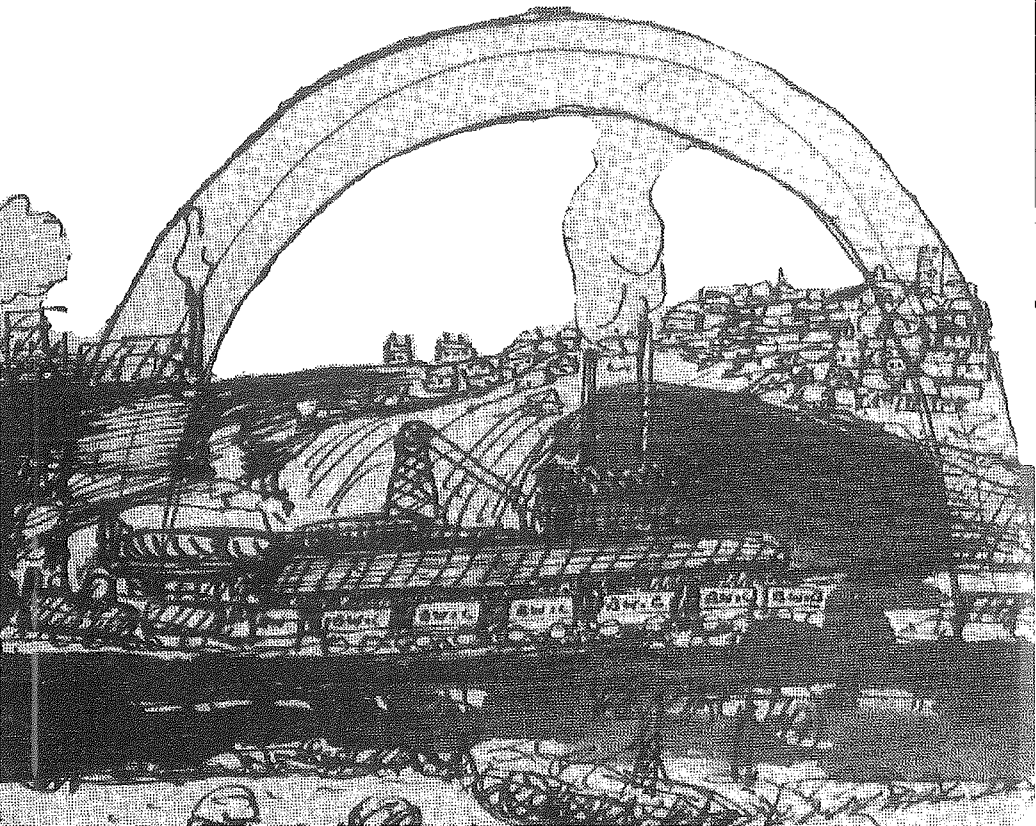


| STUDI DI ANGLISTICA / 21

D.H. LAWRENCE'S THE RAINBOW

RE-READINGS OF A RADICAL TEXT

Edited by
Renzo D'Agnillo





D.H. Lawrence's *The Rainbow*

The Rainbow marked a turning point in D.H. Lawrence's writing career. Originally intended as a vindication of the female suffragette movement, the novel underwent a complex compositional process through which it launched a broader revolutionary programme that comprised a redefinition of sexual relationships. Banned almost immediately after its publication, it remains to this day one of the most provocative and powerful texts of the 20th century. This volume brings together a collection of new interpretations of the novel and their wide range of themes and critical perspectives are a testimony to the continual relevance of Lawrence's narrative and moral vision.

Contributions by Raffaella Antinucci, Carla Comellini, Renzo D'Agnillo, Anthony Dunn, Francesco Marroni, Stefania Michelucci, Peter Preston, John Worthen, Claudia Zilletti.



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D.H. Lawrence, *Drawing*,
sent to Viola Meynell in 1915.

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Contents

Foreword by John Worthen	7
Introduction	9
Peter Preston The Polish Dimension of <i>The Rainbow</i>	15
Francesco Marroni D. H. Lawrence's Ontological Aporias: Ursula and the Broken Rainbow	39
Renzo D'Agnillo "Wedding at the Marsh": Lawrence's Rhetorical Strategies in Chapter V of <i>The Rainbow</i>	61
Stefania Michelucci Uprooting: The Beginning of Existential Crisis in <i>The Rainbow</i>	85
Anthony Dunn Generation and Education in <i>The Rainbow</i>	109
Carla Comellini <i>The Rainbow</i> and the Metaphor of Food	125
Raffaella Antinucci Going "beyond": Ken Russell's <i>The Rainbow</i> (1989)	135
Claudia Zilletti Gardens of Initiation: Experience and Growth in D. H. Lawrence's <i>The Rainbow</i>	155
Notes on the Contributors	171

Renzo D'Agnillo

**“Wedding at the Marsh”:
Lawrence’s Rhetorical Strategies in Chapter V of
*The Rainbow***

Chapter V of *The Rainbow* marks a change in style and tone that is as sudden as it is unexpected. Centred round the lively wedding ceremony between Anna and Will Brangwen, “Wedding at the Marsh” appears, on the surface, to provide momentary relief from the brooding explorations of Lawrence’s exhaustive analytical method in which personal and inter-personal conflicts are traced at the pre-conscious level¹. Indeed, with its emphasis on external elements and its relatively low frequency of digressive passages, the chapter effectively posits a stylistic alternative to the dominant rhetorical features of *The Rainbow*². Considering its almost negligible dependence on previously narrated events, there is even a sense in which it may be read as a self-complete story. At the same time, however, “Wedding at the Marsh” initiates narrative and thematic developments of crucial significance. First, the central theme of marriage is highlighted on a diegetic level through the only instance of a wedding ceremony in the novel. Second, the euphoric elements of the nuptial celebration are tempered by telling details that presage the problematic representation of sexual relationships in *The Rainbow* which culminate in

¹ Lawrence’s original title, “Haste to the Wedding”, indicates, perhaps too explicitly for the overall context of the novel, the melodrama and humour that characterise the chapter.

