

The Rainbow

D. H. LAWRENCE

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EDITED WITH AN
INTRODUCTION AND NOTES
BY JOHN WORTHEN

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THE RAINBOW

David Herbert Lawrence was born at Eastwood, Nottinghamshire, in 1885, fourth of the five children of a miner and his middle-class wife. He attended Nottingham High School and Nottingham University College. His first novel, *The White Peacock*, was published in 1911, just a few weeks after the death of his mother to whom he had been abnormally close. At this time he finally ended his relationship with Jessie Chambers (the Miriam of *Sons and Lovers*) and became engaged to Louie Burrows. His career as a schoolteacher was ended in 1911 by the illness which was ultimately diagnosed as tuberculosis.

In 1912 Lawrence eloped to Germany with Frieda Weekley, the German wife of his former modern languages tutor. They were married on their return to England in 1914. Lawrence was now living, precariously, by his writing. His greatest novels, *The Rainbow* and *Women in Love*, were completed in 1915 and 1916. The former was suppressed, and he could not find a publisher for the latter.

After the war Lawrence began his 'savage pilgrimage' in search of a more fulfilling mode of life than industrial Western civilization could offer. This took him to Sicily, Sri Lanka, Australia and, finally, New Mexico. The Lawrences returned to Europe in 1925. Lawrence's last novel, *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, was banned in 1928, and his paintings confiscated in 1929. He died in Venice in 1930 at the age of 44.

Lawrence spent most of his short life living. Nevertheless he produced an amazing quantity of work – novels, stories, poems, plays, essays, travel books, translations and letters . . . After his death Frieda wrote: 'What he had seen and felt and known he gave in his writing to his fellow men, the splendour of living, the hope of more and more life . . . a heroic and immeasurable gift.'

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Lawrence's Life and Works: A Chronology

- 1885 David Herbert Richards Lawrence born in Eastwood, Nottinghamshire, the fourth child of Arthur Lawrence, miner, and Lydia, *née* Beardsall, formerly a school-mistress.
- 1891-8 He attends Beauvale Board School and becomes the first boy from that school to win a County Council Scholarship to Nottingham High School, which he attends until 1901.
- 1898-1901 Begins frequent visits to Chambers family at Haggs Farm, and his relationship with Jessie Chambers (the Miriam of *Sons and Lovers*) which was to develop into an 'unofficial engagement'.
- 1901-2 Works as a clerk at Haywood's surgical appliances factory. Has to leave after severe attack of pneumonia.
- 1902-6 Pupil-teacher at British School, Eastwood. Sits the King's Scholarship examination in December 1904 and is placed in the first division of the first class. A few months later he matriculates and qualifies himself to take a two-year teachers' certificate course at Nottingham University College, beginning in September 1906.
- 1906-8 Writes his first poems and stories and begins his first novel *Laetitia* (later *The White Peacock*). Wins *Nottinghamshire Guardian* Christmas 1907 short story competition with 'A Prelude'. Loses his faith in 'a personal, human God'.
- 1908-11 Teaches at Davidson Road School, Croydon. Meets Ford Madox Hueffer who begins to publish his poems and stories in the *English Review* and introduces him to the London literary world. In 1910 he writes his second novel, *The Trespasser*, in conjunction with Helen Corke, and begins *Paul Morel* (later *Sons and Lovers*). His relationship with Jessie Chambers comes to an end. He has a brief affair with Alice Dax, wife of an Eastwood chemist, then becomes engaged to Louie Burrows, who had been a fellow-student at college. In December 1910 Mrs Lawrence dies of cancer. In January 1911 *The White Peacock* is published by Heinemann. Edward Garnett becomes Lawrence's mentor. Lawrence becomes seriously ill with pneumonia and has to give up school-teaching.

