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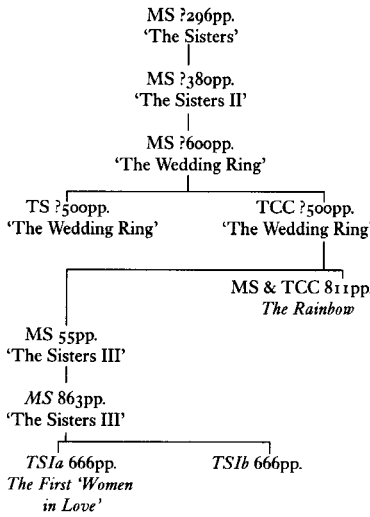
D. H. Lawrence , Edited by John Worthen , Lindeth Vasey

Excerpt

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INTRODUCTION

<i>Bibliographical Notes</i>
Pp. 291–6 in Warren Roberts's <i>Bibliography of D. H. Lawrence</i> , MS Catalogue no. E441a
Unfinished; pp. 373–80 in Roberts E441a
Not extant
Typed by Dunlop; TCC pp. 219–75, 279–84 in Roberts E331a
Roberts E331a
Unfinished first draft; Roberts E441b
Pp. 650–863 in Roberts E441c
Pp. 1–368 typed by DHL, pp. 369–666 typed by Pinker; Roberts E441d & e



Version	Date
One	March–June 1913
Two	August 1913–January 1914
Three	February–May 1914
Four	November 1914–March 1915
	April 1916
	April–June 1916
Five	July–November 1916

The Composition of *The First 'Women in Love'*

INTRODUCTION

On 20 November 1916, D. H. Lawrence sent to his agent, J. B. Pinker, a complete and corrected typescript (totalling almost 175,000 words) of his newest novel, here called *The First 'Women in Love'*: the first version of the novel published in 1920 as *Women in Love*. He had been working on this book since the end of April 1916, though it was also the culmination of the fictional enterprise based on the lives of the Brangwen sisters which had occupied him since early in 1913; but, even by the standards of his own most intense periods of work, what he had accomplished during the seven months between April and November 1916 had been quite extraordinary. He had written the novel while living in isolation in Cornwall, unsure about what he was capable of earning, subject to constant uncertainty about the war and its progress, and about his own status as unscripted civilian. And he had actually written it twice within that seven-month period, producing in *The First 'Women in Love'* what is arguably his most important piece of fiction of the second decade of the twentieth century – a novel which, until now, has been read by very few people, and whose very existence as an independent text has been ignored.¹ This Introduction will trace the composition history of *The First 'Women in Love'* up to November 1916; and will then examine its very first readers' response to it.

'The Sisters' (first version, March–June 1913)

In the middle of March 1913, while Lawrence and Frieda Weekley were living at Gargnano on the Lago di Garda in Italy, he began to write a novel which he entitled 'The Sisters'² which, on 5 April, he would cheerfully

¹ The two surviving early drafts of *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, of 1926 and 1927, have been published, as *The First Lady Chatterley* (New York, 1944) and *John Thomas and Lady Jane* (1972); the first draft of *The Plumed Serpent* has also been published, as *Quetzalcoatl*, ed. Louis L. Martz (Redding, 1995), but this was a state of the text which DHL had no intention of publishing, as he always knew that he was going to rewrite the book. The first surviving long draft of *Sons and Lovers* will also be published, as *Paul Morel*: it will appear in the Cambridge Edition of the Works of D. H. Lawrence, although it was never finished, nor submitted to a publisher.

² See *Letters*, i. 530; on 22 March it was 46 pages long. (Subsequent references to *Letters*, i., ii. and iii. are given in the text by volume and page number.)