² John Middleton Murray, *Reminiscences of D. H. Lawrence*, London, Jonathan Cape, 1932, p. 88. Frieda reported to Murray that the chapter, written in Chesham between 18-23 December 1915, “had Marlowe and Fielding in an account of a genuine English wedding” [...]. The sense of immediacy and spontaneity it conveys seems attributable to the fact that the time of narration (Christmas) coincides with the time of composition (which was also a particularly felicitous one for Lawrence, as his letters clearly indicate).

Ursula's rejection of marriage. Third, as a conclusion to the old world order of Tom Brangwen's generation, "Wedding at the Marsh" comprises a discourse (in the form of a wedding speech), that, by parodying the rhetorical strategies of its real author, reflects his own need to transcend the limitations of an exclusively male viewpoint as well as the difficulties in forging a rhetoric to heighten the reader's engagement with his text³.

The semantic-structural unity of "Wedding at the Marsh" is reflected in its self-complete and chronologically sequenced story-line which is made up of seven micro-episodes: 1) wedding ceremony preparations; 2) wedding service; 3) wedding toast and Brangwen's speech; 4) reactions to Brangwen's speech; 5) wedding couple's departure; 6) discussion between Tom and Alfred Brangwen; 7) carol singing. The opening paragraph immediately introduces Tom Brangwen as the central character through whose viewpoint virtually all of the events in the chapter are filtered and interpreted:

It was a beautiful sunny day for the wedding, a muddy earth but a bright sky. They had three cabs and two big closed-in vehicles. Everybody crowded in the parlour in excitement. Anna was still upstairs. Her father kept taking a nip of brandy. He was handsome in his black coat and grey trousers. His voice was hearty but troubled. His wife came down in dark grey silk with lace, and a touch of peacock-blue in her bonnet. Her little body was very sure and definite. Brangwen was thankful she was there, to sustain him among all these people⁴.

By rendering the haste and excitement within the Brangwen household by means of the swirling effect of these ten paratactically coordinated sentences with their succession of

³ *The Letters of D. H. Lawrence*, Vol II, eds George J. Zytaruk and James T. Boulton, London, Cambridge University Press, 1981, p. 183: During the writing process, Lawrence constantly struggled to bring his novel to full expression: "You must not say my novel is shaky – It is not perfect, because I am not expert in what I want to do" (To Edward Garnett, 5 June, 1914).

⁴ D. H. Lawrence, *The Rainbow*, ed. Mark Kinkead-Weekes, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1989 (1915), p. 124. Subsequent references refer to this edition with page numbers given in the text.

pronominal shifts, ("They had [...] Everybody crowded [...] Anna was [...] Her father [...] He was [...] His voice was [...] His wife came down [...] Her little body [...] Brangwen was [...]") Lawrence immediately establishes the dynamic pace that is so peculiar to "Wedding at the Marsh". As has been noted⁵, the opposition between *muddy earth* and *bright sky* in the first sentence recalls the opening section of the novel in which male instinct and female articulation are implied through the same features (these being, in this case, anticipatory elements of the symbolic unification of man and woman in marriage). It is also true, however, that the almost frantic movements of the opening sequence contrast markedly, on a stylistic level, with the slow, incantatory incipit of the novel. Furthermore, the fact that Lawrence subsequently confines the euphoria of the celebration to the wedding guests rather than the couple themselves, who (with the brief exception of Anna in the first scene) appear as shadowy, almost insignificant presences, the passive subjects of an event in which they ought to be foregrounded, is an ominous anticipation of their subsequent submission to the negative forces that threaten to destroy their marital union. The very fact that the predominant point of view in the chapter is reserved for Tom Brangwen has an importance for the diegetic level since the character requires a process of resolution in which the full extent of his emotional and cognitive development is traced before Lawrence can turn his narrative focus away from the old world he represents. Brangwen's initial sense of self-incompleteness is partly due to his foster-daughter's rejection of his love in the previous chapter. His attempt to bargain for her affections through the lavish expense of cabs and closed-in vehicles is a vanity for which he implicitly chastises himself later when, during his speech on marriage, he denounces the limitations of material wealth. This is symptomatic of the fact that he occupies the transitional stage between inarticulate blood-intimacy and conscious awareness, which stops short at education though,

⁵ Richard Hoffpauir, *The Art of Restraint: English Poetry from Hardy to Larkin*, Newark, University of Delaware Press, 1991, pp. 141-2.

precisely, not at materialism⁶. In spite of the fact that his 'education' lies purely within the confines of his relationship with Lydia he achieves a self-affirmation of sorts by balancing acknowledgement of his own limitations with her difference as foreign Other. The process of male re-appropriation, which is an essential aspect of the initial stages of the novel, is enacted in the opening sequence of "Wedding at the Marsh" through the initial contrast between Tom's insecurity and insufficiency (highlighted in the dichotomy *hearty/troubled*) and Lydia's confidence and self-certainty (rendered in the opposite parallelism *sure/definite*) becoming readjusted later in the chapter to the effect that Tom assumes control over events, whilst Lydia fades into the background of communal figures. Yet, in spite of this emphasis on their separation, which is also reflected on a syntactic level, Lawrence, keen to recall the couple's ultimately indissoluble union, eventually brings them together as co-subjects of the final clause (3):

Her father kept taking a nip of brandy. (1) He was handsome in his black coat and grey trousers. (2) His voice was hearty but troubled. (3)

His wife came down in dark grey silk with lace, and a touch of peacock blue in her bonnet. (1) Her little body was very sure and definite. (2) *Brangwen was thankful she was there, to sustain him among all these people.* (3) (*Italics mine*).

