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Author: Nanette Norris

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**D. H. LAWRENCE'S GEORGIC**

NANETTE NORRIS

In October 1912, Edward Marsh invited Lawrence to submit his poem 'Snap-Dragon' (published in the June 1912 issue of the *English Review*) to his anthology *Georgian Poetry 1911–1912*; Lawrence was subsequently to contribute to four of the five volumes of *Georgian Poetry*.<sup>1</sup> His work redeployed the georgic to reflect the complexity of the world as he perceived it. This essay examines Lawrence's use of the georgic as he transformed its pre-twentieth-century usage for his own age; it will discuss his relationship with the twentieth-century Georgian Renaissance, arguing that Lawrence wrote in the georgic mode in both poetry and prose, and that he employed it in order to render an otherwise inarticulate space – the lived experience of the discordance between an imagined ideal and an historically-bound reality.

The Georgian Renaissance at the beginning of the last century was not so much a renaissance of a former movement in poetics as the creation of Edward Marsh, who selected poetry to publish based upon his own criteria (more on this later). Lawrence, however, had engaged with the Georgian – the pre-twentieth-century georgic mode – while writing *The White Peacock* (1911).<sup>2</sup> Far from being "any writing produced during the reign of George V",<sup>3</sup> the georgic mode, as it shifted over the centuries, is characterised by specific values and interests that Lawrentians may find very familiar, which Lawrence worked and reworked in his analysis of his own time, such as the values of hard work and individual striving, and the link between the national interest and the soil.

The georgic mode, which can be traced back to writings of the Middle Ages, such as those of Chaucer, became especially popular in the eighteenth century, spurring interest in agriculture and the country life, thanks to John Dryden's 1697 translation of Virgil's

*Georgics* (which enabled a larger readership). Virgil placed the violent era in which he lived into an imaginative past, and the ideal georgic hero was Cincinnatus, the farmer-turned-General. (One can see how Lawrence, during the war years and after, might have equated the two times: a violent present, a sense of an idyllic past, and the British, quasi-Victorian, focus upon land and "Britishness".) Rachel Crawford argues that the attitudes associated with agriculture and English georgic were "aristocratic in their biases" involving a "gentrification of labour" that served a "paternalistic system of landed inheritance" and was conservative rather than revolutionary.<sup>4</sup> The "pressing social structures" of the eighteenth century involved "commercialism (including wage and day labour)" in which this paternalism did not exist, and therefore the georgic involved a "nostalgia for [an imagined] past".<sup>5</sup> However, Crawford's careful analysis of eighteenth-century British georgic notwithstanding, the georgic is generally seen as a genre within the idyllic mode that goes hand-in-hand with the pastoral.<sup>6</sup> The vision of georgic writing is a refiguring of the world as harmonious, integrated, "without conflict and without law", grounded in a myth of the Golden Age.<sup>7</sup> Kevis Goodman calls it the "easing of contradictions".<sup>8</sup>

Many scholars argue that the georgic disappeared from British literary practice after 1760.<sup>9</sup> Crawford contends that, as the century progressed, George III's failed American War "drew attention to progressive elements not embodied in the English georgic".<sup>10</sup> Its renaissance is frequently strictly located with Marsh's five *Georgian Poetry* anthologies, published between 1911 and 1922. The contributors are considered members of the new "school" of poetry. "Georgian poetics" are even more strictly located with the literary principles of the early Marsh group, the poetry issuing "from the friendship of Edward Marsh with Rupert Brooke and from their collateral friendships", which included Lawrence.<sup>11</sup>

Myron Simon tells us that Brooke "conceived the idea of offering the public a volume of new poetry; and it was Marsh who defined the principles of inclusion, gave the volume its name, and ensured its publication".<sup>12</sup> One of these principles was a decided revolt against

what was seen to be “Victorian doctrinizing” and “ornate poetic diction”.<sup>13</sup> Georgian poetry would free itself from doctrinarian bias, as well as from flights of diction, by giving more physical description and accurate details. Rather than exclude the putatively ugly from art, it would embrace realism by including subjects previously thought too coarse, and this included an attempt to use the “accents, rhythms, and diction of common speech – often the speech of the uneducated”.<sup>14</sup> Interest in social justice and the concerns of the victimised was coupled, oddly, with a sense of being ahistorical – a pursuit of truth and reality of which “the more transient and parochial forms of experience” were mere distortions.<sup>15</sup> Moreover, Marsh’s Georgians felt that aesthetic experience was properly the realm of poetry, and that the “definition and illumination of this realm” was the unique function of poetry.<sup>16</sup>

The so-called Georgian school was short-lived. The first two volumes of the *Georgian Poetry* anthology, the 1911–1915 publications, are considered seminal. Simon explains that there was a brief convergence of ideas and interests, a “fraternity that existed between the Hulme-Pound circle and Marsh’s Georgians around 1911. They possessed common enemies”:<sup>17</sup>

