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How Lawrence Launched His Career in London

Joyce Wexler

Loyola University Chicago, jwexler@luc.edu

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HOW LAWRENCE LAUNCHED HIS CAREER IN LONDON

JOYCE WEXLER

D. H. Lawrence's mother had great ambitions for her son, yet even she could not have imagined his future as a renowned author. He was the son of a miner, yet in everything but money and health, he believed he was superior to most people, and so did they. He mingled with famous artists, aristocrats and government ministers. Yet his life might have been quite different if he had not come to London at the beginning of his career. He arrived at this turning point almost by chance. When he finished college, he applied for many teaching jobs but was called for only two interviews.¹ One was in Stockport, near Manchester, and the other was in Croydon, eleven miles from central London.² Fortunately for his literary career, the Stockport school did not hire him, and he accepted the Croydon position at £95 a year (*IL* 79). Living close to London, he met editors and other writers who recognised his talent and helped him turn his aspirations into realities.

Lawrence owed his literary debut to Jessie Chambers. Knowing that he admired the *English Review*, she sent it several of his poems.³ Lawrence considered the journal "very fine, and very 'new'. There you will meet the new spirit at it's [sic] best ... It is the best possible way to get into touch with the new young school of realism, to take the *English Review*" (*IL* 139). The journal had published "work by Wells, Conrad, James, Hardy, Tolstoy, Yeats, Bennett, E. M. Forster, Ezra Pound, Wyndham Lewis, Edward Thomas, etc." (*IL* 138 n. 1). The editor was Ford Madox Hueffer, a man unusually open to new writers and new ideas. Hueffer saw the promise in Lawrence's early poems and accepted five – 'Dreams Old and Nascent' I and II, 'Baby Movements' I and II, and 'Discipline' – that appeared under the umbrella title 'A Still Afternoon' in the November 1909 issue (*IL* 137 n.4). Reflecting his

new life in Croydon, 'Baby Movements' features the child of John and Marie Jones with whom Lawrence lodged at the time, and 'Discipline' stems from his classroom experience at the Davidson Road School. Hueffer proposed a meeting, telling Jessie, "If you would get him to come and see me some time when he is in London perhaps something might be done".⁴ Lawrence took advantage of the invitation and visited Hueffer at 84 Holland Park Avenue, where he lived and edited the *English Review*. Hueffer told Lawrence that "he will be glad to read any of the work I like to send him – which is a great relief, is it not? ... I never thought of myself blossoming out as a poet – I had planted my beliefs in my prose" (*IL* 138). These beliefs were soon validated. In response to Hueffer's encouragement, Lawrence sent him an early draft of *The White Peacock* (*IL* 141), and Hueffer included the stories 'Goose Fair' and 'Odour of Chrysanthemums', respectively, in the February 1910 and November 1911 issues of the *English Review*.

In addition to publishing these pieces and offering literary advice, Hueffer was eager to make Lawrence his protégé. Introducing him to other writers and editors, Hueffer helped Lawrence develop an aesthetic and commercial network. In a 1909 letter to Louie Burrows, later his fiancée, Lawrence overflowed with news about the people he met:

Last Sunday I went up to lunch with Ford Madox Hueffer, and with Violet Hunt, who is rich, and a fairly well-known novelist. They were both delightful. Hueffer took me to tea at Ernest Rhys': he edits heaps of classics – Dents [sic] Everyman's, for instance. He is very nice indeed, and so is his wife, Grace Rhys, who writes stories. After tea we went on to call on H. G. Wells who also lives up at Hampstead. He is a funny little chap: his conversation is a continual squirting of thin little jets of weak acid: amusing, but not expansive. There is no glow about him ...

Hueffer is reading my novel. He says it's good, and is going to get it published for me. He also says I ought to get out a volume of verse, so you see how busy I am. (*IL* 144)

As his riff on Wells suggests, he was impressed but not awed by these people.

The same letter described a party at the Reform Club, on the Embankment, organised by Violet Hunt. Lawrence recorded meeting Ezra Pound at the gathering:

He is a well-known American poet – a good one. He is 24, like me, – but his god is beauty, mine, life. He is jolly nice: took me to supper at Pagnani’s [sic], and afterwards we went down to his room at Kensington. He lives in an attic, like a traditional poet – but the attic is a comfortable well furnished one. He is an American Master of Arts and a professor of the Provençal group of languages, and he lectures once a week on the minstrels [at] the London polytechnic. He is rather remarkable – a good bit of a genius, and with not the least self consciousness.

