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## THE SEARCH FOR THE ABSOLUTE IN THE NOVEL “RAINBOW” BY D. H. LAWRENCE (THE FIRST AND THE SECOND GENERATIONS)

**Summary.** The article studies the peculiarities of the images of two generations of the Brangwen family which developed under the influence of the search for the Absolute. Lawrence who got profound religious education revealed his own ideas concerning the search for the Absolute and possible ways to get closer or achieve it. First generation of the Brangwen family was able to achieve it due to mutual love and understanding. Regardless religious dogmas and language barrier, they could create a union which was perceived through their intuitive feelings and instincts. Nature and their rural life contributed to better understanding of the laws of nature and themselves. Rainbow as a religious symbol of forgiveness is traced throughout the whole novel. It contributed to understanding of the inner wish of a human's soul for unreal. Lydia and Tom managed to create a balance in their relationships which allowed them and their child live happily regardless the everyday concerns and opinions of other people. The second generation of the Brangwen family represented by the images of Anna and Will lived under the influence of progress. Inner search for the Absolute was either suppressed and dismissed as in case of Anna or there was a way to accomplish it due to creative expression on religious themes and sincere love. Anna and Will represented modern people who cannot find balance in the relationships, instead one of them is trying to dominate over another person. As a result, Will who once had the feeling of the Absolute due to love and creation of the bas-relief lost it forever. His life was “closed” for any search for unreal. Will's wife due to her domination made him focus his life on everyday concerns and children. Anna who once also had the feeling of unreal due to rosaries, the present of her biological Polish father, decided not to develop it, tried to escape it. Her second opportunity to trace the Absolute appeared due to pregnancy when she perceived herself as a chosen one and wished to keep that feeling. Later everyday concerns suppressed that feeling as well. Anna decided to focus her life only on real life and did her best to make her husband follow her choice.

**Key words:** D. H. Lawrence, Absolute, Phoenix, search, Frieda Lawrence.

**Definition of the problem.** The novel “Rainbow” by D. H. Lawrence became the object of many research. However, its religious concept was not fully studied and needs further investigation. The search for the Absolute played a significant role in authors worldview and reflected in many of his works. The novel “Rainbow” which is considered the most religious novel by Lawrence reveals several ways to perceive the Absolute which should be studied as they lead to better understanding of the peculiarities of the imaged created by the writer.

**Analysis of recent research.** The article “The subtle sense of the Great Absolute”: D. H. Lawrence and the Nomadic God-

head” by Lebreton Melanie [1] gives valuable material for studying of the issue. The researcher investigated and traced the search of the Absolute in literary criticism by the author and shortly mentioned them in Lawrence's novels. Worthen John [2] in the book “D. H. Lawrence. The life of an outsider” (2006) reveals the difficulties with publication of Lawrence's novels and their controversial perception by contemporaries due to themes that were discussed on the pages of the novels, including religious connotations. Wilson Frances [3] in the book “Burning man. The ascent of D. H. Lawrence” (2021) paid attention to the author's personal search for the Absolute and its realization in writer's works.

**Purpose of the article** is to investigate the development of the characters of the two generations of the Brangwen family in the novel “Rainbow” in relation to their search for the Absolute.

**Presenting of the main material.** Lawrence's worldview was largely influenced by his religious upbringing. In essence “Apocalypse and Writings on Revelation” he wrote: “From my earliest years <...> like any other nonconformist child, the Bible poured daily into my helpless consciousness until the point of saturation was reached. <...> So today, although I have “forgotten” my Bible, I have only to begin to read a chapter to realize that I “know” it with an almost sickening depth” [4, p. 3]. That knowledge formed the basis of a unique worldview that influenced the images in the novel “Rainbow”.

As Milena Lebreton rightly noted in the article “The Subtle Sense of the Great Absolute”: D.H. Lawrence and the Nomadic Deity” (2020), Lawrence argued against the “irreversible, constant crystallization of images and traditions” [1, p. 4]. In 1907 he wrote to Robert Reed: “A man who does not piece together religion slowly and painfully giving it form, does not have it; religion is never complete and, finally, must always undergo changes” [1, p. 4]. In essay, “On Being Religious” he considered this problem more broadly: “Ask any philosopher or theologian and he will tell you that the real problem of humanity is not in the notion whether God exists or not, we all know this. But the problem is how to approach him. This is a problem for our humanity <...> How can a person find God? This is the real problem” [5, p. 726–727]. The author was also convinced that the Catholic Church, identifying itself with the Universal Church of Christ, presupposes a harmful ossification. In contrast, Lawrence postulates. “the nomadic Deity” [1], the religious Absolute, which is always incomprehensible and fleeting.

