The Brangwens must accept that the self is not just a cog in a machine but also a vital entity that must be acknowledged as both a piece of something larger and a bounded individual. When Ursula looks out of her window at the novel’s end, she sees the people below as individuals, and she acknowledges that she is like them and vice versa. She knows that she is a part of a special machine, but that that machine does

not need to define her. Ursula can be a part of something larger; she can be a part of something without overwhelming it or becoming overwhelmed by it. Ursula has come to understand herself and to see that self for what it is: changeable. Whether or not Ursula has definitely overcome her narcissism by the end of the novel is perhaps questionable, but the shell has been cracked; there is a vital, new self underneath that has seen daylight at last; she is on her way.

1

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