... He knows W B Yeats [sic] and all the Swells. Aren’t the folks kind to me: it is really wonderful. (*IL* 145)

Pagani’s was located in an art nouveau building at 40–48 Great Portland Street. The restaurant attracted musicians and artists, many of whose drawings and autographs were displayed in an ‘Artist Room’ [sic]. Like Pound’s attic in Kensington, Pagani’s was elegant and bohemian.⁵ Lawrence and Pound both came to London in the Autumn of 1908.⁶ They did not become friends, but they had professional respect for each other. In 1913 Lawrence consulted Pound about the *Egoist* and *Smart Set* (*2L* 131), and Pound facilitated publication of Lawrence’s work in these magazines.⁷

Pound also promoted Lawrence’s reputation as a poet. In 1913 he reviewed Lawrence’s *Love Poems and Others* for Harriet Monroe’s *Poetry*. The review begins with a facetious jibe – “the middling-sensual erotic verses in this collection, are a sort of pre-raphaelitish slush, disgusting or very nearly so” – yet he continues, “Jesting aside, when Mr Lawrence ceases to discuss his own disagreeable sensations, when he writes low-life narrative, as he does in *Whether or Not* and in *Violets*, there is no English poet

under forty who can get within shot of him".⁸ By 1914, Pound was equally impressed with Lawrence's fiction, telling Amy Lowell, "Lawrence and Joyce are the two strongest prose writers among les jeunes".⁹ Like other connections Lawrence made in London, Pound was an influential advocate.

Literary people enjoyed Lawrence's company as well as his writing. In 1910 he met the Scottish poet Rachel Annand Taylor and cultivated a friendship with her. He praised her poems and confided in her about his parents' relationship, his feelings for Louie Burrows, and his guilt about breaking with Jessie Chambers (*IL* 190). Taylor did not discourage these conversations, though she recalled the early days of their friendship with some ambivalence:

He evidently had great emotional forces, and powers of expression. (Remember, as yet he had published no book.) What I felt was that he was possibly a genius, with all the flaws that the presence of genius usually creates in a personality; but that he was so neurotically unstable that he would collapse before he made an impression. I was wrong.¹⁰

Lawrence was proud of his social success, though he was aware that it was pulling him away from Eastwood. He told his friends back home that he missed them, but he could not conceal the excitement of being in London. For example, he wrote to Jessie, "Last night I dined with celebrities, and to-night I am dining with two R.A.s, but I'd give it all up for one of our old evenings in the Hagg's parlour" (*IL* 138). He pretended that it was all business: "Tomorrow night I am going up to the Rhyses to meet some celebrities, and to read some of my own verses. I am not very keen, and not very much interested. I am no Society man – it bores me. I like private people who will not talk current clippings" (*IL* 156). His letters home mixed such disclaimers with barely concealed delight.

In addition to introducing Lawrence to other writers and publishing his early work in the *English Review*, Hueffer offered

literary and practical advice. Lawrence expressed his appreciation in a letter to an old friend:

What do you think of Ford Madox Hueffer's 'A Call'? I think it has more art than life. I have been up to see him twice – he is a really fine man, in that he is so generous, so understanding, and in that he keeps the doors of his soul open, and you may walk in ... I have just sent up to Mr Hueffer my novel, which I have rewritten, and which is much altered. I have added a third part, have married Lettie and Leslie and George and Meg, and Emily to a stranger and myself to nobody. (*IL* 141)

Lawrence reported Hueffer's judgement of the novel that became *The White Peacock*: "It's got every fault that the English novel can have ... But,' shouted Hueffer in the bus, 'you've got GENIUS'" (*LEA* 178–9). Hueffer recommended the novel to William Heinemann, who accepted it despite some reservations about its erotic content. Heinemann asked Lawrence to shorten the manuscript and remove objectionable language.¹¹ One example of Lawrence's compliance is his revision of the following passage, which appeared as written in the first American edition: "God – we were a passionate couple and she would have me in her bedroom while she drew Greek statues of me – her Groton, her Hercules! I never saw her drawings". In Heinemann's English edition, however, the erotic implications were aestheticised: "Lord – we were an infatuate couple – and she would choose to view me in an aesthetic light. I was Greek statues for her, bless you: Groton, Hercules, I don't know what".¹² Once the revisions were made, the novel was published.

Lawrence understood the value of publicity and the advantages of having contacts in the London publishing world. Thanks to Hueffer's introductions, *The White Peacock* received good reviews and sold well enough to justify a second impression in March 1911. Lawrence noted favourable notices in the *Standard*, *Daily Mail*, *Morning Post*, *Daily Chronicle*, *Observer* and the *Times Literary*

Supplement, and credited Violet Hunt for being “very ingenious in her effort to advertise me” (*IL* 230). Lawrence used his contacts wisely. Editors suggested revisions, which he accepted. He sought out reviewers and other writers who could publicise his work. And his expectations were reasonable. As he had hoped, *The White Peacock* gave him “an entrance into the jungle of literature” (*IL* 222), and launched his literary career.