[O]nce the Marsh group and the several Modernist groups – loosely united by a reformist impulse – had made a common cause of dispatching the Victorian remnant, their ‘popular front’ split on the fundamental issue of whether traditional English poetic standards were to be corrected or replaced by new standards. In the swelling debate arising from this split, Imagists, Futurists, and Vorticists became convinced that Marsh’s Georgians were in reality “no more than the last faint re-echo of the Great Tradition”.<sup>18</sup>

The early Georgians had a keen sense of the nature and form of poetry – Marsh’s Georgians felt that the modernists were “introducing new distortions into the practice of poetry”, which was a bone of contention between them.<sup>19</sup>

The subsequent volumes of *Georgian Poetry* devolved into what Stephen Spender perceived as "the classic examples in English in this century of non-recognizers ... those who do not recognize the modern situation".<sup>20</sup> L. Hugh Moore writes that, by volumes III and IV, "the revolt had lost its drive and freshness. The movement that had begun with revolutionary realism ended with pallid escapism".<sup>21</sup> The revolutionary impulse soon became reactionary and, following the war, the georgic idyllic mode once more imposed itself.<sup>22</sup> According to Martin Weiner, post-war Georgianism offered a rural myth "which was now taken up by a chorus of writers to provide comfort and reassurance in the face of the apparent national failure and an alternative to unsettling demands for modernization".<sup>23</sup> This "rural myth" is precisely the element of the Georgian Renaissance to which Lawrence never succumbed.

Lawrence's georgic poetry blends with Marsh's vision for the Georgian Renaissance.<sup>24</sup> 'Snap-Dragon' (about which more will be said later) offers plain language, without artifice or frill, is fearless of exposing the underbelly of life (in this case, the inherent cruelty in a relationship), and has a cadence bred of passion rather than rhyme. The handling of a natural theme is layered and figurative. The snap-dragon as metaphor fits the essence of Marsh's sense of sublimity and truth: Marsh valued Lawrence's exploration of this psychological and emotional reality for the many ways in which it eschewed the worn-out modes of expression. The inward-turning eye that would become a hallmark of "high" modernist work – Virginia Woolf's 1925 novel, *Mrs. Dalloway*, is an obvious example – was as yet unheralded. There is no exploitation of nature, nor mastery of it, nor romanticisation of the intricate details that comprise the manifestation of complex relationships. 'Snap-Dragon' was innovative and fresh.

Marsh was very attracted to Lawrence's poetry. He made place for it even as others writing on the theme of nature, such as Edmund Blunden and John Freeman, were reconstructing and slickly beautifying a war-torn world, slipping back into the idyllic mode. His inclusion of 'Snake' in the 1922 volume speaks to this: Marsh saw

the truth in Lawrence's vision, that nature (and instinct) will neither be ruled nor controlled, as much as we might wish it to be. Many of Lawrence's poems from this post-war period have nature as their basic metaphor (*Birds, Beast and Flowers* was published in 1923). They align with the Georgian Renaissance insofar as the movement was, as Robert Ross claims, less a renaissance of the Georgian and more a revolt against the "Romantic-Victorian tradition".<sup>25</sup>

And yet, Lawrence differs from Marsh's Georgians: firstly, he did not fall in line with several of Marsh's key principles for the Georgian Renaissance;<sup>26</sup> secondly, his poetry was experimental, both in form and substance, and the georgic was a tool for the expression of life's complexities rather than reaching for a Golden Age, as does some Georgian poetry; and thirdly, he employed the georgic in prose as well as poetry, the prose allowing for exploration, perhaps beyond the scope of poetry, of the effects of modernity on man's relationship to work – a theme which is simultaneously Marxist and georgic.

Regarding the first point, Lawrence did not fall in line with key principles of Marsh's Georgian Renaissance for several reasons. Marsh and his circle believed that the aesthetic experience was the unique purview of poetry. Lawrence was dedicated to exploring the essence of the aesthetic experience in both poetry and prose. He did not serve genre, it served him. This essay will argue that Lawrence uses the georgic mode in his short stories 'The Horse-Dealer's Daughter' and 'England, My England' (drafted in 1915 and 1916 respectively), as well as in *The Rainbow* (1915), all from the same period. (Regretfully, space does not allow a more thorough exploration of these works.)

Lawrence also parted company with Marsh on the issue of form in poetry, preferring passion and emotion to command the flow of the words and lines. As he wrote to Marsh, "You are wrong, I think, about the two rhymes – why need you notice they are rhymes? – you are a bit of a policeman in poetry. I *never* put them in because they are rhymes" (2L 104).

Perhaps most importantly, Lawrence was not indifferent to history or to the influence of mundane, everyday life and experience

on the potential of the individual. Marsh's Georgian poetics, Simon tells us, "were ... a-historical ... Hence, we have the Georgians' interest in nature, in the rhythm of the seasons, in love and birth and death, in the enigmas of personality, in the dependably certain and the dependably uncertain".<sup>27</sup> Lawrence was a passionate explorer of the "enigmas of personality", but he was equally grounded in the expression of these ahistorical dimensions within their historical contexts. He understood and addressed such unpoetic issues as the economic imperative, the class divide and gender imbalance. In fact, this historicity is precisely what dates some of his writing. Realism, yes – ahistoricism, no.