⁶ As a failure at school, Tom Brangwen turns his back on the 'conscious' world and in his moments of separation from Lydia is happy in the outdoor world of the farm which is no longer represented in terms of the pre-linguistic world of the incipit. In the following quotation there is a consciousness registering the landscape with an emotional involvement that is absent in the opening description of the novel: "The birds pecked busily round him, the horses were fresh and ready, the bare branches of the trees flung themselves up like a man yawning, taut with energy, the twigs radiated off into the clear light [...] He was happy, this morning, driving to town, with the hoofs of the horse spanking the hard earth [...]. The evening arrived later very beautiful, with a rosy flush hovering above the sunset [...]. It was magnificent to walk between the sunset and the moon [...]. But what was the end of the journey?" (70-1, underlining mine)

These six sentences also indicate Brangwen's cognitive limitations that are continually underlined by his shifts of mood throughout the chapter. The allusion to his dependence on alcohol is partially counterbalanced in the following sentence by his handsome figure in formal dress. This is, in turn, psychologically enhanced by his conflicting emotions of merriment and awkwardness in sentence 3. Lydia's *touch of peacock blue* also provides an element of contrast with the sombre hues of Tom's suit to underline their different reactions to the event and this impression is expanded in sentence 3 which renders explicit Tom's dependence on her presence during the social function. Thus, the opening sentences inscribe a sub-text in which Tom and Lydia's mutual dependence is viewed as a possible response to the problem of the power struggles between male and female that resonate throughout the novel with their simultaneous possibility of reconciliation and mutual acceptance. As Kinkead-Weekes observes, the couple effectively embody "the first opportunity to clarify what made for a creative marriage of opposites"⁷ in Lawrence's exploration of the relationship between the sexes in the novel.

The sudden use of the present indicative tense in the second paragraph, which continues until the cab journey to the church, constitutes an interesting grammatical feature that occurs nowhere else in the novel but is functional to Lawrence's rhetorical aims in "Wedding at the Marsh". In English fiction, the present tense normally serves as a foregrounding device (in contrast to Italian fiction, for example, in which it is frequently used as a stylistic alternative⁸). The temporal shift is not so much a question of the illusion of a continually present moment, which the reader probably registers unconsciously, as a combination of immediacy and comedy:

The carriages! The Nottingham Mrs Brangwen, in silk brocade, stands

⁷ Mark Kinkead-Weekes, *D. H. Lawrence: Triumph to Exile 1919-1922*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1996, p. 176.

⁸ Since *The Rainbow* was begun in Italy there is no reason not to suppose that Lawrence may have been influenced by this strategy in Italian novels he had read, such as those of Giovanni Verga and Grazia Deledda.

in the doorway saying who must go with whom. There is a great bustle. The front door is opened, and the wedding guests are walking down the garden path, whilst those still waiting peer through the window, and the little crowd at the gate gorges and stretches. How funny such dressed-up people look in the winter sunshine (124).

The exclamation: *The carriages!* induces a duple reading (hasty warning or ceremonious announcement) and the ensuing juxtaposition of pompous ceremony and frantic haste with which the protagonists conduct their final preparations creates a humour reinforced by the staged curiosity of the dressed-up crowd. However, the initial element of comedy is undermined by the ensuing tension between Anna and Tom:

She is ready. She bridles herself and looks queenly. She waves her hand sharply to her father:

"Come here!"

He goes. She puts her hand very lightly on his arm, and holding her bouquet like a shower, stepping oh very graciously, just a little impatient with her father for being so red in the face [...]

Her father notices her slim ankle and foot as she steps up: a child's foot. His heart is hard with tenderness. But she is in ecstasies with herself for making such a lovely spectacle. All the way she sat flamboyant with bliss because it was all so lovely (124-5).

Whilst foregrounding the touchingly amusing contrast between the vanity of the excited girl and apprehension of her bewildered father, the present tense mitigates the dramatic echo in Anna's command, which is an actual repetition of Lydia's words to Tom at a moment of crisis in their relationship:

"Come here," she said, unsure.

For some moments he did not move. Then he rose slowly and went across the hearth. It required an almost deathly effort of volition, or of acquiescence (87).

In contrast with Lydia's uncertainty in taking the initiative to restore harmony in a soured relationship, Anna's interjection, reinforced by the assertiveness of her body language (*She waves her hand sharply to her father*), reveals the confidence and

command with which she later defies her husband Will. Brangwen's compliance in both instances is paradigmatic of his subservience to the female forces in his life that, in turn, is symbolically illustrative of the novel's preoccupation with male readjustment to female assertion. The implicit double-time dimension created by the use of the present tense within the context of a past narrative also temporarily distances the narrative voice from the viewpoint of its characters. Thus, the phrase: *stepping oh very graciously* implies an authorial comment (reinforced by the decelerating effect of the exclamation *oh* placed between verb and adverb) which enhances the blend of comedy and detachment. The almost imperceptible reversion to the past tense in the same paragraph, on the other hand, prompts a subtle alteration from humour to pathos: "But she is in ecstasies with herself for making such a lovely spectacle. All the way she sat flamboyant with bliss because it was all so lovely" (125). With the simple adverbial *lovely* The temporal shift from present to past narration provokes a change from subject (Anna) to object (the wedding ceremony) and, by extension, demarks a spatial transference from subjective perception to objective observation. Similarly, the adjective *hard* in: "His heart is hard with tenderness", refers to a circumscribed emotion, whilst in the past tense phrase immediately following: "[...] his heart was so full it felt hard [...]" (125) it becomes elusive in its lack of qualification.