refer to as a 'pot-boiler' (i. 536), then 110 pages long. He badly needed to write a new novel; he and Frieda were unmarried and totally dependent upon his writing; and while *Sons and Lovers*, finished five months earlier, had been accepted, it was not yet published, and he had few other prospects of income. He had also spent a good deal of time that spring writing another novel ('The Insurrection of Miss Houghton') which had turned out to be unpublishable.³ By 23 April they had moved to Germany and he had reached page 145 of 'The Sisters', but complained to his friend Arthur McLeod⁴ that it was a book 'which I have never grasped . . . and I've no notion what it's about. I hate it. F[rieda] says it is good. But it's like a novel in a foreign language I don't know very well – I can only just make out what it is about' (i. 544). Around 2 May he told his friend Edward Garnett,⁵ reader for Duckworth (about to publish *Sons and Lovers*), that he had completed 180 pages of 'The Sisters', now projected as a work of around 300 pages: 'It was meant to be for the "jeunes filles", but already it has fallen from grace. I can only write what I feel pretty strongly about: and that, at present, is the relations between men and women. After all, it is *the* problem of today, the establishment of a new relation, or the re-adjustment of the old one, between men and women' (i. 546). At this point, Lawrence estimated a month to completion, and must have sent Garnett the book's first part. By 17 May, Garnett had read and commented on it, and Lawrence was at page 256, 'but still can't see the end very clear' (i. 550). A fortnight later he was 'nearly finished', having reached page 283, and early in June he sent Garnett the second half (ii. 20). A few pages, numbered 291–6, are the only surviving fragment of an early version which was probably chronologically (and perhaps textually) close to this first draft; they are not however written in the first person which Lawrence twice remarked was the format of the first draft (i. 550, ii. 20), and so they probably derive from a slightly later revision: he thought the first-person method was part of what 'ailed the book' (i. 550). Since Lawrence had estimated that the first draft would be 300 pages long, this early fragment may well represent the way the book ended.⁶

³ It was completely rewritten in 1920 as *The Lost Girl*; see the Cambridge Edition, ed. John Worthen (Cambridge, 1981), pp. xix–xxiv.

⁴ McLeod had been one of DHL's fellow-teachers in Croydon from 1908 (see *Letters*, i. 136 n. 3).

⁵ See *Letters*, i. 297 n. 2.

⁶ The fragment is printed as Appendix I ('Fragment of "The Sisters"') in *R* 463–70, and also in *Women in Love*, ed. David Farmer, Lindeth Vasey and John Worthen with an Introduction and Notes by Mark Kinkead-Weakes (Penguin, 1995), pp. 489–96. For full details of the writing, revision and publication of the novels *The Rainbow* and *Women in Love*, see *R* xix–lxxvi and *WL* xx–lxi respectively.

'The Sisters II' (second version, August 1913–January 1914)

After spending the first part of the summer of 1913 in England, Lawrence and Frieda returned to Germany in August, where Lawrence started work on a second draft of 'The Sisters'. By 24 August he had 'made two false starts already' (ii. 66); a week later, complaining that he had 'written one or two things about which I know nothing – like a somnambulist', he complained that the book seemed equally hard to grasp:

I've begun a novel on the same principle: it's like working in a dream, rather uncomfortable – as if you can't get solid hold of yourself. 'Hello my lad, are you there?' I say to myself, when I see the sentences stalking by.

That's *my* Klagen. I look to Italy to wake me up. Think of me as the Sleeping Beauty.⁷

This second writing, so uncertain at the beginning, quickly became something he was sure of, even before he and Frieda left for Italy; he wrote on 4 September that 'The Sisters has quite a new beginning – a new basis altogether. I hope I can get on with it. It is much more interesting in its new form – not so damned flippant' (ii. 67–8). By the 15th he had finished its first hundred pages, and was thinking that he could even complete the draft in another month (ii. 74–5); but he was interrupted first by a walking trip across Switzerland to meet Frieda and her brother-in-law in Lerici, on the Italian coast; and then by the business of finding and settling into a house in nearby Fiascherino. He was working on the novel at the start and the end of October (ii. 82, 93), but he does not seem to have been able to concentrate on it before December. This time, too, it went 'slowly' (ii. 118); and at the end of the year he told Edward Garnett that, in a few days, he would be sending:

the first half of the Sisters – which I should rather call The Wedding Ring – to Duckworths. It is *very* different from *Sons and Lovers*: written in another language almost. I shall be sorry if you don't like it, but am prepared. – I shan't write in the same manner as *Sons and Lovers* again, I think: in that hard, violent style full of sensation and presentation. You must see what you think of the new style. (ii. 132)

He posted the first half of what we can call 'The Sisters II' – perhaps 200 pages – on 6 January 1914 (ii. 134). Garnett must have read them and sent his observations to Lawrence almost immediately, for on 29 January Lawrence replied that 'I am not very much surprised, nor even very much