Lawrence was exceedingly interested in the dimensions which the georgic opened for his writing. As Anthony Low reminds us:

the Middle Ages developed the *rota Vergilii* or wheel of Virgil, a scheme that divided not only poetry but life, society, and human personality into three interrelated parts. According to these theories, pastoral, georgic, and epic are written in three styles: low, middle, and high. They correspond to three social ranks or occupations: shepherd, farmer, and soldier.<sup>28</sup>

In choosing to write about the working class, Lawrence chose the middle style, the georgic, of which the farmer was the iconic figure: "georgic celebrates work".<sup>29</sup> Lawrence updates the concerns of the Middle Ages for his own time and juxtaposes the classes in ironic relation. The farming class and the soldier class are at odds, especially in a world at war, in a society which is experiencing the dissolution of the aristocracy and in which traditional roles and work are in flux and change.

Lawrence's interest in and dedication to the problems of the working man are well documented.<sup>30</sup> He did not merely "acknowledge ... a real world, external to them, the existence of which was not contingent upon their perception of it", in the ivory-tower philosophical manner of Bertrand Russell and others of the "Cambridge" circle.<sup>31</sup> Lawrence attended meetings at the home of

Willie Hopkin, a prominent Eastwood political figure and supporter of the Social Democratic Federation, which were “for discussing social problems with a view to advancing a more perfect social state and to our fitting ourselves to be perfect citizens – communists – what not” (2*P* 221). 1910 to 1912 saw a series of widespread strikes in Britain: Lawrence involved himself in the miner’s strike by delivering relief tickets to strikers’ families (1*L* 380). His concern for the emotional life of the individual, which the vicissitudes of modern life challenged at the best of times, but which most surely challenged society’s underdogs past bearing, was unwavering.

The underdogs of society are abjected in the larger movements of politics and written history. The working man and his dependent family, women, children and the poor exist only peripherally, ill-defined and unseen – like the experience on the edge of consciousness, the so-called aesthetic experience. Lawrence could see – and tried to illuminate – these abjected and ill-articulated spaces. Lawrence harnessed the georgic to draw together the aesthetic and the economic lived experience.

These abjected spaces appear in Lawrence’s texts as “disturbances” – as something misaligned, something you cannot quite put your finger on, something that challenges expectations. Raymond Williams focused his career on defining just such missing moments that cannot be accommodated by extant categories. Williams’s term “the long revolution” addresses his claim that we are in the middle of an historical process, a “far-reaching transformation – one that brought forth the very terms such as ‘democracy’, ‘industry’, ‘culture’, ‘art’ and ‘class’ that we use to describe and measure it”.<sup>32</sup> Williams contended that we are so immersed in the transformation that it is very difficult for us to see it, and that to do so requires the mediation that art affords: “to succeed in art is to convey an experience to others in such a form that the experience is actively re-created”.<sup>33</sup> Realism for Williams, and for Lawrence, is precisely the creation of the shared experience: “we cannot submit to be divided into ‘Aesthetic Man’ and ‘Economic Man’”.<sup>34</sup>



In the georgic, Lawrence discovered the mode best suited to engaging mankind's hopes and dreams at the same time as everyday reality. Although the pastoral and the georgic are the classic expressions of the idyllic mode of human imagination,<sup>35</sup> Alan Liu and Kevis Goodman have shown that the idyllic contains its opposite. Liu writes that, "Georgic is the supreme mediational form by which to bury history in nature ... The purpose of the mirror of georgic nature is to hide history in order, finally, to reflect the self".<sup>36</sup> The focus upon nature is in the sense of "ideal and enduring", linked with human labour, the working reality, the nitty-gritty of life – realism. Nonetheless, history does not disappear altogether.

Goodman develops Liu's idea and links it with Williams's "signature phrase 'structures of feeling'" to posit that, in the georgic, history appears as a "disturbance".<sup>37</sup> She writes that "clashes are the ground, as it were, out of which georgic can plow a sensation of history as affective discomfort, cognitive 'noise'".<sup>38</sup> The georgic is capable of opening a space for the "affect" – that is, the emotional and personal dimension – of history that Lawrence reveals in his use of the georgic. Reflecting the self is very important for Lawrence, but selfhood is not idyllic. For him, the self is not detached from the circumstances of one's life, from one's social and material realities, and when the subject, the individual, finds him/herself limited by the forces of life that render one invisible and disenfranchised, whether it be through gender, class, economics or other factors, then the disturbance is one of history and culture and subjecthood altogether.