Studying the images in the novel “Rainbow”, it becomes obvious that on the “background” there is a barely noticeable storyline of a deep religious search that plays a long-term role in the life of each character. The novel contains numerous allusions [6] that

influence the perception of images through the prism of the Old and New Testaments. The secret spiritual search of the heroes is expressed in their desire to comprehend the Absolute, to get closer to the Unknown and, thereby, create for themselves some kind of connection with the unreal world.

The three generations of Brangwen family will seek answers to the fundamental questions that concern them, try to deconstruct religious symbols, and attempt to understand the Divine, the essence of the Incomprehensible, the Absolute through its transformation and movement into real, everyday life. They try to comprehend the Incomprehensible with their minds, to verbalize the essence and meaning of natural sensations. The question of whether it is possible to comprehend the Absolute will not be revealed by Lawrence. However, a person who was formed exclusively in the world of everyday life, having rejected any religious search, deprives himself or herself of the opportunity to achieve spiritual harmony, to understand better own nature and the world around. According to Lawrence, the human soul must be reborn from time to time and soar like a phoenix, otherwise it will become a prisoner in the bird's cage. The image of a rainbow, suddenly appearing, going beyond the horizon and disappearing behind a thin, distant strip between heaven and earth, will become a "leitmotif" in the religious search of each of the Brangwens.

There is no doubt that such spiritual searches of the characters, political allusions in the text, and the lack of an exciting, dynamically developing plot could not but cause indignation among contemporaries. While Nietzsche declared the "death of God", and Freud, with the help of psychoanalysis, brought to the surface of the entire human body the horror that was stored in the subconscious, the notions which declared Lawrence could not be accepted easily by his contemporaries. The book was "understood" only by a small circle of readers. But it was important to Lawrence that it received high praise from his main woman, Frida. It was her idea to title the novel "Rainbow", while strengthening the religious connotations in it. Lawrence sketched the cover for the future book in 1915, depicting a mining town under the rainbow, the pillars of which were hidden beyond the horizon.

According to Lawrence, the spiritual world of man is inseparable from the real world. It is the center, the axis around which human life develops and changes. It is noteworthy that in the first edition of the novel "Women in Love" this theme will be heard in the conversation between Ursula (the prototype of Frida) and Rupert (the prototype of Lawrence). The young man will identify the Absolute with the pistil of a chamomile, around which the petals are arranged in inseparable unity. Rupert notes: "I always think of the daisy as being like a choir of angels circling around the Most High in the old celestial system" [1, p. 117]. When Ursula asks who should be in the circle, Rupert replies: "The Invisible One. But it's there, where else would they have such a wonderful central location? But he is completely unknowable. Only you know that this is so" [1, p. 117].

In "Rainbow" the author often compares the Absolute with a constantly receding horizon, which seems to be a goal, but always remains out of reach. Lawrence condemned the attempt to unify religion, to make it "nailed to one God" [5, p. 528]. In his opinion, the plurality of religions leads to a single religion, just as the plurality of gods leads to a single God, embodied in the Absolute, in the Absolute God. This idea is literally repeated on the pages of the novel "Rainbow", where Ursula, through her teacher Winifred, comes to the realization of one God. "All known religions"

seem to her to be just different "clothes in which the human dream is dressed," and depend on "national preferences or dictated by necessity" [5, p. 670].

The existence of numerous "paths" to the Absolute is integrally connected with the uniqueness and originality of each individual person. In "Rainbow" this idea is repeatedly traced as each character goes his or her own way. Therefore, it is unacceptable to interfere, to try to selflessly influence the religious views of another person.

The older generation of the Brangwen family, represented by the images of Tom and Lydia, lives far from civilization. Their farming life requires maintaining harmony with nature and following its laws. This married couple perceives the world and the processes occurring in it subconsciously, intuitively. Trusting their inner voice, they manage to create a strong union despite numerous difficulties and life experiences. Lydia was from Poland. She was married to a Polish rebel and experienced all the hardships and sorrows of such life. The woman lost her first husband and two children. When she moved to England with her four-year-old daughter, hiding from the Polish authorities she spoke English poorly. It complicated communication in the new language environment. When she met Tom, she felt a connection subconsciously, without being able to verbalize her feelings. Lydia felt that her life was not over for her. She would still be able to create a strong union, so necessary for both Lydia and her child. Farm life in harmony with nature helped the woman adapt to new conditions and awakened in her soul a craving for the Incomprehensible, to whom she had previously entrusted her life, and now she entrusted the fate of her new family.

