

# THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MALE AND FEMALE CHARACTERS IN THE NOVEL 'THE RAINBOW'

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## ***Abstract***

*The Rainbow, 1915 is a saga about the three generations of Brangwen family. Each generation on its own way explore their moral and physical relationships shown through specific ways of acting on each other and maturing of female and male characters fitted in specific social frames.*

**Key words:** *Polarized relationships, female and male principle, social aspect*

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## **THE PAPER**

In this Lawrence's novel cyclic change of generations is shown through the change of main characters (Tom and Lydia, Anna and William and Ursula and Skrabensky). At the very beginning of *The Rainbow*, Lawrence gives a clear contrast between female and male family members of the family Brangwen. Male members of the family are dedicated to farm life. That kind of life satisfy them completely. They do not have any ambitions to climb on the social scale. On the other hand, women in the Brangwen family are different. They are interested in social aspects of the community they live in. They are also interested, except the farm life, how to progress on the social scale, precisely, why some people are in dominating position, while the other are in subordinate position. What distinguishes some people in the social sense and puts them in dominant or subordinate position. They conclude that the knowledge is the thing which gives power to one person to rule in the society. Upbringing and experience is what makes the difference between two persons and this is exactly the ambition for Brangwen women in order to provide their children better life.

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'It would be wonderful to know that feeling of those wonderful men who used the power of thinking and understanding'<sup>2</sup>

Lawrence through the Brangwen women gives his own opinions, the ruling class through control of knowledge and thinking actually controls the lower classes. The similar opinion gives also Fiona Becket. She says that at the beginning of the novel the way of life and existence itself is subordinate. The modern man is excluded from this way of life. Brangwens have separated life polarized between men and women in the family, and their thinking is completely different. Lawrence illustrates this through the description of the scene where the look of the men is turned into the soil, while women's look is turned above the ground.<sup>3</sup>

At the beginning of the novel Lawrence describes the relationship of Tom and Lydia. Through the colors of kaleidoscope he describes the mood of Lydia Lensky and the way she gets used to life in England, alone, without her husband and with a young child. The colors in which she moves through the mist of her life searching for the way out are various. In Yorkshire we can see that coldness and darkness of blue and green colors of the sea prevails. After that the greyness and nothingness of Kotesy is present. But one morning the brightness of the yellow jasmine appears. The bright colors of life joy gradually returns into Lydia's life. Lydia Lensky is a woman who most of her life lives on different places with lots of excitement. As a child of the owners of the big property she was accustomed to benefits and service. Lydia adored her father who led strange and irresponsible life, leaving the family id debts. Lydia gets married to Lensky, a doctor and activist of socialists. Most of their married life The Lenskys spend adventurous and in emigrations, dedicated to great political idea of Dr. Lensky. Lydia is completely dedicated to her husband and works in the hospital as a nurse, to the point where she neglects her maternity obligations. At the end, the children die of some disease, and soon after Dr. Lensky as well. She lives as a shadow, surrounded with memories. Lydia Lensky struggles to return to life that she knows as a girl, before she got married to dr. Lensky and loss of her children and husband. However, that returning is impossible. She is obsessed with darkness. On the foreign ground she does not have a single straw to hold which would return her to life. The only thing which wakes her up is the cry of baby Anna. Lawrence introduces her the cosmic fight of good and evil, angels and demons, which takes place on the general as well as on the individual level of every person. She starts a new life with Tom Brangwen in Koteshey. Tom is a stranger to Lydia, as all other Englishmen, but Lydia recognizes Tom as a man she should spend the rest of her life with. Tom and

2 Лоренс, Д. Х., *Дуга*, Свеучилишна наклада Либер, Загреб, 1981., pg. 12.