Lawrence's perspective differed from other writers and poets of the Georgian Renaissance. Brooke, for instance, in 'The Old Vicarage, Grantchester', is filled with nostalgia for a Golden Age:

In Grantchester, in Grantchester ...  
still in the dawnlit water cool  
His ghostly Lordship swims his pool.<sup>39</sup>

The sentimental, rhymed yearning for a Britishness that exists only in reconstructed memory is escapist. Realism intrudes as bitter

disappointment with the “*temperamentvoll* German Jews” in a place where he is “sweating, sick and hot”, and the balance of the poem returns to the idyllic.<sup>40</sup> The later volumes of Marsh’s *Georgian Poetry* embraced the idyllic mode, of what Sam Smith labelled as “shell-shocked Georgians”.<sup>41</sup> Frank Prewett’s ‘The Somme Valley, June, 1917’ approaches arguably the most gruesome engagement of the war by deflecting images of brutality and eschewing feelings of anger:

The sweet lark beats on high  
For the peace of those who sleep  
In the quiet embrace of earth:  
Comrade, why do you weep?<sup>42</sup>

The words elide all negativity, preferring, instead, the idyllic comfort of “the quiet embrace of earth”.

Lawrence, on the other hand, did not suffer from war trauma. He was not trying to hide history or escape from it but to describe the ongoing effects of the cultural revolution (the “long revolution” as Williams terms it) on the individual psyche and perception. He was similar to the “Cambridge/Marsh” group in that he believed in articulation of the experience on the edge of consciousness, but he differed in that he refused to be ahistorical. He sensed that he had a particular perspective on this cultural revolution, as the son of a working man, as a non-combatant, that enabled him to articulate what others could not. His use of the georgic was not to distinguish between the worldly and the sublime but to articulate the sublime in the worldly.

‘Snap-Dragon’ is especially interesting as an example of Lawrence’s early oeuvre.<sup>43</sup> It shows many of the themes that would haunt his work going forward: the dance of the sexes, sin, passion, cruelty in love, poems-within-poems, double entendre and the symbolism of snake, moon and blood (here, I am thinking of the later poem ‘Snake’, of the power of the moon in the stackyard scene in *The Rainbow* and of the blood-knowledge in *The Plumed Serpent*).

Hugh Underhill sees much in this poem which leads back to Thomas Hardy and mainstream Romanticism, especially in terms of the rhyme scheme and formalism.<sup>44</sup> At the same time, Underhill emphasises the poem's dual purpose as both a nature and a love poem, in which the "hovering state" juxtaposes "the self which seeks to be more triumphantly self" with "the self which seeks to be lost in the other".<sup>45</sup> It is here, in its dual purpose, that the poem is most experimental, as the "pressure of the emotion" causes the progressive revision of the rhyme scheme.<sup>46</sup> The lines literally shrink on the page as the subjectivity intensifies:

The gorge of the gaping flower, till the blood did float

Over my eyes, and I was blind—  
Her large brown hand stretched over  
The windows of my mind; (*Poems* 86)

The same element that moves the poem beyond the constraints of its formalist, quasi-Romantic rhyme scheme pushes it into new territory in the interface between the physical and the psychological: a moment of consciousness hitherto unrealised and, one might add, hitherto abjected.

Hence, nature imagery is superimposed upon natural, passionate feelings, which are, in turn, overlain by the realism of contradiction: two opposing things are happening at the same time. This contradiction is inherent in georgic irony. As Goodman writes: "Poetry invested in the georgic mode obsessively tests its mediating power, and even when it attempts to narrate or otherwise contain history, something else – an affective residue – will out ... these moments of excess and dissonance [are] ... records of an otherwise unknowable history".<sup>47</sup>

'Snake' is similarly ironic. However, this poem makes no effort to constrain itself, nor to resolve, in rhyme. The quasi-Romanticism is gone, and the most obvious elements of the Georgian Renaissance are writ large in the overt subject matter of man versus nature and in

the no-holds-barred perspective which looks at the underbelly of man's nature and experience. But nothing is what it seems. The simplicity of the walk in the garden is immediately complicated by the religious overtones of the snake in the Garden of Eden. The direct narrative posits a modern-day consciousness that fails to accord the snake its due, as a biblical Snake, as the "two-forked tongue" (l. 18) of myth and religion, or as "a god" (l. 45). The clear, accessible language, the simple image of a man with his water pitcher, casually strolling in his pyjamas, are juxtaposed with the forgotten and abjected truth, which is equally real and ever present, right below the surface.

'Snake' anticipates *The Plumed Serpent* (1926), when Ramón "looked down at the ground. 'Serpent of the earth,' he said; 'snake that lies in the fire at the heart of the world, come!'" (PS 196). The resurrection of the gods demands the embrace of the complex nature of light and dark, good and evil. In 'Snake', as the snake "put his head into that dreadful hole" (l. 50), the narrator is overcome by a "horror, a sort of protest against his withdrawing into that horrid black hole" (l. 52). That "horror" is as far as his insight can reach, at that moment. The hole is the pit or tunnel which holds the contents of the unconscious, in Freudian terms. The unaware, unthinking modern man has relegated everything that he does not understand to a region he cannot and will not view – an abjected state – to which the snake must return. In a sense, his earlier state of unknowing can be likened to a Golden Age to which there is no return. Nature has been complicated: as unconscious versus conscious, abjected versus admitted, the underestimation of the limits of experience (not recognising the god in the snake) versus the self-imposed limitations to experience (forcing the snake to remain in the black hole).