The positive reception of *The White Peacock* led to an offer from Heinemann to publish Lawrence’s poems while he was finishing his second novel. In 1910 Lawrence offered him an early version of *The Trespasser*. The story was based on his friend Helen Corke’s affair with a married music teacher. Lawrence had met her soon after he arrived in Croydon, and they became close in the autumn of 1909 (*T* 5). She confided in him after her lover committed suicide, and Lawrence used her memoir as the basis for the novel.¹³ He rewrote it several times, dissatisfied with each draft. Hueffer thought it was “a rotten work of genius, one fourth of which is the stuff of masterpiece”, but Lawrence disagreed: “[Hueffer] belongs to the opposite school of novelists to me: he says prose *must* be impersonal, like Turguenev or Flaubert. I say no” (*IL* 178). Although Heinemann disliked *The Trespasser*, he was willing to publish it anyway (*IL* 339). Hueffer, however, advised Lawrence to withdraw the novel, because it had “no construction or form”, was “execrably bad art” and too “erotic” (*IL* 339). He warned that the novel might “damage” Lawrence’s reputation, “perhaps permanently”. Lawrence conceded that the novel was “finally, pornographic” (*IL* 229), and he asked Heinemann to return the manuscript. He soon reconsidered this decision.

After this discouraging episode, Edward Garnett took Hueffer’s place as Lawrence’s mentor.¹⁴ Not only were Garnett and Hueffer both prominent London writers and editors, but both had been born into the capital’s artistic and intellectual elite. After the death of his father in 1889, Hueffer lived at 1 St. Edmund’s Terrace, St. John’s Wood in the home of his grandfather, the painter Ford Madox

Brown. Hueffer's aunt was married to William M. Rossetti (the brother of Dante Gabriel Rossetti and Christina Rossetti). Edward Garnett's family lived next door at 3 St. Edmund's Terrace until 1890.¹⁵ Garnett's father and grandfather were distinguished scholars, translators and writers, who held high positions in the library of the British Museum.¹⁶ Hueffer was sixteen and Edward Garnett twenty-one when they became neighbours. If the difference in age made friendship unlikely, acquaintanceship was unavoidable. Their professional interests often intersected, notably in the career of Joseph Conrad, a few years before they discovered Lawrence.

In the autumn of 1922 Garnett was an editor for Gerald Duckworth and Co., and he brought the young author to his firm. Lawrence was flattered by the attention of "Garnett ... a very well known *littérateur*, editor of big things like the *World's Famous Literature*, wants me to go and see him some Wednesday or Tuesday" (*IL* 305).¹⁷ Garnett welcomed him as warmly as Hueffer had done. Lawrence told Louie, "I had a fine time at Edward Garnetts [sic] ... We discussed books most furiously, sitting drinking wine in the ingle nook, cosy and snug in the big, long room. We had a fine time, only he and I. He thinks my work is quite extra. So do I, of course" (*IL* 314–5). Like Hueffer, Garnett made Lawrence his protégé. One of Garnett's friends described the editor's tireless promotion of his discovery: "Lawrence's genius [sic], you see", [Garnett] would begin, and go on to explain just how, with that background, it lent itself to that fearless exposure of body and soul which was the reality of creative art" (*IL* 324 n. 5). Garnett especially admired the "sensuous feeling" in the writing (*IL* 315). Garnett, like Hueffer, helped Lawrence expand his literary network. Still concealing his pleasure in meeting other authors, Lawrence wrote to Louie: "Garnett is going to introduce me to quite a lot of people. I am not keen on it, but he says my business is to get known" (*IL* 315). In addition, Garnett acted as an unofficial literary agent, sending some stories to the New York publisher Century (*IL* 297–8).

In 1910 Austin Harrison had replaced Hueffer as editor of the *English Review* and assured Lawrence of his interest, writing that he “would be glad if I would continue to submit my work to him” (*IL* 152). Harrison also took on Hueffer’s role as a mentor. In 1911 Lawrence wrote to Louie, “Last night I dined with Austin Harrison at the Pall Mall restaurant – quite swelly” (*IL* 304). Again minimising his pleasure for Louie’s sake, he told her, “I think this is all the news – except Harrison says he’ll make me an appointment to meet Frank Harris [editor, journalist, author] at dinner next week. But I’m not keen a bit on being a swell – I’d rather not bother to go” (*IL* 305). Despite his reassurance, Louie should have started to worry. Lawrence was talking like a literary insider:

While Garnett and I were having lunch who should come in the place but Atkinson, Heinemanns [sic] man. Garnett doesn’t like Heinemann’s people, so he was beastly sarky [sarcastic] with him. I hate Atkinson – I don’t go to Heinemanns because I don’t like the sneering, affected little fellow. But he made me promise to call there. (*IL* 310)

The anecdotes Lawrence sent his old friends record his entrance into London’s literary circles.