⁷ Letter to John Middleton Murry, 30 August 1913 (unpublished): 'Klagen' means 'complaint' (German). Murry (1889–1957), journalist and critic, and his partner Katherine Mansfield (1888–1923), New Zealand short-story writer, had met the Lawrences in July 1913 (*Letters*, i. 507 n. 3, ii. 31 and n. 3).

hurt by your letter – and I agree with you'; but he stood his ground on one point: 'I *must* have Ella [later to be called Ursula] get some experience before she meets her Mr Birkin . . . tell me whether you think Ella would be possible, as she now stands, unless she had some experience of love and of men . . . I feel that this second half of the Sisters is very beautiful, but it may not be sufficiently incorporated to please you' (ii. 142–3).

In this letter Lawrence gave at least some indication of how 'The Sisters II' was moving closer to *The Rainbow*, which in its later sections would deal with Ursula's (Ella's) 'experience of love and of men'. But he also voiced satisfaction with the second half of the novel, that portion he was still writing and which apparently began to deal at length with Ella and Birkin, and would finally be transformed into *Women in Love*: 'I prefer the permeating beauty. It is my transition stage – but I must write to live, and it must produce its flowers, and if they be frail or shadowy, they will be all right if they are true to their hour.' He again explained that 'I have no longer the joy in creating vivid scenes, that I had in *Sons and Lovers*', and described his new method as 'exhaustive': he was no longer writing 'pure object and story' (ii. 142–3). He had reached page 340 by 19 January (ii. 137) and planned to send another 150 pages to Garnett on 30 January (ii. 142). Only one fragment, probably from the last part of 'The Sisters II' to be written, has survived in a set of pages numbered 373–80.⁸ Shortly after responding to Garnett's criticism on 29 January 1914, Lawrence abandoned 'The Sisters II' and embarked upon the next sustained version of the novel: one which took it to the verge of publication.

'The Wedding Ring' (third version, February–May 1914)

By 7 February 1914, Lawrence had 'begun it again'; two days later he wrote to McLeod that it was for 'about the seventh time', and a month later he claimed to be starting for 'about the eleventh time' (ii. 144, 146, 153). But after these initial difficulties he seems to have grown in confidence as this third sustained version developed. In the same March letter, the novel was 'on its legs and . . . going strong' (ii. 153); as proof of what he saw as its publishable quality, he began to have a ribbon and carbon typescript made of it while he wrote.⁹ By 3 April he had 'done two-thirds' (ii. 163); and less than three weeks later, on 22 April, with only eighty pages remaining to be written, it had the new title he had been considering at the end of

⁸ Roberts E441a (UT); printed in *R* 473–9 and in *The Rainbow*, ed. Mark Kinkead-Weekes with an Introduction and Notes by Anne Fernihough (Penguin, 1995), pp. 463–9.

⁹ His typist was Thomas Dunlop, British Consul in La Spezia; see *Letters*, ii. 152 n. 1.

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December – ‘The Wedding Ring’ – and he was sending to Garnett what had so far been completed: ‘I am sure of this now, this novel. It is a big and beautiful work. Before, I could not get my soul into it. That was because of the struggle and the resistance between Frieda and me. Now you will find her and me in the novel, I think, and the work is of both of us’ (ii. 164). Early in May, Frieda suggested ‘The Rainbow’ as its title, but Lawrence did not yet adopt it; by the 16th he had however finished the novel and checked the typescript, sending it to Garnett the following day (ii. 173, 174). Sixty-two pages of carbon copy incorporated in the final manuscript of *The Rainbow* survive from this third main version,¹⁰ and it is possible to learn still more about it from a contemporary reader’s report. Submitted on 10 November 1914 in the form of a letter from Alfred Kuttner to Mitchell Kennerley, who had published four out of Lawrence’s first five books in the USA, the report reads in part:

The real story is concentrated in the lives of Ella and Gudrun and the novel does not strike its best pace until we deal with them. But that does not become clear until we are almost half way through the novel so that the first part of the plot has a rambling quality which greatly contributes to the feeling of over-lengthiness. Mr. Lawrence takes us through practically three generations but our real interest lies only in the third.¹¹

Kuttner clearly responded most readily to the stories of Ella and Gudrun, who had been the central characters – the sisters of the title – since the beginning in 1913. He generally liked what he read, but argued strongly for it to be ‘condensed and foreshortened’, as well as ‘expurgated, not for moral reasons but for artistic effect. Mr. Lawrence sees sex too obsessively.’ Kuttner also reported that this version of the novel contained a scene of ‘Gerald Crich raping Gudrun in a boathouse’.¹² It seems probable that this was Kuttner’s way of describing a preliminary version of the encounter which takes place in Gudrun’s bedroom in *Women in Love*.