On the first pages of the novel, the reader is presented with the image of a woman who is able to look beyond the horizon, to the world captured in words beyond the boundaries of her existence. She hears the sounds of speech from an alien world and strives to understand its meaning. Gradually, she manages to bring her husband closer to the world of the Incomprehensible. She "enclosed him in the circle of her beliefs", over time "her views and habits, every rise of her eyebrows served him as a sign and guide" [7, p. 194]. He watched his wife for a long time, tried to understand her thought, her attitude towards the world, which, after numerous trials in their relationship, led to the fact that they managed to find divine harmony, creating a wonderful world for their daughter Anna, which enriched them spiritually.

Lydia felt indifference to generally accepted values. She had "powerful intuitive beliefs that determined everything in her life – the fate of her and her family" [7, p. 194]. The woman "believed in the Lord as a kind of mystery, without thinking about His essence. The inner and very subtle feeling of the omnipotence of the Lord, extending over her and her life, was extremely strong in her" [7, p. 193]. Poorly speaking English, she was still able to recognize behind the dogmas of Anglicanism "the presence of the great Sorter, the Almighty of the universe, shining in the rays of glory of the formidable and terrible Great Incomprehensible, lightning-fast and ineffable" [7, p. 193]. "She burned with love for this Incomprehensible One, whom she felt with all her senses, beaming with strange mystical superstitions" [7, p. 194].

With the help of Lydia, who has the name of Lawrence's mother, the author reveals one of the most important aspects in comprehending the Absolute – trust in intuition, refusal to try to verbalize feelings and emotions, attention to the inner voice.

The second generation of the Brangwen family is represented by the images of Anna and Will. Their lives are already shaping

up under the influence of progress. Settling near Nottingham (Lawrence's hometown), they do not engage in farming. Spouses try to fill their free time with thinking about themselves, about the future, or by trying to improve, adjust each other according to their wishes. When children are born, Anna decides to confine herself only to thoughts about the real – about children, her husband and household chores. She seeks to impose her worldview on Will. Gradually, the world of the Incomprehensible, which occupied such an important place in Will's life before marriage, fades into the background. Anna points out to him the importance and value of everyday little things, the need to devote all his free time to the children and his wife. His rare attempts, through church books and religious paintings, to get closer to the world of the Absolute, to feel the exciting spiritual thrill in his soul, only cause anger, reproaches and discontent from his wife. Having destroyed Will's spiritual world, causing him to doubt the truth of his beliefs, Anna feels triumphant and becomes "Anna Virtrix". Now her husband, only by occasionally leafing through books with reproductions, will be able to awaken in his soul a spark of joy and delight from approaching the Absolute.

However, there remains one more thing in his life that allows him to feel full of strength, inspiration, and to experience spiritual rebirth. Wood carving becomes such a thing for him. Using Will as an example, Lawrence reveals the second way to get closer to the Absolute – through activities that you love doing. Carving becomes a special passion for Will, the embodiment of a long-standing plan, which was to create a bas-relief of the creation of Eve for the church. This bas-relief will become the "forerunner" of those ideas about the apple of knowledge, about temptation and expulsion from Paradise, about Sodom and Gomorrah, that will be embodied in the second novel, in the continuation of "Rainbow" – in "Women in Love". It is also important that in addition to the desire to create a bas-relief on a religious theme, his soul was filled with love for Anna. It is sincere and mutual love that is an important and necessary condition in an attempt to get closer to the Absolute, and the source of a person's desire to transform the feeling into reality. The process of working on the bas-relief is written so emotionally that it seems that the reader is involved in Will's work and shares the same feelings as the artist himself.

In addition to Adam and Eve, the bas-relief depicts two figures of angels covering their faces with wings. Will was so impressed by his work that on the way to Anna's home (before marriage) he seemed to be an angel, and the trees reminded him of angels with covered faces. The world has been transformed for a person whose soul was filled with love. Will admires the deep colors of the dying evening dawn, the dark blue of the sky, the stars sparkling from a distant distance, but glowing so invitingly and welcomingly over the dark cluster of buildings at Marsh Farm, over the crystal paths at the edge of the Universe. Anna seemed a morning star in the rays of purest love. This image of purity creates an allusion to the image of the Virgin Mary. Will is overwhelmed with a feeling of gratitude to the Almighty for the opportunity to love sincerely and to be loved.