Yet Lawrence’s provincial background was an asset in London. Hueffer encouraged him to write about working-class life,¹⁸ and early poems, stories and plays use the local dialect of Eastwood and incidents from miners’ lives. For example, *A Collier’s Friday Night*, a play written in 1909, was so autobiographical that it upset Jessie Chambers. She recalled, “it troubled me deeply to see his home put before me in his vivid phrases”.¹⁹ Although the content of Lawrence’s plays was local, their form was sophisticated. James Moran describes Lawrence’s love of theatre and his familiarity with dramatic literature. Living in Croydon made it possible for him to see professional productions of classic and contemporary plays. By 1911 he was escorting visitors from home to performances:

I am frightfully busy this week. On Monday I was up at Covent Garden to hear *Siegfried* – Wagner – one of the *Ring* cycle that I had not heard. It was good but it did not make any terrific impression on me. And now George has asked me to take a friend of his – a Nottingham chap – to the theatre tomorrow evening – in London. (*IL* 327)

Moran points out that although Lawrence had written three plays, “he knew next to nothing about the mysterious process by which theatres selected their scripts, cast the main parts and rehearsed pieces for performance”.²⁰ Knowing that he was a novice, Lawrence “regularly expressed his willingness to revise his work to suit a prospective producer or company” (*Plays* xxvi). He also enlisted Hueffer and Garnett to approach theatre managers. Hueffer sent *The Widowing of Mrs. Holroyd* to Harley Granville-Barker, a prominent producer, who declined it. Garnett recommended Lawrence to the director Ben Iden Payne, whose regional repertory companies seemed a good fit for Lawrence’s plays. Payne offered suggestions but nothing more.²¹ The Introduction to the Cambridge Edition of *The Plays* suggests some reasons that theatre managers were less enthusiastic than editors: the dialect “would have been impossible for many actors to speak and most audiences to understand; while the unashamedly working-class concerns of some, the stark realism of others ... would have ruled them out for most commercial theatres” (*Plays* xxxvii). *The Widowing of Mrs. Holroyd* was first performed in Los Angeles in 1916, and its London premiere was not until 1926; *David* had its London premiere a year later (*Plays* xxv). These were the only two of his eight completed plays to be performed in his lifetime.

Although his plays did not interest directors, Lawrence defended his dramatic vision. In 1913 he wrote to Garnett: “I believe that, just as an audience was found in Russia for Tchekhov, so an audience might be found in England for some of my stuff, if there were a man to whip ’em in. It’s the producer that is lacking, not the audience” (*IL* 509). He was correct. Eventually, Lawrence’s plays

“impressed and influenced a range of important theatrical thinkers, from Sean O’Casey and G. B. Shaw, to Raymond Williams and Richard Eyre” (*Plays* xii).

Lawrence’s confidence in his ability to earn a living as an author grew. In December 1910 he had asked Louie to marry him,²² and they agreed to wait until he was earning £120 a year and had £100 in cash (*IL* 223). By the following September, however, he considered resigning his teaching post so that he could write full time. He felt that he had to consult Louie, and in an uncharacteristically timid tone he sought her approval:

Should you be cross if I were to – and I don’t say I shall – try to get hold of enough literary work, journalism or what not, to keep me going without school. Of course, it’s a bit risky, but for myself I don’t mind risk – like it. And then, if I get on with literature, I can increase my income ... But don’t think of this seriously. It is only a small idea. (*IL* 303)

His diffidence suggests that he thought she would mind very much. After all, how could he earn enough or save enough to marry if he stopped teaching? It was one thing to earn extra money by writing, but to give up teaching completely would sacrifice financial security. If Lawrence had not been welcomed by London’s literary elite, the “small idea” might have disappeared. By November of 1911, as he struggled with *Paul Morel*, he was restive and less conciliatory: “I am really very tired of school – I cannot get on with Paul. I am afraid I shall have to leave – and I am afraid you will be cross with me – and I loathe to plead my cause” (*IL* 326). Illness saved him from having to convince her. He was physically unable to return to teaching (*IL* 337), and by then Heinemann, Duckworth and Secker were competing for his work (*IL* 319 n. 1). He knew that he could support himself by writing.

Garnett persuaded Lawrence to publish *The Trespasser* with Duckworth. Nevertheless, Garnett, like Hueffer, thought the novel self-indulgent and so erotic that it would diminish Lawrence’s

reputation as a serious artist. Lawrence agreed. He told Garnett, “At the bottom of my heart I don’t like the work, though I’m sure it has points, and I don’t think it retrograde from the *White Peacock*. It surprises me by its steady progressiveness – I hate it for its fluid, luscious quality” (IL 351). Responding to Garnett’s concerns, Lawrence revised the novel again (IL 343). Duckworth offered an advance of £100, 15% royalty on the first 2,500 copies, and 17.5% beyond that. Lawrence was thrilled, telling Garnett: “D[uckworth]’s terms are quite gorgeous –” (IL 482). The book convinced the American publisher Mitchell Kennerley to pay royalties on the entire edition despite 200 unsold copies and to seek the rights to Lawrence’s third novel (T 28).