- 1912 In March Lawrence meets Frieda Weekley, wife of his former modern languages tutor, and six weeks later elopes with her to Germany. Lawrence records the vicissitudes of their relationship in 'Look! We Have Come Through!'. They walk over the Alps into Italy and settle at Gargnano, where Lawrence finishes *Sons and Lovers* and begins *The Insurrection of Miss Houghton* (later to be rewritten as *The Lost Girl*).
- 1913 Begins *The Sisters*, eventually to be split into *The Rainbow* and *Women in Love*, and *Italian Sketches* (later *Twilight in Italy*). They return to England in June and begin friendship with John Middleton Murry and Katherine Mansfield. They return to Italy (Lerici) in September. Lawrence works mainly on *The Sisters* until June, when they return to England to marry (Frieda having at last obtained her divorce) and to find a publisher for *The Rainbow*. The wedding takes place at Kensington Registry Office on 13 July 1914. Lawrence works on revising his short stories for *The Prussian Officer*. The outbreak of war the following month prevents the Lawrences from returning to Italy. At Chesham and Greattham during the next six months, Lawrence rewrites *The Rainbow*. He begins important friendships with Lady Cynthia Asquith, Lady Ottoline Morrell, Bertrand Russell and E. M. Forster.
- 1915 In August they move to Hampstead. Lawrence develops his idea of an ideal community, Rannan, envisaged, at this stage, in Florida. His plans to form a revolutionary anti-war party with Russell and Murry collapse. *The Rainbow* is published by Methuen and immediately suppressed. This blow, together with the war, ill-health, increasing poverty, the defection of several friends, humiliating examinations for military service, and his inability to get permission to leave the country, brings Lawrence close to despair and misanthropy – his 'nightmare'.
- 1916 The Lawrences move to Cornwall where Lawrence writes *Women in Love*.
- 1917 He begins *Studies in Classic American Literature*. The Lawrences are evicted from Cornwall on suspicion of spying. In London Lawrence begins *Aaron's Rod*.
- 1918 They move to Newbury, in Berkshire, then to Mountain Cottage, Middleton-by-Wirksworth, Derbyshire. Lawrence writes *Movements in European History*.
- 1919 Lawrence is very ill with influenza. Moves back to Berkshire. In November the Lawrences leave for Italy and settle in Capri.
- 1920 Moves to Fontana Vecchia, Taormina, Sicily. Visits Maurice Magnus at Monte Cassino.
- 1920–21 Writes *The Lost Girl*, *Mr Noon*, *Sea and Sardinia* and the

- two psychoanalysis books; begins *Birds, Beasts and Flowers*; finishes *Aaron's Rod*.
- 1922 Translates Verga. Visits the Brewsters in Ceylon on the way to Australia, where he spends the summer at Thirroul, N.S.W., writing *Kangaroo*. Goes to New Mexico in September at the invitation of Mabel Dodge Luhan. In December settles at Del Monte ranch, Questa, near Taos. Finishes *Studies in Classic American Literature*.
- 1923 Finishes *Birds, Beasts and Flowers*. Spends the summer at Chapala in Mexico where he writes *Quetzalcoatl* (the first version of *The Plumed Serpent*). Rewrites Mollie Skinner's novel *The House of Ellis* as *The Boy in the Bush*. Frieda returns to England in August; Lawrence follows in December.
- 1924 Dinner at the Café Royal where Lawrence invites his friends to form a community at the ranch in Taos. Only Dorothy Brett accepts and accompanies the Lawrences to New Mexico in March. Frieda acquires Lobo ranch, later renamed Kiowa, from Mabel in exchange for the manuscript of *Sons and Lovers*. That summer at the ranch Lawrence writes *The Woman Who Rode Away*, *St Mawr*, *The Princess* and the New Mexico sections of *Mornings in Mexico*. Lawrence's father dies. In November the Lawrences move to Oaxaca, Mexico, where Lawrence writes the Mexican sections of *Mornings in Mexico* and rewrites *Quetzalcoatl*.
- 1925 In February Lawrence almost dies of malaria. In Mexico City a doctor tells Frieda that he is dying of consumption. He puts rouge on his cheeks to get back across the border. Recuperates at the ranch and writes *David* and *Reflections on the Death of a Porcupine*. In September the Lawrences return to Europe and settle at Spotorno in Italy, where Lawrence writes *Sun*.
- 1926 Writes *The Virgin and the Gipsy*. Quarrels with Frieda and leaves her for several weeks. Has an abortive affair with Dorothy Brett. In May the Lawrences move to the Villa Mirenda, Scandicci, near Florence. In the late summer Lawrence makes his last visit to England. On his return he writes *The First Lady Chatterley*. Takes up painting seriously.
- 1927 Writes second version of *Lady Chatterley's Lover*. Makes Etruscan pilgrimage with Earl Brewster. Writes *The Escaped Cock* and *Etruscan Places*. Begins final version of *Lady Chatterley's Lover*.
- 1928 In June the Lawrences move to Switzerland and settle at Gsteig. Lawrence is too weak to work, except on newspaper articles and paintings. In October he visits Richard Aldington on Port Cros, then settles in Bandol. Begins *Pansies*. *Lady*