The same as for Lydia in previous generation Christian dogma did not play a significant role in Will's worldview. The creed, which is usually instilled and perceived through the verbalization of Christian symbols, the interpretation of the Old and New Testament had no influence on the young man. Despite the strong and mutual feeling of love between Will and Anna, their relationship is marked by mutual repulsion due to different attitudes towards religion. If we compare their family with the family of the older generation,

a different "approach" in establishing relationships becomes obvious. Tom secretly watched Lydia, her spiritual impulses, in order to get spiritually closer to her, to understand her better. In the married couple between Anna and Will, the search for the Incomprehensible, to which Will's soul strives, becomes a stumbling block. Anna attends church sermons and performs all religious rituals in accordance with all social norms. The woman would be happy if Will's religiosity did not go beyond these norms. The woman is annoyed not so much by the fact that he is interested in religious painting or church symbols, she is infuriated by the influence, the effect that arises under their influence. Will seems to be hovering somewhere in unknown worlds, where she, Ursula Brangwen, will never reach. She was jealous and envious of his ability to perceive such feelings and emotions.

Will, ignoring reason, listened only to his dark passions and aspirations, believing only his instincts. The theme of the prerogative of reason over feeling, intuition, "blood knowledge" (Lawrence) will become one of the key issues in the novel "Women in Love", linking together the Old Testament story about the apple of knowledge, the fall of man and the desire to understand the world around with reason and knowledge. Hermione in the second novel will declare the idea of progress and reason. Rupert Birkin (the prototype of Lawrence) will speak on behalf of the minority, defending the idea of perceiving the wholeness through intuition and "blood knowledge". The same theme will be traced in Lawrence's essay "Introduction to these pictures" where with the help of reproductions of apples by Cezanne and Fantin-Latour, reason and intuitive perception of the subject are contrasted [8].

However, Anna's consciousness in relation to the incomprehensible, the Absolute, was not always "locked." In adolescence, recognizing that she was not comfortable inside her mother's unreasoning knowledge, her soul also tried to get closer to the Unknown, to the Absolute. As a child, she had mother-of-pearl rosaries, which she inherited from her Polish father. She could not understand their meaning. "But as soon as this thread of moonlight and silver stretched between her fingers, a certain impulse took possession of her. <...> She was afraid to think about it. Instinct dictated her <...> not to think, to take care of herself" [7, p. 196]. Anna tried to free herself from this feeling, which caused passionate excitement. She wanted to free herself by becoming a zealous parishioner. But she heard falsehood in the church language. An attempt to learn the truth through reading also turned out to be unsuccessful – boredom and, again, the falsity of the words spoken turned her away from this too. It was acquaintance and love for Will that could awaken a sincere, true feeling. Unlike Will, who acquired a sense of the Incomprehensible intuitively, subconsciously groping for the path that his soul suggested, Anna tried to understand Scripture and its meaning with her mind.

The second attempt to comprehend and get closer to the Absolute arose during Anna's pregnancy. When she found out that Will had burned the bas-relief after their debates and quarrel, she cried all day and "cleansed her soul". She felt that she was pregnant. Here the image of the Absolute is endowed with the features of a phoenix bird, which is very significant for the writer. For the first time, the image of a bird reborn from the ashes, as a symbol of eternal life, arose during the period when Anna realized her feelings of love for Will, who gave her a self-made butter box with the image of a phoenix. After the wedding, the fire of love went out. The birth of a new soul again rises the theme of immortality and eternal life.

Anna's soul was filled with joy. She wanted to dance in front of the Unknown. "Pregnant, she danced in her bedroom, all alone, raising her arms, rushing with her whole body to the Unknown, the Unseen, to the invisible Creator who made her his chosen one, to the one who owned her soul. <...> She danced furtively before the eyes of the Almighty, taking off her clothes, proud of her pregnancy" [7, p. 351].

Having physically and spiritually separated from her husband, Anna again wonders about what is out there in the distance, where the arch of the rainbow goes. When she was a child, her parents Lydia and Tom were identified with the pillars of the rainbow under which she grew up. Now, for Anna, the two pillars of the rainbow that embraced the day became dawn and sunset. The rainbow gave hope and promise.

The rainbow in the novel, in addition to the Old Testament allusion, is identified with an attempt to get closer to the Unknown, to momentarily feel the presence of another world, the world of the Incomprehensible. Although Will seemed spiritually "broken," a visit to Lincoln Cathedral reawakened his awe of the Unknown. The image of Will is endowed with the features of a heavenly angel, capable of rising above the real world and approaching the world of the Absolute.