From the report we can also gain an idea of the structure of ‘The Wedding Ring’: ‘the whole story of Tom Brangwen’s courtship of the Polish woman as well as Anna’s marriage could be told in retrospect in much less space if the novel began with Ella’s childhood’. After a year of writing, the novel had come to contain a great deal of what became *The Rainbow* as well as much that would become *Women in Love*.

This version also provoked Lawrence’s famous defence of his fictional method in a letter to Edward Garnett of 5 June 1914. Garnett had been

¹⁰ In Roberts E331a (UT). The surviving typed pages were originally numbered 219–75 and 279–84, and are renumbered 548–604 and 608–13.

¹¹ Located in LC, printed in full in *R* 483–4.

¹² *R* 484.

critical both of 'The Sisters II' and of 'The Wedding Ring', and Lawrence had to some extent accepted his criticisms; but he was now prepared to take a stand against what Garnett was saying.

I don't agree with you about the Wedding Ring. You will find that in a while you will like the book as a whole. I don't think the psychology is wrong: it is only that I have a different attitude to my characters, and that necessitates a different attitude in you, which you are not as yet prepared to give . . .

You must not say my novel is shaky – It is not perfect, because I am not expert in what I want to do. But it is the real thing, say what you like. (ii. 182–3)

Garnett's criticism also mattered less because Lawrence was on the verge of deciding to give the novel to another publisher.¹³ *Sons and Lovers*, published in May 1913, had caused a real outburst of interest in his work, and he had received offers and suggestions from a number of publishers as well as from two literary agents. By the middle of May 1914, the long-established firm of Methuen had offered him an advance of £300 (in two instalments) for the new novel, along with a contract for the next two; the news had come to Lawrence via the literary agent J. B. Pinker, who regularly acted for the authors who were offered Methuen's three-novel contracts.¹⁴ So although Lawrence had sent the completed 'Wedding Ring' to Garnett in May 1914, he went to see both Pinker and Duckworth when he returned to England in June,¹⁵ and decided to throw in his lot with Pinker and Methuen; the money the latter was offering (as Lawrence explained to Garnett) was 'a pretty figure that my heart aches after' (ii. 174), and the fact that he and Frieda were getting married in July probably confirmed him in the belief that he must take the best financial offer available. He signed Methuen's contract and received £150 late in June, but his happiness was short-lived; early in August, while on a walking tour in the Lake District, he learned of the outbreak of the First World War, and by 10 August Methuen had returned his typescript (ii. 206–7, 240–1). They would claim at the *Rainbow* prosecution in November 1915 that they had asked in August 1914 for the novel to be rewritten, but a great many literary manuscripts (especially of fiction) were returned to their authors simply because of uncertainty about what was going to happen to the publishing business following the outbreak of war.¹⁶ Methuen probably did

¹³ Duckworth accepted a volume of short stories in lieu of the novel; see *The Prussian Officer and Other Stories*, ed. John Worthen (Cambridge, 1983), p. xxvii. For details of the split with Duckworth, see below.

¹⁴ E.g. see *The Collected Letters of Joseph Conrad: Volume 4 1908–1911*, ed. Frederick R. Karl and Laurence Davies (Cambridge, 1990), p. 502.

¹⁵ See *Letters*, ii. 31 n. 1.

¹⁶ The *Publisher's Circular* showed that the total of books published during the year 1914

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no more than return the novel in a routine way, with a recommendation that some changes would be in order, and that Lawrence should resubmit it in six months' time.

***The Rainbow* and 'The Sisters III' (fourth version, two novels, November 1914–March 1915 and April–June 1916)**

Lawrence must have begun the book's next sustained version late in November 1914; on 3 December he wrote that he was 'working *frightfully* hard – rewriting my novel' (ii. 239). He had begun by trying to type it himself, on the typewriter which Amy Lowell¹⁷ had sent him; but stopped after 7 single-spaced pages which bear every sign of an inexperienced typist at work. He continued by hand; on 5 December he sent the first 100 pages to Pinker, followed by another instalment on the 18th (ii. 240, 245). By 5 January 1915 he had completed 300 pages in all, and on the 7th sent Pinker another batch of 100 pages (ii. 255, 256).