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- Chatterley's Lover* published, with consequent furore.
- 1929 Visits Paris in the spring, then Mallorca. Lawrence's paintings exhibited at the Warren Gallery in London. On the day the show is raided by the police Lawrence collapses at Forte dei Marmi. He goes to Bavaria for treatment, but returns, no better, to Bandol in September. Writes *Nettles* and *Last Poems*. Begins *Apocalypse*.
- 1930 On Dr Morland's recommendation Lawrence enters Ad Astra sanatorium at Vence in February. After three weeks with no improvement, he is moved by Frieda and Aldous and Maria Huxley to a nearby villa where he dies the following night. He is buried at Vence.
- 1935 Lawrence's body exhumed, cremated, and the ashes taken to Taos where Frieda's third husband, Angelo Ravagli, has built a small shrine above the ranch.
- 1956 Frieda dies and is buried outside the shrine.

KEITH SAGAR

Introduction

The first readers of *The Rainbow*, knowing from the book's dustjacket that it was a study of 'three generations of the Brangwen family',¹ must have been amazed at what they found. Instead of the romantic and aristocratic gentleman farmer of the cover illustration, they found Tom Brangwen; instead of some English *Buddenbrooks*,² they found a novel which certainly contained the outline of a family history, but which went deeply into sexual – and religious – experience. Those first readers were frequently violently opposed to the book; moralists denounced it, Churchmen condemned it, sophisticates sneered at it (like the *New Statesman* reviewer, who airily declared that 'the most improper thing about it is its punctuation'³); patriots hated it, and even Lawrence's own friends found little to defend in it.⁴ Lawrence was already known as a specialist in the erotic: his *Love Poems*, his novels *The White Peacock*, *The Trespasser* and *Sons and Lovers*, his volume of stories *The Prussian Officer*, had all been objected to, either before or after publication. But it was one thing to be known as an erotic writer; another to publish an account of sexual relationships which are simultaneously described in the language of the Old and New Testaments – and all this, too, in wartime, when both patriotic reviewers and the National Council for Public Morals⁵ were eager to denounce the demoralizing tendency of such work. And *The Rainbow* was suppressed within six weeks of publication.

But the book which caused such a furore had been changing enormously over the years in which Lawrence wrote it; it was a very different work from the one begun in the spring of 1913. Lawrence's letters suggest that his first version of the book, *The Sisters*, had been a light-hearted novel written in the first person about the relationships of two girls with men. A couple of

months before starting *The Sisters*, Lawrence had told a woman friend that he would write for women in a way which would help them more than the suffrage would⁶ – and he had thereupon written 200 pages of a novel which he called *The Insurrection of Miss Houghton*, about the breaking away from conventional life by one Anna Houghton. He had had to abandon that because it was becoming erotic and unpublishable, and started *The Sisters* instead. But that novel, designed as something lighter, to make money, in its turn became a serious novel about relationships. Lawrence rewrote it in the autumn of 1913, when it turned into a very long and complex novel indeed: and one which we know very little about.⁷ It seems probable that it was never actually finished, being superseded by a new draft called *The Wedding Ring*, written between February and May 1914. This version of the book Lawrence submitted to publishers in England and America. It had, we know,⁸ a tripartite structure of three generations, starting with Tom Brangwen and ending with Ursula (or Ella, as she was originally called), but it also contained the two sisters' love affairs: Gudrun with Gerald Crich, and Ursula with (at first) Charles Skrebensky and later with a school inspector. That is, *The Wedding Ring* contained the outline of the material we now know as both *The Rainbow* and Lawrence's next novel, *Women in Love*. Frieda Lawrence would have liked this version of the book to be called 'The Rainbow', but it is not clear why.