Brangwen's melancholic withdrawal during the wedding ceremony in the second episode dramatises a fundamental dichotomy of *The Rainbow*; the clash between individual and communal experience:

How long was it since he had gone to be married himself? He was not sure whether he was going to be married now, or what he had come for. He had a troubled notion that he had to do something or other. He saw his wife's bonnet, and wondered why she wasn't there with him (125).

Whilst the free indirect discourse articulates a conscious train of thought, (as opposed to the pre-conscious states Lawrence

otherwise employs the strategy to render in the novel) the obsessively interrogative tone (“How long was it [...] He was not sure whether [...] what he had come for [...] wondered why she wasn’t there [...]”) and abstract noun phrases (“troubled notion [...] something or other”) convey a mental confusion which culminates in the final sentence with Tom’s metonymic sighting of Lydia’s bonnet (rather than her actual person), the humour of which seems deliberately rendered by the exaggerated repetition of the phoneme /w/ in “He saw his wife’s bonnet, and wondered why she wasn’t there with him” (underlining mine) – . Lydia’s total absence for the remainder of the chapter is conspicuous and ironically suggests that she (the foreign Other) is now domesticized as an organic part of the community whilst Brangwen has become psychologically alienated from the rest of the congregation⁹. The ambivalence of Brangwen’s liminal position, between affiliation and disaffiliation, is all the more unsettled by the limitations of his cognitive perceptions. There is, to begin with, a symbolic nuance in his perception of the colours glowing through the church window, presented as they are in terms of a light/dark dichotomy that, in addition, dramatises a conflict between consciousness and unconsciousness:

They stood before the altar. He was staring up at the east window, that glowed intensely, a sort of blue purple: it was deep blue glowing, and some crimson, and little yellow flowers, held fast in veins of shadow, in a heavy web of Darkness. How it burned alive in radiance among its black web (125).

It cannot go unnoticed that this observation of colours (blue purple – blue crimson – yellow) proleptically configures, in an uncompleted form, Ursula’s envisioning of the rainbow at the end of the novel. It is almost as if, in his primitive stage, Brangwen is only given a glimpse of what Ursula fully perceives in her

⁹ Gerald Doherty “The Metaphorical Imperative: From Trope to Narrative” in *The Rainbow*, *South Central Review*, 6, 1, (1989), p. 52 makes the observation that the alien elements of Lydia’s ‘otherness’ become “absorbed and domesticated” after she settles down to a married life with Tom.

enlightened condition. This passage also recalls the chromatically illuminated evening landscape Brangwen observes while walking in the fields:

The evening arrived later very beautiful, with a *rosy* flush hovering above the sunset, and passing away into *violet* and *lavender* with *turquoise green* north and south in the sky, and in the east, a great, *yellow* moon hanging heavy and radiant. It was magnificent to walk between the sunset and the moon [...]. But what was the end of the journey? (71, italics mine).

Significantly, the lyrical ecstasy which marks his aesthetic appreciation of the land is abruptly terminated by the same interrogative statement that haunts him during the wedding ceremony. Moreover, the reduction from five colours in the outdoor scene to three in the church confirms the limitations of Brangwen's semi-epiphany which concludes in a darkness that indicates denial of salvation. The description of his mind becoming a "heavy web of darkness [...] a black web" is significantly echoed in his death in the flood: "He fought in a black horror of suffocation [...]. Something struck his head, a great wonder of anguish went over him, then the blackness covered him entirely" (229, underlining mine). This co-reference gives an ominous resonance to the vicar's question: "'Who giveth this woman to be married to this man?'" creating a simultaneous effect of comedy and drama in the divergence between the emotional intensity of the 'felt' language of the individual and the neutral ritualistic code of the ceremony. While Brangwen is so engrossed in his thoughts that he does not have the presence of mind to respond instantly, the conventional question, at the same time, elicits his existential reflections which resume his previous interrogation in the fields:

How did one grow old – how could one become confident? He wished he felt older. Why, what difference was there, as far as he felt matured or completed, between him now and him at his own wedding? He might be getting married over again – he and his wife. He felt himself tiny, a little, upright figure on a plain circled round with the immense, roaring sky; he and his wife, two little, upright figures walking across this plain, whilst the heavens shimmered and roared about them.

When did one come to an end? In which direction was it finished? There was no end, no finish, only this roaring vast space. Did one never get old, never die? That was the clue (126).

The dialogic tension between Brangwen's self-interrogation and his self-awareness is rendered through the duple discourse level of free indirect thought and omniscient narration. Temporal and spatial coordinates become blurred in his mind, to the point that past and present events are contracted¹⁰ ("[...] he might be getting married over again .- he and his wife"), and the circumscribed environment of the Marsh Farm expanded to the *roaring vast* space of an endless, alien universe which becomes his only certainty. Conversely, the passage provides an intimation that elucidates Brangwen's incompleteness in his recognition that the richness of his existence: "[...] red and burning and blazing and sporting itself in the dark meshes of his body [...] is at the same time so finished and unformed" (126). On the one hand, he only needs to satisfy his senses to feel consummated, on the other, he is sub-consciously aware of the infinite in himself but unable to fully apprehend this dimension. Thus, whilst he can envisage himself as an upright figure on the horizontal level of an earthly (physical) plane, he can only feel totally astray on the vertical plane of the immense (spiritual) heavens. Furthermore, the chromatic clash between "the frost hoary and blue among the long grass under the tombstones and the holly-berries overhead twinkling scarlet" (126) outside the church after the service is symbolically suggestive of the self-consuming nature of the body (the Unconscious) according to whose laws Brangwen essentially adheres. The deathly nature of purely physical consummation is further emphasised by the

¹⁰ Michael Bell, *D. H. Lawrence: Language and Being*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1992, p. 67, notes: "*The Rainbow* is the first work in which Lawrence gave extended narrative expression to this sense of the human identity as inhabiting different time scales simultaneously [...]. Also p. 69: "the different time scales compressed into any one moment often transcend those of personal psychic history". In this particular sequence, however, the very opposite occurs as Tom imagines his own past marriage superimposed on that of his daughter's present marriage.

fact that Brangwen's 'vision' appears against a dysphoric background of "black motionless, ragged boughs" (127) of yew trees (traditionally connoted with death), whose ominous contrast with the "vain white peacock of a bride with her white, slim, daintily-stepping feet" (127) is certainly not accidental.