3 Becket, Fiona, *the Complete Critical Guide to D. H. Lawrence*, Routledge, 2002, London, 50.

Lydia are strangers, seen in cultural and socially. They belong to different worlds, however, they recognize each other essentially and they are close. Lydia is a puzzle for Tom. Lydia often falls into melancholic mood, and that state of her makes life together quite difficult. In those moments of distance Tom finds comfort in little girl, Anna, Lydia's daughter from her first marriage. Tom's and Anna's relationship is actually the first in the row of specific father-daughter relations which Lawrence repeats twice throughout the novel. This distance and not understanding between Tom and Lydia will last to the moment of the birth of their first common child. In that moment Lydia will experience transformation. From Mrs. Lensky she becomes Mrs. Brangwen, she becomes Tom's wife completely. Another change will happen that night. Little Anna, after many tears and weeps after her mother starts to accept Tom as a person who gives shelter and loses forever the feeling that she must take care about her mother. Now, that will be the job of the new baby, and she can dedicate herself now to her childhood. On the other hand Tom finds the support and comfort in Anne. Anne is a strange child, not interested in playing with her peers. She plays and spends time on the farm with animals, acting as if she was their mistress. That feeling of control and predominance will develop Anne in peculiar and confuse adult. Anna will also develop extraordinary feeling of belonging to Tom. The two of them are strange image on the cattle market. Lydia's inferiority and Tom's isolation will lead to distance that was almost impossible to overcome. Through the dialogue Lydia explains Tom that he does not see and feel her on the right way. She wanted Tom's complete participation, and that participation includes giving. Tom finds it difficult to give himself to somebody, because he is not sure that he wants to give himself to anybody. But, through this reunion for the first time sincere and honest, Tom and Lydia will recognize.

Lawrence points out this icon recognition as the basic relationship in social sense. It is exactly this way of manifestation unacceptable in English society. In *The Rainbow*, the sexual act Lawrence describes cautiously and carefully. As the novel progress and couples change, the description of sexual act scenes are more explicit.

Relationship of Lydia and Tom is natural and straightforward. Tom is fully realized as a person only in the primordial contact with Lydia. Lydia, as a Polish woman who comes in a foreign society represents something completely new and exotic in a dull small mining town. In the first relationship Lydia is completely subordinate to the leading idea of her husband. This thrill will fade away when Lydia starts to awake and matures as a woman. On the other hand, relationship of Lydia and Tom is completely different. Tom sees his wife as something special. She will remain almost to the end a beautiful exotic mystery which he will love on a specific way understandable

only to himself. The relationship of Tom and Lydia is sensual and full of gentle feelings. In a way these two characters are the happiest in the novel.

Painting the relationship of Lydia and Tom at the beginning of their life together, Lawrence points out the difference in the class between them, and how can happen social mobility at the social level. In childhood Lydia belonged to the ruling class. Tom would be in her social milieu just a worker who belonged to her family, working for them. At the beginning of their marriage Lydia occasionally tells stories about her past, consciously or unconsciously, putting Tom in this class. This is hard for Tom, of course. Belonging to different social classes in the beginning makes a real rift between Tom and Lydia. However, at the moment of intimacy Tom and Lydia find each other, and hand over to each other completely neglecting the class, misunderstanding, past and future. In these moments they live only for a moment of the present.