Lawrence's georgic sensibility explored beyond the bounds of genre, and this is precisely how he moves beyond the narrow confines of the poetic Georgian Renaissance, by allowing the georgic to inform his prose, as well. According to Jessie Chambers, Lawrence read Virgil's *The Georgics* while writing *The White Peacock* (1905–1911).<sup>48</sup> Michael Squires has argued that this novel

is a modified or modern pastoral novel characterized by its lyrical landscapes, its circumscribed pastoral valley, its pointed contrast between city and country modes of life, its tension between rural and urban values, its full representation of a pastoral picnic, its inverted pastoral conclusion, and its nostalgic backward look to the little world that once functioned for the characters as a Golden Age.<sup>49</sup>

The dominant movement in the novel is from the pastoral to realism. By 1915, Lawrence had written through his pastoral backward glance and was ready to tackle the question of where the modern world was headed.

Lawrence's work in 1915–1916, notably 'The Horse-Dealer's Daughter', *The Rainbow* and 'England, My England', focuses on the changes imposed by the crisis of modernity upon the nature of man – the warping of instinct, desire, and behaviour – and offers strong examples of Lawrence's use of the georgic in prose. 'The Horse-Dealer's Daughter' begins where one might expect an idyllic georgic piece to end: in realism. It is grounded in a socio-economic reality, the dissolution of a family business and the consequent dispersal of the family. The georgic elements lie in the exploration of the interrelationship between man and his (agricultural) work, and the sharp focus on the "natural" being, the pre-industrial person. The "new" georgic realism is clear in the less-than-idyllic circumstance and gone is that sense of joy which Lawrence pointed out in the poetry (*IR* 199), which Ross claims was the hallmark of pre-war georgic renaissance.

In Lawrence's story, there is no backward glance to the Golden Age; rather, it has passed. Mabel's mother, the representative of the previous era, is in the grave, signifying the end of that era. The text questions whether the passing era was ever a Golden Age, associating the heavy mahogany furniture to dreariness and, possibly, a kind of albatross whose time to change has come: "The dreary dining-room itself, with its heavy mahogany furniture, looked as if it were waiting to be done away with" (*EME* 137). The heavy

mahogany furniture materialises the Victorian time and culture, reminding us that, if Mabel were a Victorian woman, she would have no choice as to what she will now do. Propriety and lack of scope for women's work would dictate that either she lives with her sister or she goes into service at the Manor. There is no doubt that Mabel is comfortable in this old world: "For the life she followed here in the world was far less real than the world of death she inherited from her mother" (*EME* 143). But although a sense of melancholy for the past has been injected here, it is not real and, if she is to live, she must move on. The play of history and economics, of class and of gender, is enacted through the family's location in a post-industrial world; their traditional way of life and means of making a living have become obsolete. Each must scramble to make his (or her) way in the world.

Following the work of Carl Jung on depth psychology and symbolism,<sup>50</sup> we tend to think of descent into water as a rebirth, but before Mabel undergoes any kind of transformation, she attempts suicide. An American genre called suicide fiction may give us an alternate view of Mabel's descent. According to Katherine Gaudet, about a quarter of all American books published before 1820 feature suicides.<sup>51</sup> She notes that suicide was traditionally seen as an act which went against both religious and social duty: "Thomas Aquinas had formulated a threefold argument against suicide: it violates the natural law of self-preservation, it offends God by usurping control over life and death, and it harms the community by removing a useful member".<sup>52</sup> In the modern world, offence to God is hardly an issue. The control passes to the individual. In fact, as Gaudet says, suicide encodes contradictions of self-determination and helplessness and so it can be seen as the ultimate act of self-determination, as it is for Mabel, who does not want to live with her sister or to become a skivvy. As for the issue of the removal of a useful member of society, the narrative focuses on the extent to which Mabel has no place or purpose in this new world. By the nineteenth century, suicide "had begun to be treated as a medical problem, a tragic symptom of melancholy rather than a criminal act".<sup>53</sup> By the twentieth century,

even such feelings as melancholy are no longer the purview of the medical profession (embodied in the narrative by Jack Fergusson, the doctor), which busies itself with the physical body rather than either the psychological or the spiritual.

Mabel's suicidal act gestures to the war through its sense of voluntary or patriotically motivated suicidal action – the suicidal enlistment of young men in the war. The war is the "history" which rumbles in the background of this story, in conventional georgic fashion, while the "affect" of history is pushed to the forefront. For, if the men's lives are useful to the nation, why are they being sacrificed on the altar of war? If they are not conscripted but go willingly, how different is this from Mabel's act of wading into the water and allowing herself, against all sense of self-preservation, to drown? In England at that time patriotism was the catchword of the day and nationalism touted as the reason to go to war; however, the narrative calls into question the relationships between the state, nationhood and the individual.