Brangwen's sombre reflections during the wedding ceremony, (the incongruous effects of which are also paralleled by the married couple's strange silence during the dinner celebration) give way to drunken revelry in the third episode. With no means to fathom his flashes of spiritual awareness, Brangwen must erase the gloom of its 'mysterious' message in order to re-establish the coordinates of his physical, sensual self, by abandonment to unrestrained merriment ("Tom Brangwen, becoming boisterous" [...] 127). Once the social obligations of the church service are replaced by alcohol (*Everybody must drink*, 127), he regains the confidence to take command at the dinner table, although this process is arrived at in stages. First, his toast to the bride and groom is declared in a ritualistic language which his brothers' mock-replies crudely 'deconstruct':

"Lift your glasses up," shouted Tom Brangwen from the parlour, "lift your glasses up, an' drink to the hearth an' home – hearth an' home, an' may they enjoy it."

"Night an' day, an may they enjoy it," shouted Frank Brangwen, in addition.

"Hammer an' tongs, and may they enjoy it," shouted Alfred Brangwen, the saturnine.

"Fill your glasses up, an' let's have it all over again," shouted Tom Brangwen.

"Hearth and home, an' may ye enjoy it."

There was a ragged shout of the company in response.

"Bed and blessin', an' may ye enjoy it," shouted Frank Brangwen.

There was a swelling chorus in answer.

"Comin' and goin', an may ye enjoy it," shouted the saturnine Alfred Brangwen, and the men roared by now boldly, and the women said "Just hark, now!" (127).

The initial and end focus of Brangwen's split infinitives (*Lift your glasses up* [...] *Fill your glasses up*) aptly reinforce his sentiments of merriment brought on by drunkenness. However, the enduring

antagonism between the Brangwens is not attenuated even during the toast to the bride and groom. Frank and Alfred's counter-responses produce a sardonically comic effect by altering the initial words of Tom's toast while faithfully maintaining the antistrophe in the second part of the clause. In the first round, the culminating reference (*hammer and tongs*) alludes to marital strife, whilst in the second (in which the address becomes explicit with the pronoun shift from 'they' to 'ye') the associations are more deliberately 'scandalous' (*home* → *bed* → *coming and going*). Lawrence does not retract from employing prosodic features¹¹ which rhetorically reinforce the crescendo effect in a pattern of alternating trochaic, iambic and anapaestic rhythms with syllable numbers increasing (from 9-10 and 10-11) in each round of toasts:

/ - / - / - - / -
 [...] hearth an' home, an' may they enjoy it."

/ - / - / - - / -
 "Night an' day, an may they enjoy it,"

/ - - / - / - - / -
 "Hammer an' tongs, and may they enjoy it,"

[...]

/ - / - / - - / -
 "Hearth and home, an' may ye enjoy it."

[...]

/ - / - - / - - / -
 "Bed and blessin', an' may ye enjoy it,"

/ - - / - - / - - / -
 "Comin' and goin', an may ye enjoy it,"

In spite of the mockery at his expense, Brangwen emerges from a voiceless character (apart from the single word 'me' uttered in

¹¹ R. Hoffpauir, *op. cit.*, p. 143, has also noted that: "The passage has the tightness, economy and expressive breadth of a poem."

reply to the priest during the service), to become the most important spokesman in the chapter. His speech on marriage occurs in the most comical scene in the novel and never addresses the bride and groom, but is rather a self-referential discourse in which Brangwen ultimately ridicules himself before the company. On a diegetic level, the speech represents his attempt to overcome his existential dilemma during the church service, whilst, on an extradiegetic level it draws on Lawrence's own contemporary theories on male-female relationships. This latter factor may explain why, despite Brangwen's verbal ineptitude, Lawrence is careful to present his discourse in terms of a three-part logical-rational progression: the first which declares the necessity of marriage; the second which centres on a dichotomy between hunger for material things and the spiritual craving for marriage and the third which elaborates upon a simile between a married couple and an angel. The rearrangement of the first part of Brangwen's speech below serves to evidence his recourse to the typical Lawrentian traits of verbal repetition and rhetorical emphasis:

Marriage,
Marriage is what we're made for.
A man enjoys being a man:
for what purpose was he made a man,
if not to enjoy it?
And likewise,
a woman enjoys being a woman [...] (128)

Brangwen commences with an epizeuxis with 'marriage' placed as head-subject rather than the pronoun 'we' (i.e. not 'we were made for marriage'). This rhetorical emphasis is also belied by the fact that he repeats the word in his drunkenness, of course, so that his speech may be doubly read as self-parody or self-illumination. Brangwen's inarticulacy is qualified precisely by the continual vying of these mutually-exclusive possibilities. His language, characterised by short paratactically coordinated sentences, indicates the slow, deliberate tempo of a mind struggling to organise and articulate its thoughts. The effect of

deceleration discloses a frustration that is underlined by the intermittent interventions of narrative description together with the coarse interruptions of his listeners. His opening sentence, for example, is broken up by two main sentences and three subordinate clauses of the third-person narration:

“Marriage”, he began, his eyes twinkling and yet quite profound, for he was deeply serious and hugely amused at the same time; “Marriage, he said, speaking in the slow, full-mouthed way of the Brangwens, “is what we’re made for –” (128).