In the novel the same or a similar scenario of couples union in a generation of the Brangwen continuously repeats. Lydia and Tom at the beginning of their marital relations have a kind of relationship of opposite sexes. They are two opposing sides. Tom, tries at the beginning to subordinate his wife to his will by the power and superiority, Lydia Lensky, Bragwen later. On the other hand, Lydia being a foreigner, sees Tom as a foreigner whom she has to adapt. Lydia achieves that, but her inner, spiritual life reserves for herself. Lydia is physically very present in community life. Performs all domestic and social obligations just as it was expected of her, but deep down she is always staring at a distant past, her childhood and even more distant future, which is a combination of Lydia's desires and fantasies associated with the experience acquired with the first husband. Lydia is a specific character in Lawrence's works. One gets the impression that Lawrence, representing that Lydia is a Polish woman, wants to emphasize how much Tom, deciding to marry Lydia, jumped out of the standard social milieu in which he was raised and where he lived. Lydia is a quiet woman. She is a character who does not say much, but her acts show much more. It is a smashing scene in which she calls Tom before the onslaught of floods, aware that Tom is dead. That her cry, tells more about her and Tom's connection than the entire dialogue on other places in the novel. The depth of mutual feelings, love, attention and affection gradually developed between Tom and Lydia. Tom is a man of the soil. His whole being is set to cyclic repetition that is found in nature. Tom feels the ground almost like a woman, the ground opens for him, receives the seed that he sowed, that seed bears fruit, and the fruit of an absolute satisfaction and reward for the person who handles. This is the result of hard work, effort and attention that a farmer gives to the ground. Tom has a similar relationship with Lydia. What makes him particularly angry at the beginning of their

relationship is that Lydia is far and distant. From Tom's point of view, Lydia is somehow still staring into the distance, which he himself cannot reach. Only after some time spent in a kind of hostility Tom and Lydia are beginning to understand each other and to connect at that deeper, emotional and spiritual sense. For Tom Lydia is a soil which richly reward him by the force of his feelings because he is ready to make concessions and to accept her just as she is, different from other women and from himself. Tom and Lydia have a harmonious relationship. They do not care too much for other people's opinion. Their moral world is in accordance with the mutual relations that they have built, quiet and calm, as well as the life that happening in the house. Together life of Tom and Lydia is subordinate to natural cycles.

Lawrence through the early relationship of Tom and Lydia is trying to show how the ruling class even already helpless tries to maintain a privileged position in any way. He also points out that differences can be overcome only through the primordial union and surrender that Tom and Lydia experience. According to Lawrence, the natural order of things is the only possible way for a better future.

Another relationship clearly illustrates the relationship of the ruling and subordinate classes. This is the relationship of little Anna and Tilly – Brangwen's maid. Tilly is extremely sensitive and devoted to little Anna, however, Anna sees Tilly as a thing. Anna acts like that towards Tilly, which clearly shows this relationship dominant - subordinate to Lydia and Anna the earlier society is presuming, while each of them in their time, and undergo a transformation and new birth.

On the other hand Lydia's daughter, Anna is building a completely different relationship with her fiancé, William. William is a young man who lives in his own world of woodwork and abstract understanding of the church and religion. Anna and Tom start their relationship violently in constant mutual misunderstandings and animosities. Anna is a woman who lives in a spiritual world that is partly facing practical needs. Anna finds herself in the role of mother and just as a mother of a large number of children she will be happy and fulfilled. On the other hand, William is a man who gradually matures and his discontent and unfulfilled tries to fulfill with exhausting engagement in the church. William is almost entirely devoted to making carvings in the church next to their home and playing the organ. He develops special relationship with his firstborn child, Ursula. It is interesting that almost all the male characters have a specific relationship with the first girls in the family and that the girls develop their relationship with men in a similar manner they had with their father. In fact, in their chosen men they seek some characteristics that have their fathers. When they start a relationship with their chosen men it is usually the beginning of a painful separa-

ration from the father. Anna is a woman of rich spiritual life, completely separated from the moral concepts of society that surrounds her. Specifically her life are children and William with whom eventually learn to find a common language that both understand well. Anna's and William's relationship is physical one and exactly this kind of relationship completely fulfills them. Anna looks forward to creating new life and breeding of the new life. She looks at things very practically. Her religion is practical and simple.

Anna grew up in an unusual girl. She is afraid of the world outside of her family. Despite the expressed fear she is trying all the time to escape from the isolation of the March. She looks down on people from the environment with arrogance. Anna and William differ substantially when it comes to religion. For William Church still represents the mystical, miracles and faith, unlike Anna who sees life practically and does not boast too far in some thinking. Anna understands life intuitively, while William spiritually.