Mabel emerges with a renewed sense of purpose into a world whose values are possibly capable of change. The old, Victorian values of Englishness are contrasted with new British values, as Mabel is resurrected in a three-fold manner: as a person of worth, in that her life is valuable enough to save; aligned with a Scot who has broken the class barrier through his education and his abilities; and thirdly, in her affirmation of the value of the spiritual, represented by the redeeming ability of the concept of love. Literally, Mabel is saved by what she believes to be love (the Doctor, however, is nonplussed, so the text remains tentative in its renewal). Finally, Mabel's appeal to love returns the narrative to its georgic, idyllic roots in its exploration of the place of aesthetic experience in the new world.

*The Rainbow* follows the generations of the Brangwen family from more classic, georgic roots represented by Tom Brangwen, the farmer, through to the modern world of his granddaughter Ursula. In January 1915, Lawrence's rewriting of 'The Wedding Ring' into *The Rainbow* introduced "a distinctive strand of vocabulary ... for the first time".<sup>54</sup> As Charles L. Ross observes, Lawrence "first hit upon

the striking ‘metallic-corrosive’ vocabulary in which he describes the love contests, or battles of will, between Ursula and Skrebensky”.<sup>55</sup> The “metallic-corrosive” tone manifests the robotic landscape rather than the pre-industrial world of instinct. Ursula represents both the need for and the possibility of individual – and instinctive – growth within a world of (masculine) annihilation. That she goes too far in embracing her pre-conscious self, when she annihilates Skrebensky in the stackyard scene, is testament to the imbalance of the age.

Nonetheless, when Lawrence wrote of the “marshy, bitter-sweet corruption” (*R* 326) that Uncle Tom and Winifred share, and when his letters “began to speak of resurrection rather than crucifixion”,<sup>56</sup> Lawrence was developing a nuanced critique of modernity, exploring the space between the pastoral fantasy and the material actuality of a working landscape, as a way of moving through death, of incorporating death into the rebirth. David Fairer writes of the georgic that the “crisis of nature is really only a symptom of the crisis of a more fundamental crisis of humanity”, and that the georgic is rooted in this “crisis of culture (*cultus*), in which a mutual respect between man and nature needs to be recovered”.<sup>57</sup> The “foetid”, the “corrupt”, stagnation and the graveyard have their place in this counter-narrative of renewal in the midst of crisis, but the outcome is by no means certain. At the moment of transcendence in ‘The Horse-Dealer’s Daughter’, when Mabel seems to have successfully negotiated the transition from the old world to the new, from her life with her mother and brothers to her life with the Doctor, “the horrid, stagnant smell of that water” returns (*EME* 149). How we read it depends upon where we are standing in relation to the distance between the extremes of escapist innocence and the outright exhaustion of modernity.

Thus, in ‘England, My England’, what it means to be British is examined, as is the impulse to join the war; the narrative ultimately offers a vision of reconciliation with the destruction of war. Virgil’s *Georgic* was a renewal of the fabric of society after war. This is how it appears in Lawrence’s review of *Georgian Poetry* of 1913: idyllic, harmonious, a revelation of joy following negativity. It is a vision



that was unable to withstand the onset of war; Lawrence's work during the war warps this classic sense of the georgic in order to reflect the ongoing psychosocial reality of his time, while using the metaphoric possibility which the georgic affords, in order to manifest the inarticulate space.

'England, My England' focuses on the "spirit of place lingering on primeval" and "savage", in an English garden which Egbert has "re-created" (*EME* 5–6),<sup>58</sup> he who "worked so hard, and did so little, and nothing he ever did would hold together for long", and for whom the "permanency" of the past was an unattainable Golden Age (*EME* 9). Egbert is a parody of the classic georgic farmer: an "amateur" non-farmer who, in fact, knows neither work nor war. When it comes, the war means the loss of this link to the past. "Winifred would never meet him again at the cottage" (*EME* 30). It also means the loss of his "consciousness, in unutterable sick abandon of life" (*EME* 32), that dubious half-life of the backward-yearning British. In the 1922 version, Lawrence inserts the uncertain ending: "Better the terrible work should go forward, the dissolving into the black sea of death, in the extremity of dissolution, than that there should be any reaching back towards life" (*EME* 33).<sup>59</sup> Both of these endings are problematic. The first is "sick" in its abandonment of life; the second is slightly more hopeful in that the movement is "forward". The path, however, is unclear, the "extremity of dissolution". The only hopeful note is that dissolution is a stage of alchemy, the outcome for which is the creation of gold.