The humorous blend of lucidity of purpose and cognitive confusion that underpins Brangwen’s speech is deliberately evoked through a combination of crafted rhetoric (in the equally balanced repetitions of the lexemes ‘man’ and ‘woman’) and awkward garrulousness (in the rambling tautologies: “A man enjoys being a man for what purpose was he made a man if not to enjoy it. And likewise a woman enjoys being a woman” [...]) In effect, Brangwen’s central proposition is already contained in the first sentence (“*Marriage [...] is what we’re made for*”). The kind of verbal insistence with which the following segment underlines the inextricable link between man and woman: “Now, [...] for a man to be a man, it takes a woman [...] And for a woman to be a woman, it takes a ‘man’ [...] Therefore we have marriage” (128), seems a deliberate self-parody on the author’s part. Indeed, in the following extract from a letter to A. W. McLeod dated 2 June 1914, Lawrence’s lexical repetitions are not dissimilar to Brangwen’s: “[...] *the source of all life and knowledge is in man and woman, and the source of all living is in the interchange and the meeting and mingling of these two: man-life and woman-life, man-knowledge and woman-knowledge, man-being and woman-being*” (italics mine)¹². Although Brangwen senses the basic premise of the argument he attempts to put forward, he lacks the vocabulary with which to indicate its phenomenological complexity. The only discourse model available to him is the

¹² *The letters of D. H. Lawrence*, cit., p. 181.

church sermon, *the other, magic language* that the Brangwen women recognise at the beginning of the novel, spoken by voices moving *in worlds beyond where (their) own menfolk never existed* (11). In this respect, whilst the vicar, as a figure of enlightenment, represents the original seed of conflict between the men and women, Brangwen, as mock-preacher, attempts to restore the lost harmony between the men and women that has arisen as a result of the former's influence, though his attempt to give verbal dignity to his speech by drawing on biblical phraseology only falls flat on the deaf ears of his uncouth listeners. Besides, any idea of unity between the men and women is completely negated to the point that the women's turning away from their husbands' mode of being has now become the object of their open antagonism:

The saturnine Alfred had glittering, unseeing eyes, and a strange, fierce way of laughing that showed his teeth. His wife glowered at him and jerked her head at him like a snake. He was oblivious.

[...]

"Oh, don't you bother- called a farmer's wife.

"You may back your life they'd be summisin'," said Frank's wife.

[...]

"All speak up, men," chimed in a feminine voice (127-8).

For Brangwen, marriage is a sacred union through which the individual transcends the limitations of its materialistic ego¹³. The second part of his speech, with its implicit references to the gospel of Matthew: "For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in Heaven"¹⁴ and Mark: "For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?"¹⁵ reinforces its

¹³ See p. 57, which describes Brangwen's early discovery of the beneficial effects of married life: "It made a great difference to him, marriage. Things became so remote and of so little significance, as he knew the powerful source of his life, his eyes opened to a new universe [...] A new, calm relationship showed to him the things he saw [...]."

¹⁴ *The Bible, Authorized King James Version with Apocrypha*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1997, Matthew, 22:30, p. 32.

¹⁵ *Ibid*, Mark, 8:36, p. 56.

spiritual importance for him. The nexus of his speech, with its strong sermonising tone, reveals a sense of absolute certainty that contrasts with Tom's previous indecisiveness:

"There's no marriage in heaven," went on Tom Brangwen, but on earth there *is* marriage [...] there's very little else on earth but marriage. You can talk about money, or saving your souls. You can save your soul seven times over, and you may have a mint of money, but your soul goes gnawin', gnawin', gnawin', and it says there's something it must have. In heaven there is no marriage. But on earth there is marriage, else heaven drops out, and there's no bottom to it (128-9).

These words can also be read as an ironic comment on the marriage between Will and Anna which consists in the conflict between flesh and flesh rather than between spirits¹⁶. Thus, the three times repeated verb *gnawin'* foreshadows the mutually antagonistic and ultimately destructive nature of their marital relationship. Conversely, the increasingly evangelical tone of Brangwen's speech reflects the excitement of a sudden realisation that the very existence of heaven may be dependent upon earthly marriage. This leads to the metaphorical equation between men, women and angels that comprises the final part of his speech:

"If we've got to be angels [...] and if there is no such thing as a man nor a woman amongst them, then it seems to me as a married couple makes *one* angel [...] For an angel can't be less than a human being. And if it was only the soul of a man minus the man, then it would be less than a human being - [...] An angel's *got* to be more than a human being [...] So I say, an angel is the soul of man and woman in one: they rise united at the judgement day as one angel [...]" (129).

Brangwen lays the basis of his argument *a priori* when he says: *If we've got to be angels*. He does not question the validity of his assumption, which for him is merely taken for granted. Furthermore, by envisaging an angel as the end product of a

¹⁶ Haruhide Mori, "Lawrence's Imagistic Development in *The Rainbow* and *Women in Love*", *E. L. H.* 4, 1964, p. 463.

marriage between a man and woman he suggests a one-to-one correspondence that undermines its spiritual superiority: ("for thou hast made him (man) a little lower than the angels [...]"¹⁷) Indeed, he overrides the issue of there being "[...] no such thing as a man nor a woman amongst them [...]" (129) by investing the figure of the angel with a hermaphroditic identity that is the very opposite of the sexless intermediary being represented in Christian doctrine. His secularized version of the angel as the final product of sexual polarity parallels Lawrence's own peculiar adaptation of Christian terminologies to outline the nature of his dualistic philosophy in *Twilight in Italy*:

This is the Holy Ghost of the Christian Trinity. And it is this, the relation which is established between the two Infinities, the two natures of God, which we have transgressed, forgotten, sinned against. The Father is the Father, and the Son is the Son. I may know the Son and deny the Father, or know the Father and deny the Son. But that which I may never deny, and which I have denied, is the Holy Ghost which relates the dual Infinities into One Whole, which relates and keeps distinct the dual natures of God¹⁸.