However, having been the subject of a contract between Lawrence and his new publisher, Algernon Methuen, *The Wedding Ring* was returned to Lawrence at the beginning of August 1914. There were passages the publisher disapproved of; and it also appears that most publishers were returning submitted manuscripts, because of the outbreak of the First World War.⁹ At all events, Lawrence had the typescript of his novel back on his hands and by the time his American publisher, Mitchell Kennerley, had made up his mind about the book, Lawrence had started to rewrite it.

It is at this point that the real history of *The Rainbow* begins. Before Methuen returned the novel, Lawrence had arranged to write a short book about the characters of Hardy's novels. The

'Study of Thomas Hardy'¹⁰ turned out to be unpublishable, too, being mostly about subjects other than Hardy; but Lawrence used it to work out a new, private version of the history of the human psyche. And this primarily metaphysical investigation heavily influenced the final version of *The Rainbow*, started around the end of November 1914. Lawrence was apparently still working on the 'Study' in mid December, while simultaneously rewriting *The Rainbow*; but it soon became clear that the novel was growing substantially – probably as a result of the 'Study'. Accordingly, early in January 1915, Lawrence decided that the novel could no longer include some of the material which had been in the various drafts; he decided to cut the book short before Ursula's second relationship, and to omit the Gudrun material almost completely. He finished the book in its new shape at the beginning of March. Then followed two months' revision of the typescript, which included not only substantial revision but large insertions and deletions; the last relationship between Will and Anna Brangwen (pp. 277–80) being, for instance, completely altered.

Lawrence corrected proofs during July and August (see the Note on the Text, p. 32) and incorporated some substantial revision, as well as a number of changes asked for by his publishers; but such changes were insufficient to prevent the book from being denounced in the press after publication on 30 September 1915. *The Rainbow* received remarkably few reviews; newspapers and periodicals had clearly decided to wait and see what would happen before giving space to such a controversial book. Two reviews in particular called for the book's withdrawal (and were eventually mentioned in court¹¹); the publisher withdrew his advertising at the end of October, and handed over all available copies to the police when they called on 3 November. After a short hearing at Bow Street Magistrates Court on 13 November, *The Rainbow* was ordered to be destroyed. Methuen made no attempt to defend the book, only to defend themselves; in Lawrence's later account of the matter, his publisher

almost wept before the magistrate ... He said he did not know the dirty thing he had been handling, he had not read the work, his reader

had misadvised him – and Peccavi! Peccavi! wept the now be-knighted gentleman.¹²

Just over a thousand copies of the book survived because they were sold before being recalled, but the book was not again available in England until 1926.¹³ Lawrence hoped that copies of the American edition (published in December 1915 by B. W. Huebsch from the text of the English edition) could be imported into England, and the passages cut by Huebsch restored; but the plan came to nothing, and in fact the 1927 and subsequent English editions used the cut American text.¹⁴ Lawrence made another slight and unsuccessful attempt to have the book republished in the spring of 1916;¹⁵ but *The Rainbow* vanished from the English scene for eleven years. Lawrence wrote in 1924, 'I'm afraid I set my rainbow in the sky too soon, before, instead of after, the deluge',¹⁶ and it is probable that the book's publication in wartime contributed to the attack upon it, and its subsequent prosecution. Less than three months after the court case, conscription was introduced for the first time in Britain – and *The Rainbow* showed its heroine sharply criticizing soldiers: "'I hate soldiers, they are stiff and wooden. What do you fight for, really?'" (p. 357). Ursula also insists that the individual is more important than the nation; if everybody denied that they were the nation, "'there wouldn't be a nation. But I should still be myself'" (p. 356). Such arguments, coupled with the 'demoralizing' effect of the book already mentioned – and the information noted in the police files that a Mrs Weekley (Frieda was an outspoken defender of Germany) was living at Lawrence's address – must have counted against author and book.¹⁷ Official displeasure could find ample support from the cries of outraged moralists; and, as a result, the work upon which Lawrence was financially reliant failed to earn him anything more than its advance royalties. What is more, it actually prevented publishers from accepting another novel by him for more than four years.