As with everything he did, everything he wrote, Lawrence was not the follower of movements: he was in the vanguard. If, in reputation, he remains outside the Georgian Renaissance,<sup>60</sup> in spite of being oft-anthologised by Marsh, it is not because the georgic held no attraction for him and had no place in his work. Quite the contrary. He employed the georgic in both poetry and prose, eschewing the more common, sentimental and nostalgic perspective on nature, on the nature of man and on work, for a keen analysis of the transitional modern world. Instead of looking back on an imaginary past, Lawrence sought the elusive unconscious in the depths of the

natural world. Lawrence's tillers of the land are neither generic peasants nor elites-turned-farmers; they are individuals struggling to be reborn into the contemporary world. At a time when writers were using the georgic to escape the fall-out of war and modernity, Lawrence employed it to articulate the effects of the changes he perceived.

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<sup>1</sup> Lawrence's poems in *Georgian Poetry* are: 'Snap-Dragon' (1911–12); 'Service of all the Dead', 'Meeting among the Mountains', 'Cruelty and Love' (1917–18); 'Seven Seals' (1918–19); and 'Snake' (1920–22).

<sup>2</sup> Jessie Chambers, *D. H. Lawrence: A Personal Record* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1965); qtd. in Rose Marie Burwell, 'A Checklist of Lawrence's Reading', *A D. H. Lawrence Handbook*, ed. Keith Sagar (Totawa, N.J.: Barnes & Noble, 1982), 59–125, 73.

<sup>3</sup> Myron Simon, 'The Georgian Poetic', *The Bulletin of the Midwest Modern Language Association* 2 (1969), 121–35, 121–2.

<sup>4</sup> Rachel Crawford, 'English Georgic and British Nationhood', *English Literary History* 65.1 (Spring 1998), 129, 137.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid*, 142.

<sup>6</sup> Donald Mackenzie, 'Edwardian Idyll, Edwardian Mapping: *The Heart of the Country*', *International Ford Madox Ford Studies* 12 (Jan. 2013), 105–24.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid*, 105.

<sup>8</sup> Kevis Goodman, *Georgic Modernity and British Romanticism: Poetry and the Mediation of History* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2004), 9.

<sup>9</sup> See Kurt Heinzelman, 'Roman Georgic in a Georgian Age: A Theory of Romantic Genre', *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 33 (1991), 182–214, 201; see also Crawford, 'English Georgic and British Nationhood', 10.

<sup>10</sup> Crawford, 'English Georgic and British Nationhood', 125.

<sup>11</sup> Simon, 'The Georgian Poetic', 122. See also Dominic Hibberd, 'Wilfred Owen and the Georgians', *The Review of English* vol. 30, no.117 (Feb. 1979), 28–40: "the 'Georgians' may be defined simply as those poets who were reasonably substantial contributors to Edward Marsh's anthology" (28).

<sup>12</sup> Simon, 'The Georgian Poetic', 122.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid*, 127.

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<sup>14</sup> L. Hugh Moore, 'Siegfried Sassoon and Georgian Realism', *Twentieth Century Literature* 14.4 (Jan. 1969), 199–209, 200.

<sup>15</sup> Simon, 'The Georgian Poetic', 132.

<sup>16</sup> Lascelles Abercrombie defined aesthetic experience as experience at what is virtually the threshold of consciousness: *ibid.*, 133.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 127. The Marsh circle included Lascelles Abercrombie, Gordon Bottomley, Rupert Brooke, James Elroy Flecker, Wilfrid Gibson, Walter de la Mare, Harold Monro, Sturge Moore, Bertrand Russell, G. E. Moore, Sturge Moore, and, sometimes, Lawrence. The Hulme-Pound circle included Richard Aldington, Hilda Doolittle, F. S. Flint, Ford Madox Heuffer (later Ford), T. E. Hulme, James Joyce, Wyndham Lewis, W.B. Yeats, and Lawrence.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 128. The embedded quotation is from Harold Monro, *Some Contemporary Poets* (London: L. Parsons, 1920), 25; the "Great Tradition" to which he refers is that of the canon of English poetry (and literature), which the Georgian Renaissance purported to eschew.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.* In fact, Lawrence was the only poet to be included in both the Georgian and Imagist anthologies.

<sup>20</sup> Stephen Spender, *The Struggle of the Modern* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1963), 159; quoted in *ibid.*, 121.

<sup>21</sup> Moore, 'Siegfried Sassoon and Georgian Realism', 200.

<sup>22</sup> According to C. K. Stead, Georgians, far from being reactionary, were generally regarded in 1912 as "dangerous literary revolutionaries": *The New Poetics: Yeats to Eliot* (London: Hutchinson, 1964), 57.

<sup>23</sup> Martin J. Wiener, 'England is the Country: Modernization and the National Self-Image', *Albion: A Quarterly Journal Concerned with British Studies* 3.4 (Winter 1971), 198–211, 204.

<sup>24</sup> Arguably most of Lawrence's nature poems are georgic, given his own repositioning of the mode. Certainly this can be said of poems similar to 'Snake' in comparing an element of nature to man, specifically to the state of man's natural instincts in the modern world. One thinks especially of *Birds, Beasts and Flowers*, as well as poems in *Look! We Have Come Through!*, such as 'Green', 'Gloire de Dijon', and 'A Doe at Evening'.