Lawrence's concept includes the conjunction between man and woman which: "[...] creates a third thing, an *absolute*, a word, which is *neither me nor her, nor of me nor of her*, but which is *absolute*"¹⁹ (italics mine). However, Brangwen's angel not only sanctions the symbolic union between male and female which constitutes this absolute, but, more importantly, indicates a recognition of the male and female elements coexisting in his own self²⁰ which are the necessary basis for a creative sexual

¹⁷ *Ibid*, Psalms 8:5, p. 643.

¹⁸ D. H. Lawrence, *Twilight in Italy*, Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1981 (1916) pp. 53-4.

¹⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 116.

²⁰ D. H. Lawrence, *Selected Literary Criticism*, ed Anthony Beal, London, William Heinemann, 1955, p. 190. In his "Study of Thomas Hardy", which Lawrence was working on during composition of *The Rainbow*, he makes the same point: "For every man comprises male and female in his being, the male always struggling for predominance. A woman likewise consists in male and female, with female predominant." Further on (228) his

relationship. Thus, his advocating of the impersonal union of the two forces is, in reality, nothing less than a celebration of his own marriage which, after its first two years of misunderstanding and strife, becomes "a baptism to another life" filled with "the perpetual wonder of the transfiguration" (90-1). Indeed, the fact that his marriage to Lydia is the only example in the novel of a relationship which comes anywhere near Lawrence's ideal union, explains why Brangwen's speech eventually breaks down. His harmonious vision is, from the start, totally lost on his unfeeling interlocutors whose only way of responding is through irrelevant, interruptions. At the same time, his inability to make himself understood becomes self-evident. His statement: "And if it was only the soul of the man minus the man, then it would be less than a human being", for instance, is self-contradictory since, until this moment, Brangwen has described the angel as a union of the souls of a man and woman: ("An angel's got to be more than a human being. So I say, an angel is the soul of man and woman in one [...]"), whereas "minus the man" implies that the creation of an angel is in some way forestalled by the absence of a physical, earthly being. Moreover, he is neither able to confidently challenge Frank's sarcastic rejoinder: "Praising the Lord" nor Alfred's humorously pertinent question: "And what about the other women left over?" To the former, he implies agreement by repeating the same phrase, whilst to the latter he can only reply with a matter-of-factness that goes against the pseudo-religious rhetoric that has so far characterised his speech: "That I can't tell. How do I know as there is anybody left over at the Judgement Day? Let that be" (129). The colloquial exchanges of dialogue that ensue are foregrounded from the general linguistic background of the novel to such an extent as to constitute one of the most hilarious moments in *The Rainbow*:

words echo more closely those of Tom Brangwen: "It needs that a man shall know the natural law of his own being, then that he shall seek out the law of the female, with which to join himself as complement. He must know that he is half, and the woman is the other half: that they are two, but that they are two-in-one."

"I can always remember," said Frank's wife, "when our Harold was bad, He did nothink but see an angel at th' back o' th' lookin' glass. 'Look Mother', he said, 'at that angel.' Theer isn't no angel, my duck, I said, But he wouldn't have it. I took th' looking glass off' n th' dressin' table, But it made no difference. He kep' on sayin' it was there. My word, it did give me a turn. I though for sure as I'd lost him."

"I can remember," said another man, Tom's sister's husband, 'my mother Gave me a good hidin' once, for sayin' I'd got an angel up my nose. She seed me pokin', an she said: 'What are you pokin' at your nose for – give over. 'There's an angel up it,' I said, an' she fetched me such a wipe. But there was. We used to call them thistle things 'angels,' as wafts about. An' I'd pushed one o' these up my nose, for some reason or other."

"It's wonderful what children will get up their noses," said Frank's wife. "I c'n remember our Hemmie, she shoved one o' them bluebell things out th' middle of a bluebell, what they call candles,' up her nose, and oh we had some work! I'd seen her stickin' 'em on the end of her nose, like, but I never thought she'd be so soft as to shove it right up [...]" (129-30)

Lawrence's rendering of dialect through contractions (*th' looking glass, hep' o'* etc), lexical vagueness (*them thistle things, one o' them bluebell things*), variant spellings (*nothink, theer, sayin'* etc), double negatives (*theer isn't no angel*) grammatical variants (*seed*), and simple sentences, delightfully underlines the clash of discourses which reflects, on an ideological as well as a social level, the differences between Brangwen, who is able to articulate most of his speech in standard English, and the wedding guests. The rush of uninterrupted exchanges creates a comical effect of semantic drift through lexical associations in which the meaning of the word *angel* shifts from the biblical figure to a dialect term indicating the part of a flower, to the final ludicrous descriptions of infantile domestic accidents. What Brangwen begins as a serious evaluation of a human sacrament descends into farce and bathos. Yet, despite the fact that he can only submit to the festive communal spirit, as a result and content himself with inarticulately: "[...] roaring and shouting with the rest" (130), he admittedly undergoes "an evolutionary process

of increasing awareness and inter-dependence"²¹. The real reason why Brangwen fails to communicate his vision is because he has presented it to the wrong audience. This is evident in the fact that the clichéd, though earnest, language he adopts is too easily exposable to their ridicule. In this respect, it may be pertinent to suggest a deliberate parallel with Lawrence's own difficulties as a writer which may beg the question of whether his character's speech may be a deliberate parody of his own rhetorical strategies²². The discourse situation certainly anticipates the sort of ideological and artistic misunderstanding to which Lawrence was subjected from the publication of *The Rainbow* onwards. It may be interesting to note that Lawrence, surely wary of similar ridicule to his own credibility, never resorted to the linguistic hybrid of biblical rhetoric and philosophical speculation that appears in *Twilight in Italy* again in his fiction²³.