Anna and William Brangwen started their relationship and marriage very early. They have completely different interests and attitudes. It was only after ten years of life together when they begin to understand each other. The attitude of Anna and William is completely different compared to Tom and Lydia. What started very passionately and somewhat unexpectedly is just the announcement of their passionate arguments and physical relationships. Anna already in the beginning is different from her mother who is the archetype of woman. Anna has an opinion about everything that is of course almost always the opposite of her husband. Anna after the failure fulfil and wrong relationship with her husband all her passion invests in her motherhood. She constantly re-dedicating herself to new pregnancy and the newborn that comes with that disregard her relationship to her husband and to other children. Anna and William do not have calm and filled physical relationship. They fulfil in their physical relationships their personal passion. More precisely, one gets the impression that Anna and William through their physical relationship fulfill psychological unrest that every spiritually unfulfilled soul has. In a passionate, almost brutal physical relationship Anna meets her need for a new maternity and in some ways revenge to her husband with being unable to experience spiritual fulfillment. William through this touch meets his lack of mental and spiritual harmony that cannot seem to find with his wife. The only thing the two of them completely agree, and only after several complete failures, is a natural understanding that they find in mutual physical contact. At the beginning of marriage, Anna and William have confusing attitude towards themselves but also towards society that is the situation in which they find themselves. Lawrence through the scene of the first days of their marriage conflict primordial image of man and socially acceptable behavior patterns. The first hours of marriage Anne and Wil-

liam are filled with mutual care and tenderness. But when the night turns into day, and the two of them still live in the intimate atmosphere of the first martial experience, William has a moment of hesitation between models of behavior that is acceptable in society and that intimate in which he is perfectly happy with Anna. William simply feels guilty because it has been half a day, and they are still lying in the bedroom and have not yet lifted the curtains. These blinds are the link between the outside world and their private relationships. Returning to the roots for Lawrence is the core of every relationship. The living arrangement that is important is the one that includes a healthy relationship between the married couple. William breaks between recognized social norms: getting up on time and carrying out ones obligations or relaxation of darkened martial bedrooms. Social responsibility is a social obligation, but not the spiritual fulfillment. In a moment of frustration with married life, William begins to seek satisfaction outside the home. He becomes aware of other women and wants to make contact with them. In the city he meets a girl who is just a mere object of his attention, and this is the clearest example of objectification of the body in a novel.

Throughout the novel, Lawrence repeated the question of morality of relationships between two people, as well as the question of shame. He claims that there is no shame. So what is the shame? It is said that the secret shameful things that are horribly beautiful. Lawrence points out the issue of the individual in society. More precisely, what the individual represents in society, community. According to Lawrence individual is just one brick in a building called the nation? Told in the words of a young man Skrebenski, one must meet his/her place and play the given role. The man is as important as he represents the whole of humanity.<sup>4</sup>

The last couple Lawrence describes in the novel are Ursula and Skrebenski. Ursula Brangwen will gradually from the emotional and intellectual child develop in a thoughtful and interesting person. Many things will interest her, and as the eldest child of William and Anne Brangwen, because of disorganization in the family and the chaos that surrounds her, she will seek isolation and loneliness. In rare moments of solitude she dreams of being a princess who should be saved, and the home of Brangwen represents a true captivity because of the noise and chaos caused by minor children. Relief represents a departure in high school in Nottingham. In the beginning of her girlhood, she is burdened with the question of religion in terms of explaining the secrets of faith on her logical way. She cannot, like Anna, accept miracles of faith as such; turning water into wine, the resurrection and similar, because their practical way of understanding does not believe in miracles. Growing up and maturing is hard for her, particularly because a

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, pg.. 384.