One of the book’s favourable reviews was written by Rebecca West for Dora Marsden’s journal *The Freewoman: A Weekly Feminist Review*, which ran from 1911–12. Marsden, according to Bruce Clarke, “explicitly connected sexual emancipation and libertarian politics, radical feminism and anarchist radicalism”.²³ In her battle against censorship, she published literary modernists who similarly defied convention. West’s essay on ‘Spinsters and Art’ in the July 1912 issue lamented the absence of passion in most modern novels and singled out *The Trespasser* as an exception: “it is a book that was worth the writing”. She praised the novel for its representation of passion: “The description of the ecstasy of love has been done before, often impertinently ... But Mr. Lawrence not only treats it with reality, but he attains past it to the most godlike point of discontent; he perceives the failure of love”.²⁴ West and Marsden were vocal advocates of sexual emancipation, and they were receptive to the novel’s erotic themes. Years later West wrote that *The Freewoman*’s “greatest service” was “its unblushingness”. It “mentioned sex loudly and clearly and repeatedly, and in the worst possible taste”.²⁵ Clarke argues that Marsden’s journal “helped prepare for the sexual explicitness of literary modernism”.²⁶ He traces the development of Anglo-American modernism from Marsden to Pound, William Carlos Williams, H. D., T. S. Eliot and Lawrence.²⁷ London brought Lawrence into

contact with several of these people early in his career, when their interest in his work mattered most.

Heinemann, however, was not prepared to risk prosecution and declined Lawrence's third novel, *Sons and Lovers*, regretting that "its want of reticence makes it unfit, I fear, for publication in England as things are" (*IL* 421 n. 4). Garnett brought the novel to Duckworth and suggested a number of changes (*IL* 481–2). Lawrence agreed to them: "I don't mind if Duckworth crosses out a hundred shady pages in *Sons and Lovers*. It's got to sell, I've got to live" (*IL* 526). He gave Garnett permission to cut provocative passages: "Have I made those naked scenes in Paul Morel tame enough. You cut them if you like. Yet they are so clean – and I *have* patiently and laboriously constructed that novel" (*IL* 478). Being published was more important than being unfettered, although he also wanted his books to change readers' lives: "And I am so sure that only through a readjustment between men and women, and a making free and healthy of the sex, will [England] get out of her present atrophy" (*IL* 544). He was willing to modify his rhetoric to achieve his rhetorical aims. When editors asked him to be less explicit, Lawrence tried to comply as much as possible while defending the integrity of his vision.

Richard Aldington argues that *Sons and Lovers* was a milestone in Lawrence's career.²⁸ The book catapulted Lawrence to fame beyond the reputation his first two novels had won. Edward Marsh, a prominent critic and patron of the arts, introduced him to Herbert and Cynthia Asquith, the son and daughter-in-law of the Prime Minister. He was also befriended by Lady Ottoline Morrell and her husband, the liberal MP Philip Morrell. In addition, he met young writers like John Middleton Murry and Katherine Mansfield.²⁹ Referring to these connections, Aldington comments: "Some if not all of these distinguished persons had felt an interest in Lawrence's early work, but the publication of *Sons and Lovers* had made his reputation".³⁰ Aldington astutely accounts for the novel's success:

After two exciting but not quite integrated early novels Lawrence had produced in *Sons and Lovers* a masterpiece of very high achievement. Among the qualities which had attracted readers were its mingling of precise reality with poetic imagination, its truth to ordinary life and high aspiration, its clear presentation of character and the clash of deep but completely understood emotions, its vivid writing from beginning to end.³¹

Nevertheless, sales were disappointing at first.³² Duckworth reprinted the novel in London in 1916, 1922 and 1924; Martin Secker bought the British rights in 1926. Michael Kennerley printed the novel from new plates in New York in 1913 and continued to issue reprints until 1923, when Thomas Seltzer became Lawrence's American publisher.³³

After this early critical success, publishers and literary agents pursued Lawrence. Hutchinson and Co and T. Fisher Unwin asked for novels (*IL* 458 n. 4), and London's two most prominent literary agents, J. B. Pinker and Curtis Brown, told him they had "definite offers" from publishers in England and America (*2L* 165). Pinker had contacted Lawrence in 1912 "wanting to place me a novel with one of the leading publishers" (*IL* 477), but Lawrence hesitated, possibly because the agent's fee was 10%. Again Garnett played a decisive role in Lawrence's career. In 1913 he sent Pinker one of Lawrence's stories, promising others if the agent succeeded in placing it (*2L* 6). Pinker usually required clients to send him all their work, not just the short or hard-to-place pieces. Nevertheless, he agreed to sell individual stories for Lawrence. Apparently, Pinker was willing to make an exception in the hope that Lawrence would become a client. Lawrence told Garnett: Pinker "writes to me about novels, saying that he hears I am not engaged as he had believed, to Duckworth. I don't know why he said that. A man Curtis Brown wrote offering me 'a considerable advance on a 20% royalty' – for America, and so for England" (*2L* 98). Despite these offers, Lawrence was reluctant to leave Duckworth.