The fifth episode, which marks a return to the festive mood of the beginning of the chapter, besides being reminiscent of Hardy's *Under the Greenwood Tree*, is intratextually connected with Lawrence's first published short story "An Enjoyable Christmas: An Interlude"²⁴. The story features a description of

²¹ William E. Lenz, "The Organic Connection of *The Rainbow* with *Women in Love*", *South Atlantic Bulletin*, 43, 1, 1978, p. 8.

²² Allan Ingram, *The Language of D. H. Lawrence*, Houndsmills, Macmillan, 1990, p. 125. In his lucid analysis of the passage in question, Ingram observes that "no single voice is capable of speaking the whole truth alone. What is more, the very fact that Lawrence draws attention to this incapacity is a comment about the shortcomings of the enterprise in which he is engaged – writing a novel, using language for the purpose of communication."

²³ *The Letters of D. H. Lawrence*, cit., p. 249. Writing to Gordon Campbell on 20 December 1914, Lawrence reveals a simultaneous reluctance and determination to pursue such Christian rhetoric: "It is very dangerous to use these old terms lest they sound like Cant. But if only one can grasp and know again as a new truth [...] the great vision, the great satisfying conceptions of the world's greatest periods, it is enough. Because so it is made new."

²⁴ This story features a dramatic representation of St George's struggle with Beelzebub: "They began the ludicrous old Christmas play that everyone

the same traditional mystery play of St George and the devil that is also performed before the group of wedding guests, but with a very different function. Here, the fact that Lawrence uncharacteristically shuns the opportunity to evoke any sense of excitement or jollity other than in the form of a laconic narrative report act, is appropriate. For the idea of harmony and reconciliation, implicit in celebration, has already been negated in the breakdown of Brangwen's speech as well as the open hostility between the male and female guests. Moreover, in his reminiscence of his own participation in the play as a youth Brangwen momentarily evokes his enjoyment at playing the devil:

"By Jove I got a crack once, when I was playin' Beelzebub," said Tom Brangwen, his eyes full of water with laughing. "It knocked all th' sense out of me as you'd crack an egg. But I tell you, when I came to, I played Old Johnny Roger with St George, I did that" (130).

It cannot go unnoticed that Brangwen's humorous identification with the devil not only contrasts with the earnestly pious tones of his wedding speech, but is also underscored by his lapse into dialect. This shift in linguistic register has an important socio-cultural implication because it effectively sanctions his re-embodiment of the communal spirit of the festivities. In dramatic contrast, the dignified silence throughout of the newlyweds, appropriately rendered in neatly balanced clauses: ("Only the bride and bridegroom sat with shining eyes and strange, bright faces, and scarcely sang, or only with just moving lips [...] Anna rose silently and went to change her dress [...] The youth stood with a faint, half-hearing smile on his face. He was tense and abstracted [...] Anna came down, in her day dress,

knows so well. Beelzebub acted with much force, much noise, and some humour. St. George, that is Fred, played his part with zeal and earnestness most amusing, but at one of the most crucial moments he entirely forgot his speech, which, however, was speedily rectified by Beelzebub. Arthur was nervous and awkward, so that Beelzebub supplied him with most of his speeches."

very elusive" (130-1) is symptomatic of their independence and alienation from the community (which is further reinforced both by their new home lying outside the confines of the Marsh Farm as well as the fact that Anna breaks with the family custom by refusing a permanent servant).

The sequel to Brangwen's speech in the sixth episode precludes the night-time scene of reconciliation and reassurance which concludes the chapter. It centres exclusively on his brief exchange with his elder brother Alfred, whose insistence that: "You've got to go on by yourself, if it's only to perdition" (132) is diametrically opposed to Tom's belief in the fundamental importance of marital union (it is no accident that Alfred's jeering remarks are instrumental in discouraging Tom to continue his speech) such that Tom is once again compelled to review and confirm his own position: "[...] if it were finer to go alone, it was: he did not want to, for all that" (133). The free indirect discourse of Brangwen's concluding thoughts ironically carries a more persuasive force than any of his own spoken words and seems to provide him with a new impetus through which, with his insistence on the collaboration of all the men in the final carol singing scene, he emerges as an assertive voice:

The hymn rambled on outside, all the men singing their best, having forgotten everything else under the spell of the fiddles and the tune [...]. Anna could hear her father singing with gusto.

"Aren't they silly" she whispered.

And they crept closer, closer together, hearts beating to one another. And even as the hymn rolled on, they ceased to hear it (133).

After the self-conscious inarticulacy of his wedding speech, Brangwen discovers a more effective, if not more endearing, means of celebrating his daughter's marriage through a ritual performance (carol singing), which, because merely a recitative activity, poses none of the problems to his self-confidence that cripple his own improvised discourse. The ritualistic enactment of carol singing also sanctions his reconciliation with the group of men who, in turn, have "forgotten everything else under the spell of the fiddles and the tune [...]". Underlying this process

of re-affiliation, is the descriptive shift to the newly married couple who represent the new (female oriented) world which takes precedence in the rest of the novel. The outcome of this narrative strategy is not without its symbolic significance, for, as they become oblivious of Brangwen's voice, lying in bed with "their hearts beating to one another", Anna and Will effectively silence it²⁵. For, on the diegetic level, "Wedding at the Marsh" anticipates the transition from the old order to a new world in which the female struggle for self-assertion only exacerbates male-female relations rather than lead towards a creative interchange. Whilst Lawrence confers a rhetorical and narrative autonomy to the bucolic world represented in the chapter, its textual features ultimately confirm the problematic nature of sexual relations in *The Rainbow* by enacting the intersection between the modes of being of two generations, and whilst it sets the events within the temporal context of the former, it is essential to the thematic development of the novel that it points ahead to the complex phases of the latter.

²⁵ It is no accident that Brangwin's only other appearance in the novel occurs in the chapter that describes his death in the flood.