person must inherit a heavy burden of responsibility of living that new, undiscovered life. How to make out of nothing a person, and a respected person in the society? In which direction to mature? Through Ursula's character Lawrence gives his attitude towards religion: for him the religion is only a story, a myth, an illusion, for which one, no matter how much thought it was true and presents a historical fact, knows that it is not true, at least - is not true for this present time in which we live.<sup>5</sup>

Ursula and Skrebenski represent the culmination of failed relationships in this line. Ursula and Skrebenski cannot bring even their physical relationship to the about level at which at least one of the characters would be satisfied. They are in constant discord. When Ursula is aware of her love for Skrebenski then he does not feel it. On the other hand, when Skrebenski is in emotional disarray in which the focus is exactly Ursula, she did not seem aware of the emotions that he has for her or is interested in someone else. At the end of the novel Ursula is left alone. It could be said that Ursula is a prototype of the modern woman. Is the fate of a modern man to repress his/her feelings and guide himself/herself by the cold reason that will satisfy our pride but neglect our heart? Modern man will thrive intellectually so that they will lose the need for emotion. These are some of the questions that Lawrence leaves open and further expands and analyses in his subsequent works.

Lawrence at several places in the novel emphasizes the idea of modern society, the relationship Ursula and Winfred highlights the beginnings of the feminist movement and women's rights. Ursula will try to establish a loving relationship Winfried Inger. After some time she realizes that such a relationship is not the happiest solution for her in emotional or in a spiritual sense. Winfried is a representative of modern class women, intellectuals, who are willing to research and experiment in the emotional and spiritual sense. Because of the high aspirations and ideals, this type of woman in Lawrence's novels lose battle, because they move too much away from its primordial beings and their natural state.

Marvin Mudrick in his essay *The Originality of the Rainbow* says the new women are too strong, and new men too weak, women have suddenly become aware of the power that a long period of time slept, and the men were suddenly faced with a rival.<sup>6</sup>

Through Ursula's school work Lawrence emphasizes that the business world in which Ursula enters is a man's world, and that only men and the occasional masculine women have control over the mass, in this case the children. Ursula at the beginning of her career is experiencing a series of

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid, pg. 385 – 386.

<sup>6</sup> Mudrick, Marvin, *The Originality of the Rainbow*, Prentice – Hall, Inc, Englewood Cliffs, New York, USA, pg. 48.

inconveniences. Discipline in the classroom is established only with the use of force and she demolishes all her ideals of emotional and affordable teacher who cares about her students. Even the act of force does not end with the glory and Ursula's authority is being undermined. Ursula then felt only emptiness and unfulfilled. The attitude of senior professors and Ursula appear to be equivalent to the attitude of the ruling class and subordinates. The ruling class is using all possible means of oppression in order to regulate relations in society as it suits them.

The manifestation of violence is present in the character of Ursula. Through Ursula's experience of separate life in the city and work in a school where there is no any satisfaction the disastrous effect of industrialism on the life of individuals who somehow snatched from its primeval roots that are tied to the land and its primordial position of women. Lawrence is not coping very well in this new order. He still lives through his characters tied to nature, functional, healthy human body and stable order in which each male and female creature takes place a natural birthright, depending on the gender in which they are born. He understands the needs of the young women intellectuals, but still thinks that they would be happier when if they perform their natural guaranteed function. Only in this way they would have their life filled.

Disturbed social relationships are highlighted through the image of miners who are faceless, nameless mass. Mine is a living entity that runs the life of a particular area. The man who is at home is nothing more than a machine that is not working. Lawrence through his actions tries to emphasize that, contrary to the social perception, every person is an individual for himself. The man who is master of his own destiny. A miner is primarily a man, and then the worker. However, socially acceptable notion is contrary to Lawrence. Namely, the mine owns the miners. Miners are just faceless machine with no human desires or ideal.