<sup>25</sup> Robert Ross, *The Georgian Revolt: Rise and Fall of a Poetic Ideal 1910–1922* (London: Faber, 1967), 21.

<sup>26</sup> See Simon, 'The Georgian Poetic'.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 132.

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- <sup>28</sup> Anthony Low, *The Georgic Revolution* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1985), 3.
- <sup>29</sup> Ibid, 4.
- <sup>30</sup> See Macdonald Daly, 'D. H. Lawrence and Labour in the Great War', *The Modern Language Review* 89.1 (Jan. 1994), 19–38.
- <sup>31</sup> Simon, 'The Georgian Poetic', 130. Marsh enlarged his circle beyond his Cambridge mates over time: see note 17 above.
- <sup>32</sup> Anthony Barnett, 'Foreword to *The Long Revolution*', in Raymond Williams, *The Long Revolution* (Cardigan: Parthian, 2011), vii–xxv, viii.
- <sup>33</sup> Williams, *The Long Revolution*, 54.
- <sup>34</sup> Ibid, 58.
- <sup>35</sup> Mackenzie, 'Edwardian Idyll, Edwardian Mapping: *The Heart of the Country*', 105.
- <sup>36</sup> Alan Liu, *Wordsworth: The Sense of History* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1989), 18–19.
- <sup>37</sup> Goodman, *Georgic Modernity and British Romanticism*, 5.
- <sup>38</sup> Ibid, 10.
- <sup>39</sup> Rupert Brooke, 'The Old Vicarage, Grantchester', in *Georgian Poetry 1911–1912*, 32–7, ll. 49–51. Project Gutenberg, accessed Oct. 3, 2018 <<http://www.gutenberg.org/files/9640/9640-h/9640-h.htm>>.
- <sup>40</sup> Ibid., l. 22, l. 19.
- <sup>41</sup> Sam Smith, *Inviolable Voice: History and 20<sup>th</sup> Century Poetry* (New York: Gill and Macmillan, 1982), 189. Smith is referring to the poetry of Seamus Heaney and John Montague.
- <sup>42</sup> Frank Prewett, 'The Somme, June, 1917', *Georgian Poetry 1920–22*, 145, ll. 9–12: <[https://archive.org/stream/in.ernet.dli.2015.208108/2015.208108.Georgian-Poetry\\_djvu.txt](https://archive.org/stream/in.ernet.dli.2015.208108/2015.208108.Georgian-Poetry_djvu.txt)>.
- <sup>43</sup> 'Snap-Dragon' was written during the summer of 1907 while Lawrence was drafting *The White Peacock*. It was published in the *English Review* (June 1912) and *Georgian Poetry 1911–1912*.
- <sup>44</sup> Hugh Underhill, 'From a Georgian Poetic to the "Romantic Primitivism" of D. H. Lawrence and Robert Graves', *Studies in Romanticism* 22.4 (Winter, 1983), 517–50, 532.
- <sup>45</sup> Ibid, 535.
- <sup>46</sup> Ibid, 532.
- <sup>47</sup> Goodman, *Georgic Modernity and British Romanticism*, 9.
- <sup>48</sup> Qtd. Burwell, 'A Checklist of Lawrence's Reading', 73.

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<sup>49</sup> Michael Squires, 'Lawrence's *The White Peacock*: A Mutation of Pastoral', *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 12.2 (Summer 1970), 263–83, 266.

<sup>50</sup> Carl Jung, *Man and His Symbols* (New York: Dell, 1968).

<sup>51</sup> Katherine Gaudet, 'Liberty and Death: Fictions of Suicide in the New Republic', *Early American Literature* 47.3 (2012), 591–622, 591.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 592.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>54</sup> Charles L. Ross, *The Composition of 'The Rainbow' and 'Women in Love': A History* (U of Virginia P, 1980), 32.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 34.

<sup>56</sup> Keith Sagar, *The Life of D. H. Lawrence* (London: Methuen, 1980), 80.

<sup>57</sup> David Fairer, "'Where Fuming Trees Refresh the Thirsty Air': The World of Eco-Georgic", *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture* 40 (2011), 201–218, 201, 202.

<sup>58</sup> The change of name from Evelyn to Egbert in the 1922 version signals the distinction between the first Saxon to be sovereign of a united England, and the present-day Egbert, who is backward-looking, little respected, who does no work, and whose Britishness rings hollow.

<sup>59</sup> In the 1915 version, Evelyn is an "abstraction" while in the war, "working at the guns" and his death is "dissolution" (*EME* 227, 226, 231).

<sup>60</sup> As Stead notes, "a chorus of critics begins its remarks on D. H. Lawrence's poetry by saying he was 'not a Georgian'": *The New Poetics: Yeats to Eliot*, 88.