It is worth asking the question posed by a number of *The Rainbow's* original reviewers: how did the author of *Sons and*

Lovers come to write a book like *The Rainbow*? Are the books in fact as far apart as Lawrence's own remarks¹⁸ suggested they were? And what is the significance of the later novel's religious vocabulary – something quite alien to *Sons and Lovers*?

Written hard on the heels of the earlier novel – Lawrence was correcting the proofs of *Sons and Lovers* while simultaneously writing *The Sisters* in April 1913 – it is quite remarkable that *The Rainbow* should cover so long a period of time in an almost identical region of the English Midlands without for one moment covering the same ground, geographically or metaphorically. Only a few miles from *The Rainbow*'s real-life Ilkeston, and from the fictionalized Marsh Farm and Cossethay,¹⁹ lies the fictional Bestwood of *Sons and Lovers* – the real-life Eastwood, where Lawrence was born and grew up. Eastwood, in one form or another, appears in *The White Peacock*, *Sons and Lovers*, *Women in Love*, *The Lost Girl*, *Aaron's Rod* and *Lady Chatterley's Lover*. Yet, almost as if it had been wiped off the map, the landscape of *The Rainbow* is empty of Eastwood or of any place like it,²⁰ and the life and work of the mining community of the Erewash valley is either distanced or totally ignored until the last third of the book. *The Rainbow* begins with a farm, as does *The White Peacock* (and as *Sons and Lovers* includes, too), but there is no connection with the farming community just north of Eastwood drawn upon by the other two novels. *The Rainbow*'s Marsh Farm is a place deliberately set apart from village or community, where life may continue in real isolation; and it is not a place where we see many of the problems of actual farming. Tom Brangwen, when he takes over (p. 53), seems to run the farm single-handed: there is just one reference to 'farm-hands' (p. 122). The farm apparently makes a handsome profit, and that is the end of the matter; in the first part of *The Rainbow*, at least, Lawrence is not interested in the problems of work as he had been in *Sons and Lovers*. He is more concerned with the place, with the family, and above all with the marriage of Tom Brangwen and the Polish woman, Lydia Lensky. Our experience as readers has similarities with

Tom's experience as he thinks about marriage: 'the facts and material of his daily life fell away, leaving the kernel of his purpose clean. And then it came upon him that he would marry her and she would be his life' (p. 75). Following the revelation about what is real, the language moves with the cadence of the Bible, and the life suggested is that of inner fulfilment. (Will Brangwen has rather the same experience, see pp. 190-91.)

The details of life are made convincingly vivid – Tom with his daffodils in his hand, going through the twilight to propose marriage – “‘Bit of courtin’, like’” (p. 77). The extent of the dialect used in the book (see Glossary) suggests how rooted much of it is in the local language of the Midlands. Sensations of light and weather and instinct are wonderfully created. But life in these early chapters is also continually described in terms which we can only call religious; we move continually between revelation and the details of everyday life. The Marsh Farm matters less as the location of work than as a location for such revelations. Although we are told very early on that the Brangwens can hear the sounds of the collieries and smell the sulphurous air, and occasionally see the miners, such things ‘vibrated in their hearts with the fact of other activity going on beyond them’ (p. 47). Their experience of the outer world is *abstract*: an experience of the heart, of something ‘beyond them’. Life in an industrial or mining community (which elsewhere in Lawrence's early writing creates the very conditions of life) is, here, the other side of a barrier; the Marsh Farm is explicitly the ‘safe side of civilisation’ (p. 46), and goes its own way. Lawrence used the real-life setting of a farm in Cossall Marsh²¹ to create *The Rainbow's* Marsh Farm; a place literally and symbolically cut off from the smoking town and industry of Ilkeston, and the active Barber & Walker Co. Cossall Colliery only a few hundred yards away; the canal bank shuts off that world from the farmhouse. Ursula Brangwen and her lover Skrebensky, in the third generation, walk that canal bank, which divides the ‘seethe of the town’ (p. 355) from the quietness of the fields. In a way that is typical of the whole novel, Lawrence