Ivo Vidan in the preface to the Croatian edition of *The Rainbow* titled „*The Variable Rainbow of our Lives*” points out that critics have long felt that it condemns, denounces environmental practices of an entire civilization, where man is drawn into the most intimate mechanisms, not only policy and governance and ideology, but those relations which are the weft of deriving personal views and general spiritual patterns.<sup>7</sup>

Vidan further states that *The Rainbow* is experiment, the author's conscious striving to express something which literature, so far, has not been capable of expressing: subjectivity, the experience of the relationship between people who live together, under one roof: the lovers, but also parents and children, primarily of course a relationship that is erotic, but that cannot be isolated from the existence and change society, as much as we try to obser-

<sup>7</sup> Ibid, 542.

ve it in isolation. This statement certainly clearly illustrates the development of relations between the characters that are presented through three generations. The life that Lawrence shows is not far removed from a life that is a common picture of the novel from the period of realism. What is different is the fact that some characters in Lawrence's *The Rainbow* are more alive and turn to nature and the natural order of things. As the action in the novel progresses and the characters become more abstract, more realistic characters lose their outlines. They fall into intellectual and abstract thinking, as well as in some kind of didactic lecture. *The Rainbow* is on its way a novel about the history. Details, such as the construction of the channel, which modernizes traffic in the mining area of central England, the expansion of mining settlements. In wider sense the novel describes the arc from the rural life, that Brangwen led since time immemorial, to the loss of natural landscapes from industry, the disappearance of spontaneity man tied to the land and the creation of automated mentality of people who spend the day in the dark underground.<sup>8</sup>

It is described the whole history of the development of small mining town and how this little mining town becomes industrial-strength environment. That is how the changing environment in which the characters live, change the characters themselves, from the psychological, as well as on that of the spiritual, emotional and physical level. There is a kind of decadence in the physical, but also spiritual sense. From a healthy body, as Tom's body is described, at the end of the novel we meet with physically broken body of Ursula, whose deteriorating health perfectly illustrated her physical but also spiritual stumbling, not only Ursula herself, but also of the whole generation.

Marvin Mudrick in his article "*The Originality of the Rainbow*" points out that *The Rainbow* is just an abstraction made up of individuals who are all different and represent the embodiment of this abstraction.<sup>9</sup> The characters in *The Rainbow* are really different and it is through their diversity that Lawrence points out different sociological aspects. From class differences to different spiritual aspirations Lawrence shows a rainbow made of different relationships. In the following quote it is clearly seen how Lawrence represents class distinctions between rich Brangwen girls and of Phillips:

"She painfully endured because the Philips were poorer then her, because they used despicable small concessions, and the small petty advantages."<sup>10</sup>

This short quote clearly shows that Brangwen progressed through the generations and that they have risen out of ordinary farmers to the level of

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8 Ibid, 590.

9 Mudrick, Marvin, *The Originality of the Rainbow*, Prentice – Hall, Inc., Englewood Cliffs, New York, USA, стр. 35.

10 Лоренс, Д.Х., *Дуга*, Свеучилишна наклада Либер, Загреб, 1981., pg.. 65.

the richest people in the village, not only financially, but also by education and by mode of behaving. This sense of uniqueness and isolation greatly contributed to the fact that the grandmother Lydia at birth was Polish, means a stranger in a typical English society. At the same time, Lydia is from Polish aristocratic family, the specific requirements and the model of conduct adopted from aristocratic circles in which she was brought up.

Lawrence through three generations Brangwen tried to illustrate the changing social relations through generational change. It was an obvious path where from blurred characters who are at the beginning only divided into male and female, through the changes that surround them, the characters themselves are experiencing spiritual, physical, and even sociological changes. The characters are at the end individuals and clearly separated. Ursula's character stands out as a giant compared to Brangwen women as Lawrence presents them at the beginning of the novel. It is interesting that Ursula becomes the exact opposite end of the primal woman as Lawrence illustrated at the beginning. How will Ursula's character develop and in which direction this female character will go we will see in the novel *Women in love*, which presents a continuation of the saga of the Brangwens.

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