But the single most important development in the writing of *The Rainbow* and *Women in Love* now occurred. When Lawrence sent Pinker the third batch of pages on 7 January, he also announced that he had decided 'to split the book into two volumes: it was so unwieldy. It needs to be in two volumes' (ii. 256). Kuttner's suggestion that the Brangwen saga was really separate from the story of the marriages of Ella and Gudrun may have confirmed Lawrence in his decision to divide and expand his work rather than to abbreviate it; there is evidence that Kennerley sent him Kuttner's November 1914 report (presumably in late November or December 1914).¹⁸

From January to March, Lawrence made rapid progress on what was now simply *The Rainbow* (the *Women in Love* material was put aside). The novel was finished on 2 March 1915, typed and revised, and published by Methuen on 30 September 1915, only to be suppressed in November.¹⁹ Lawrence – unable to earn his living from fiction in an England increasingly dedicated to a war he hated – turned to revision of his travel essays for

(11,537) was considerably reduced compared with 1913 (12,379), in spite of a great many ephemeral publications about the war in the second half of the year, and after a first half-year which suggested that the 1913 total would be exceeded; it also revealed that fiction showed the largest single decrease (392) of any individual category: science (108) and religion (80) both increased (*Athenaeum*, 2 January 1915, p. 11).

¹⁷ American poet (1874–1925): see *Letters*, ii. 203 n. 2.

¹⁸ Letter from Kuttner to Kennerley, n.d.: 'Of course I should not have written my criticism in just that way if I had intended it for Mr. Lawrence's ears but . . . I don't mind your sending it on to him' (*R* 485).

¹⁹ See *R* xlv–li.

collection in *Twilight in Italy*, to philosophical work and to some short stories and poems; at the end of the year he and Frieda went to live in Cornwall.

The idea of the novel whose second half he had abandoned never, however, completely left him. He had written 'End of Volume One' on the last leaf of the manuscript of *The Rainbow* in March 1915, for example;²⁰ and on 16 February 1916, the composer Philip Heseltine – then staying with the Lawrences – mentioned in a letter to a friend that he hoped to publish 'a sequel to *The Rainbow*' in his plan for *The Rainbow Books and Music* (an idea which unfortunately came to nothing).²¹ Novels, so far in his professional career, had provided Lawrence with most of his income; however, good sense would also have suggested to him that – rather than provoke the suspicion and outrage which such a sequel would inevitably invite – he might do better to publish a less controversial text. In March 1916, he planned to resume work on the unfinished manuscript of 'The Insurrection of Miss Houghton', given up in 1913; the manuscript however was in Bavaria and he could not recover it (ii. 580, 595). After waiting for a month – during which time John Middleton Murry and Katherine Mansfield²² had come to live in the next cottage at Higher Tregerthen (ii. 596–7) – he went back instead to the material left over from *The Rainbow*. His income was tiny, his health had been bad in the winter, his attitude to the war and to British society in general had grown almost completely antagonistic. Yet he was going to write a novel; and that book, in its turn, came to reflect his new attitude towards his society. As he told Barbara Low in May 1916:

I would write to you oftener, but this life of today so disgusts one, it leaves nothing to say. The war, the approaching conscription, the sense of complete paltriness and chaotic nastiness in life, really robs one of speech . . . I have begun the second half of the *Rainbow*. But already it is beyond all hope of ever being published, because of the things it says. And more than that, it is beyond all possibility even to offer it to a world, a putrescent mankind like ours. I feel I cannot *touch* humanity, even in thought, it is abhorrent to me.²³

Nevertheless, sometime between 18 and 26 April he had begun writing. What he had returned to presumably consisted of the second half of the typescript he had submitted to Methuen in 1914 and which they had

²⁰ Roberts E331a, p. 811 (UT).

²¹ Letter to Viva Smith, 16 February 1916 (BL); see Nehls, i. 348–51. For Heseltine, see Explanatory note to 50:1.

²² See footnote 7.

²³ *Letters*, ii. 602. Barbara Low (1877–1955) was a pioneer in psychoanalysis, and an aunt of Catherine Carswell (see below); see *ibid.* 279 n. 6.