Lawrence sent Garnett his new novel for Duckworth. Initially titled 'The Sisters' and then 'The Wedding Ring' (2L 134), *The Rainbow* was so different from *Sons and Lovers* that Garnett voiced objections. Lawrence defended and defined his new style:

You mustn't look in my novel for the old stable ego of the character. There is another ego, according to whose action the individual is unrecognisable, and passes through, as it were, allotropic states which it needs a deeper sense than any we've been used to exercise, to discover are states of the same single radically-unchanged element. (2L 183)

Garnett's criticism gave Lawrence an excuse to leave Duckworth, as Hueffer's objections to *The Trespasser* had helped him leave Heinemann. Lawrence wrote to Garnett,

If Duckworth ... is not really *keen* on this novel, we will give it to Pinker without its coming back here. I dont [sic] think I want to sign an agreement with Duckworth for another novel after this. I did not like to see he had lost on *Sons and Lovers*. (2L 166)

He implied that Garnett was partly responsible for low sales: "You see I can't separate you from Duckworth and Co, in this question of novels. And *nobody* can do any good with my novels, commercially, unless they believe in them commercially – which you dont [sic] very much" (2L 166). The same day Lawrence wrote to Pinker to say that he had sent the manuscript of *The Rainbow* to Duckworth:

In answer to your question about agreements, I don't think I have agreed for anything to anybody, after this present novel which I am this week sending in to Duckworth and Kennerley. I believe I am free, certainly I am *legally* free, to do as I like with

subsequent work. It is a question of gratitude, or perhaps of moral obligation, that is all. (2L 167)

Representing Lawrence without a contract, Pinker secured an offer of £300 from Methuen (2L 174). Lawrence gave Duckworth the opportunity to match Methuen's offer, but Duckworth told him in a "peremptory" tone, "I'm afraid you'll have to accept it" (2L 189). And he did: "So I went to Pinker, and signed his agreement, and took his cheque, and opened an acc. with the London County and Westminster Bank – et me voilà" (2L 189). Thanks to Pinker, Lawrence's advance increased threefold.

The Rainbow appeared in the second year of the First World War, and some reviewers found it lacking in patriotic spirit. Two months after the book was published, Methuen was prosecuted under the Obscene Publications Act of 1857, and the firm declined to contest the charge. The unsold copies of *The Rainbow* were destroyed. Lawrence enlisted influential friends, such as Philip Morrell who raised the issue in the House of Commons (2L 439), and other writers, including "Walter de la Mare, E. M. Forster, John Middleton Murry, J. D. Beresford, Hugh Walpole, and Gilbert Cannan" (2L 435), to challenge the court's decision, but only the publisher had legal standing to contest the ruling.³⁴ The ensuing scandal deprived Lawrence of royalties during the war. In November of 1915 he told Pinker: "It is the end of my writing for England. I will try to change my public" (2L 429). According to Pound, Pinker thought the ruling could have been overturned:

He put the whole blame on Methuen. Some crank went to a magistrate and said the book was immoral. Methuen admitted it. Then the magistrate gave various orders, *in excess of his powers*. If Methuen had declined to obey, or if they had denied that the book was immoral, *NOTHING* could have been done until the Home Office moved. The Home Office had inspected the book (Mr Birrell being asked for an opinion said the book was too dull to bother about) and decided that they would do nothing.³⁵

Pound was irate because “the suppression of [*The Rainbow*] had sent all the printers off their chump”, and his own poems in *Lustra* were questioned.³⁶ Pinker did what he could for Lawrence. He testified before the Westminster Tribunal,³⁷ and he lent Lawrence money during the war (2L 630).

Aldington argues that if Lawrence had remained loyal to his previous publisher, Duckworth might have defended the book.³⁸ Lawrence may have thought so too. As he was finishing *Women in Love*, he wrote to Pinker:

I thought of writing to Duckworth and saying to him, the novel is done in substance, and I could send him the typed MS. in about six weeks' time, and would he give me some money. Duckworth is so decent, I think it is best for him to publish all my books. (2L 619)

Duckworth, however, declined the novel early in 1917. Martin Secker also refused to publish it during the war (WL xxxiv). Timely publication of *Women in Love* would have spared Lawrence some of the penury and isolation that marked the war years.