Noticing the evil faces in the stone carvings of the bas-relief, Anna hastened to point them out to Will, thereby destroying the sense of awe at the greatness that he felt. Her voice seemed to him as "the voice of the Serpent in Eden" [7, p. 394]. The woman was sure that these evil faces were images of the wife of the master who created the carving. Anna suggested that the master hated his wife and was glad that he was able to present her in those images. Anna broke the spell of the cathedral for Will. It was no longer a miracle to him. His soul was filled with bitterness of disappointment and anger. "He realized that cathedrals would now mean less to him. Previously, he saw it as an indisputable absolute, but now he discerned to another reality, dark and mysterious, closed inside, a world inside another world, but as if additional, not the main one, while before it was for him a piece of harmony inside chaos <...> The Absolute was lost to him" [7, p. 398].

Thus, the search to perceive the Incomprehensible was over in this married couple. Anna managed to destroy Brangwen's mysticism, his passion for church symbolism and painting, the original supernatural and superhuman meaning was lost for him. It was replaced by the awareness of "the terrible, Perfect Beauty of the wife, her rounded forms" [p. 461]. Spiritual passion was replaced by physical passion. Will began to belong entirely to his wife, only occasionally being content to take care of the local church, which also aroused contempt in Anna. She immersed herself in everyday life. Over time, she began to care exclusively about physical well-being of her children.

**Conclusion.** Lawrence in the novel "Rainbow" showed several ways to get closer to the Absolute. First generation of the Brangwen family was able to achieve it due to mutual love and understanding. Regardless religious dogmas and language barrier, they could create a union which was perceived through their intuitive feelings and instincts. Nature and their rural life contributed to better understanding of the laws of nature and themselves. The second generation of the Brangwen family lived under the influence of progress. Inner search for the Absolut was either suppressed and dismissed as in case of Anna or there was a way to accomplish it due to creative expression of religious themes and sincere love. Anna and Will represented modern people who cannot find balance in the relationships, instead one of them is trying to dominate over another person. As a result, Will who once had the feeling of the Absolut due to love and creation of the bas-relief lost it forever. His life was "closed" for any search for unreal. Will's wife due to her domination made

him focus his life on everyday concerns and children. Third generation of the Brangwen family represented by two older daughters Ursula and Gudrun and their relationships with men – Rupert Birkin and Gerald Crich needs to be studied in detail in future research as it will lead to better understanding of the general concept of the author.

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#### Єлісеєнко А. Пошуки Абсолюту в романі Д. Г. Лоуренса «Веселка» (перше і друге покоління)

**Анотація.** У статті досліджуються особливості образів двох поколінь родини Брангвенів, що склалися під впливом пошуку Абсолюту. Лоуренс, який отримав глибоку релігійну освіту, розкрив власні ідеї щодо пошуку Абсолюту та можливих шляхів його наближення або досягнення. Перше покоління родини Брангвен змогло досягти цього завдяки взаємній любові та розумінню. Незважаючи на релігійні догми та мовний бар'єр, вони створили союз, який сприймався ними інтуїтивно. Природа та сільське життя сприяли кращому пізнанню законів Всесвіту і самих себе. Веселка як релігійний символ прощення простежується через увесь роман. Це сприяло розумінню внутрішнього прагнення людської душі до нереального. Лідія і Том зуміли створити баланс у своїх стосунках, який дозволив їм і їхній дитині жити щасливо, незалежно від повсякденних турбот і думок інших людей. Друге покоління родини Брангвенів, представлене образами Анни та Вілла. Їх стосунки розвивалися під впливом прогресу та залежали від точки зору оточуючих. Внутрішній пошук Абсолюту був або полишений, як у випадку з Анною, або реалізований через створення барельєфу на релігійну тему та завдяки щирому коханню. Анна і Вілл представляли людей, які не можуть знайти баланс у стосунках, натомість один з них намагається домінувати над іншим. В результаті Вілл, який колись через любов і створення барельєфу мав почуття наближення до Абсолюту, втратив його назавжди. Його життя було «зачинене» для будь-яких пошуків ірреального. Дружина Вілла завдяки своєму домінуванню змусила його зосередити своє життя на повсякденних турботах і дітях. Наближення до Абсолюту Анна відчула, дізнавшись, що завагітніла. Вона усвідомлювала себе обраницею і хотіла зберегти це почуття, відчуваючи загрозу від чоловіка його порушити. Пізніші побутові турботи придушили і цей пошук. Анна вирішила зосередити своє життя тільки на реальному і зробила все можливе, щоб чоловік обрав той же самий шлях.

**Ключові слова:** Д. Г. Лоуренс, Абсолют, фенікс, пошук, Фріда Лоуренс.