Despite legal obstacles to publishing sexually explicit fiction, publishers knew that there was a market for Lawrence's work. B. W. Huebsch bought American rights to *The Rainbow* and published it in 1915. He counted on a market for a book that had been prosecuted for obscenity, but he did not publicise the book because he feared prosecution. He explained:

I withheld the book when the ghouls were lying in wait for me to publish it, and a few months ago I quietly distributed the edition that I had prepared in the autumn of 1915 without advertising or any other publicity, so that at least the book is not buried. (3L 356 n. 1)

Lawrence was grateful and wrote to Huebsch: “I feel it is my business now to secure an American public. I have been fooled long

enough” (3L 473). He wanted Huebsch to publish *Women in Love* as well, but there was confusion about sending him the manuscript. Lawrence blamed him for the delay and withdrew the manuscript. After the war, other publishers were competing for his work (3L 484). Seltzer published *Women in Love* in New York in 1920, and Martin Secker published it in London in 1921.

Lawrence began to rely on the American market: “Nowadays I depend almost entirely on America for my living” (4L 114). He broke with Pinker in 1919 (3L 439) and early the next year asked his friend Robert Mountsier to act as his agent in America (3L 476). He told Mountsier, “But I want to plant my stuff *first* in America, and let England take second chance every time. And I want somebody to help me. I am sure I am going to have my day” (3L 477). He added, “What do you think of Huebsch. – And do you know Scott & Seltzer – new people?” (3L 477). Seltzer was willing to fight the censors, and in 1922 he won a “suppression” trial for *Women in Love* (4L 296). Sales reached fifteen thousand copies in a few months. Lawrence was puzzled and pleased: “Why do they read me? But anyhow, they do read me – which is more than England does” (4L 296). Seltzer gave Lawrence the security of agreeing to publish whatever he wrote.

This assurance also allowed Lawrence the freedom to write as he pleased. He felt estranged from his audience and decided to live abroad. Having moved to Sicily in spring of 1920, he explained, “I am not interested in the public – it all seems so far off, here in Sicily – like another world” (3L 486). This attitude is evident in *The Lost Girl*: he expresses his convictions more stridently and addresses the reader more explicitly. Worthen calls the appearance of the intrusive narrator Lawrence’s “popular style”, arguing that Lawrence adopted it to enlarge his audience beyond the London literary elite.³⁹ Lawrence accepted Secker’s request for revisions to meet circulating libraries’ standards. The book was published by Secker in London in 1920 and by Seltzer in New York in 1921.

Lawrence continued to send his work to Seltzer and Secker. They published *Aaron’s Rod* in 1922, and *Kangaroo* in 1923. By

1924 Lawrence was disappointed in Seltzer and decided to publish with Knopf in America (5L 161). *The Plumed Serpent*, written during his stay in Mexico, was published in 1926 by Knopf in America and by Secker in England. Chafing at editors' demands, Lawrence turned to private publishing, assuming the costs of production and selling his books directly to readers. He saw that Norman Douglas was able to avoid censorship by having his improper novels printed in Italy and sold by subscription. Lawrence decided to follow this example and wrote *Lady Chatterley's Lover* freely, relieved of all commercial constraints:

I'm thinking I shall publish my novel *Lady Chatterley's Lover* here in Florence, myself, privately – as Douglas does – 700 copies at 2 guineas. It is so 'improper', it could never appear in the ordinary way – and I won't cut it about. So I want to do it myself – and perhaps make £600 or £700. (6L 225)

Circumventing commercial publishers, Lawrence was confident that his manuscript would not be censored, and he knew that he could earn more money by printing privately than by cooperating with editors. His agent and his publishers, who would not share in the profits, urged Lawrence to reconsider. His agent warned him not to destroy his "at last respectable reputation" (6L 353). Lawrence resisted these pleas, and *Lady Chatterley's Lover* proved to be his most profitable book. It was published in June 1928, and by the end of August, gross receipts were £980 (6L 533). Demand was so great that the book was pirated. Lawrence asked Secker to publish an expurgated edition to secure copyright.⁴⁰

Lawrence appreciated the irony of the market for limited editions. Seeing that increasing the price increased the demand, he observed: "but this shows you the insanity of the modern collector of books. And a good author can't even get his work printed. Makes me tired! I hate this expensive edition business" (7L 304). Nevertheless, he knew that he had achieved his goal of reaching a public while writing as he chose:

– and there is a big public waiting to get anything which they think is not orthodox, does not come via the ‘good’ publishers. There is the enormous ‘proper’ public, of Heinemann or Gollancz. But I believe the ‘improper’ public is almost as big, if not bigger, so long as they are fairly safe ... But then I am amazed to realize how huge, and how much more potent the ‘improper’ public is. (7L 448)

Lawrence’s London publishers not only recognised his talent from the outset, but they invested in it throughout his career. Lawrence railed against them for worrying about censorship. Before condemning publishers as cowardly philistines, however, we should remember that they were willing to publish Lawrence’s first three novels. The potentially actionable erotic daring and autobiographical content of *The White Peacock*, *The Trespasser*, and *Sons and Lovers* did not deter them. Paying him more for each novel than he earned in a year as a teacher, they made his career as an author possible. Lawrence was able to walk away from the secure income of £95 per year to devote himself to his writing because his years in London, 1908–1912, brought him into the capital’s literary circles. The writers and editors who hailed him as a genius also provided practical advice and publicity as he launched his career, and his London contacts continued to play an important role in sustaining and consolidating his reputation. Unable to publish *The Rainbow* and *Women in Love* during the war, he turned his back on England and his British audience. Writing as he pleased, he imagined a new public in America. The continuing support of British and American publishers sustained his career, but his greatest financial success came when he escaped the constraints of commercial firms. Private publishing gave him freedom to write as he pleased and restored his connection to his readers.

¹ Andrew Harrison, *The Life of D. H. Lawrence: A Critical Biography* (Chichester: Wiley Blackwell, 2016), 15.

² Ibid., 26.

³ John Worthen, *D. H. Lawrence: The Early Years, 1885–1912* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1991), 214–5.

⁴ Jessie Chambers, *D. H. Lawrence: A Personal Record by E. T.* (London: Frank Cass & Co. Ltd., 1965), 158.

⁵ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Portland_Street> .

⁶ Warren Roberts, 'London 1908: Lawrence and Pound', *Helix*, 13/14 (1983), 45.

⁷ Ibid., 47.

⁸ Ezra Pound, 'D. H. Lawrence', in *Literary Essays of Ezra Pound*, ed. T. S. Eliot (New York: New Directions, 1968), 387.

⁹ Ibid., 48.

¹⁰ Richard Aldington, *Portrait of a Genius, But ...* (London: William Heinemann, 1950), 94.

¹¹ Worthen, *D. H. Lawrence: The Early Years*, 222.

¹² Eugene Goodheart, 'Censorship and Self-Censorship in the Fiction of D. H. Lawrence', in *Representing Modernist Texts: Editing as Interpretation*, ed. George Bornstein (Ann Arbor: U of Michigan P, 1991), 225.

¹³ Worthen, *D. H. Lawrence: The Early Years*, 222.

¹⁴ See also Helen Smith, *An Uncommon Reader: A Life of Edward Garnett, Mentor and Editor of Literary Genius* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2017), 206–51, for additional information about Garnett's role in Lawrence's career.

¹⁵ Robert Hampson, 'Conrad and the Rossettis: "A casual conversation about anarchists"', in *The Ugo Mursia Memorial Lectures: Second Series*, ed. Mario Curreli (Pisa, Italy: ETS, 2005), 290.

¹⁶ Obituary, *The Times*, Saturday, Apr 14, 1906; Issue 37994; p. 4; col A. <https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Times/1906/Obituary/Richard_Garnett> .

¹⁷ The editor of the *International Library of Famous Literature* was Edward Garnett's father, Richard Garnett (*IL* 305 n.1).

¹⁸ Harrison, *The Life of D. H. Lawrence*, 51.

¹⁹ Chambers, *D. H. Lawrence: A Personal Record*, 166.

²⁰ James Moran, *The Theatre of D. H. Lawrence: Dramatic Modernist and Theatrical Innovator* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), 51.

²¹ Ibid., 57.

²² Worthen, *D. H. Lawrence: The Early Years*, 188.

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- ²³ Bruce Clarke, 'Dora Marsden and *The Freewoman*: Anarchism and Literature', *Works and Days*, 10.1 (1992), 133.
- ²⁴ Rebecca West, 'Spinsters and Art', *The Freewoman* (July 11, 1912), 147–8.
- ²⁵ Rebecca West, 'The Freewoman', *Time and Tide* (July 16, 1926), 649.
- ²⁶ Clarke, 'Dora Marsden and *The Freewoman*', 132.
- ²⁷ *Ibid.*, 138.
- ²⁸ Aldington, *Portrait of a Genius, But ...*, 138.
- ²⁹ Harrison, *The Life of D. H. Lawrence*, 110–1.
- ³⁰ Aldington, *Portrait of a Genius, But ...*, 138.
- ³¹ *Ibid.*, 149.
- ³² R. P. Draper, ed., 'Introduction', *D. H. Lawrence: The Critical Heritage* (London and New York: Routledge, 1970), 5.
- ³³ Helen Baron and Carl Baron, 'Introduction', *SL* lx-ii.
- ³⁴ Harrison, *The Life of D. H. Lawrence*, 145.
- ³⁵ Forrest Read, ed., *Pound/Joyce: The Letters of Ezra Pound to James Joyce, with Pound's Essays on Joyce* (New York: New Directions, 1967), 283.
- ³⁶ *Ibid.*, 282.
- ³⁷ Ezra Pound, Letter of 25 February 1916, James B. Pinker Papers, Northwestern University Special Collections.
- ³⁸ Aldington, *Portrait of a Genius, But ...*, 154.
- ³⁹ John Worthen, *D. H. Lawrence and the Idea of the Novel* (London: Macmillan, 1979), 127.
- ⁴⁰ Derek Britton, *Lady Chatterley: The Making of the Novel* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1988), 261.