

The First “Women in Love”

John Worthen

I

On 1 October 1998, Cambridge University Press published a book which should have been published more than eighty years before, in the spring of 1917. It had been finished in November 1916, sent to the author’s agent, and from there had gone to the publisher who had a contract to publish it.

But the author was D.H. Lawrence, the agent J.B. Pinker, the book the first version of *Women in Love*, and the publisher Algernon Methuen, who, just twelve months earlier, had been roundly criticized at Bow Street Magistrates Court for publishing the book’s immediate predecessor, *The Rainbow*. The Magistrate, Sir John Dickinson, had then commented:

how it ever could have passed through Messrs. Methuen’s hands he failed to understand. It was greatly to be regretted that a firm of old standing and the highest repute, whose name on the title-page of a book justified anyone in taking it into their home, should have allowed their reputation to be soiled, as it undoubtedly had been . . . (*Daily Telegraph*, 15 November 1915, p. 12)

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The Rainbow had, of course, been banned under the 1857 Obscene Publications Act. For the first time since 1910, Lawrence had then spent a period as long as seven months without working on a novel. There must have seemed little point in doing so, in spite of the fact that the other half of the old “Sisters” material remained to be developed. However, as he remarked in the spring of 1916, “a work of art is an act of faith . . . one goes on writing, to the unseen witnesses.” He returned to novel-writing at the end of April 1916, to bring to a conclusion the fictional enterprise based on the lives of the Brangwen sisters which had occupied him since early in 1913.

Even by the standards of his own most intense periods of work, what he then accomplished, between late April and mid-November 1916, was extraordinary. He wrote the novel while living in isolation in Cornwall, unsure whether it would be published, quite uncertain how he would be able to earn his living, subject to constant uncertainty about the war and its progress, about the situation of Frieda’s German family, and about his own status as unscripted civilian. And he actually wrote this new novel 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 largely ignored.¹

II

Why was it not published in 1917? In November 1916, Pinker sent the typescript of the new book to Methuen. They kept it for a month, then returned it. They may have been consulting their lawyers about ending the contract (their June 1914 agreement with Lawrence had promised them his next three novels); and they may even have been wondering whether this new novel offered them any chance of recovering the advance they had paid Lawrence for *The Rainbow*, which they had demanded back in December 1915: “there has been a complete failure of the consideration for which we paid our money. Mr. Lawrence should now repay this sum” (*L* ii. 457 n. 2).² It is very unlikely that in the winter of 1916 they even considered publishing his new book; one which, in its own way, was as offensive about the war, and as potentially libelous about real people, as the previous one had been about marriage and sexuality. The month’s delay was probably simply because Methuen saw no reason why they should hurry to

make a decision about ending the contract of an author who had caused them so much trouble and embarrassment, and lost them money into the bargain. It was not until around 20 December 1916 that Lawrence heard that the contract had been canceled. He responded, with characteristic point and vigor, "I am glad not to be thrown any more under the snout of that particular swine" (*L* iii. 58).

Pinker could now offer *The First "Women in Love"* to other publishers. A copy of the typescript went to Duckworth, then to Constable and then to Secker, and there may well have been others who saw it too; Lawrence's friend Catherine Carswell believed that "it must have lain on the table at one time or another of every leading publisher in London" (80). But it was turned down everywhere; even Duckworth, who had all but one of Lawrence's books in print, and for whom Lawrence probably had the highest hopes, rejected it.³ When sending Pinker a batch of manuscript for typing, on 25 October, Lawrence had remarked that it was "a terrible and horrible and wonderful novel. You will hate it and nobody will publish it. But there, these things are beyond us" (*L* ii. 669). When he sent in the final batch of manuscript a week later, he told a friend it was a novel "which everybody will hate completely" (*L* iii. 19); and he remarked to E.M. Forster that although it was "rather wonderful and terrible," "I don't suppose anybody will publish it" (*L* iii. 22). He was thus attempting to prepare himself for the worst, though he may well have been shocked by the absolute rejection the novel suffered in the winter of 1916-17. But after the *Rainbow* debacle, Lawrence was a marked man; what the new book said about the war, and the way in which it clearly used real people as fictional characters,⁴ made it deeply unattractive to publishers who—with a growing wartime shortage of materials and labor—were cutting back on what they published and were increasingly unprepared to take risks. On one level, Lawrence remained confident that the novel would one day be published; a comment he made in February 1918—"I shall have some money when the war ends" (*L* iii. 216)—suggests the depth of that confidence. But it was not until December 1920 (in America) and June 1921 (in England) that the book was finally published (*WL* xxxix-1). I shall take as text of the 1921 novel the Cambridge edition of the novel, which incorporates the additions Lawrence made in proof for the English edition.

By 1921 it had become in many ways a different sort of book from the one which had circulated publishers in the winter of 1916-17. Pinker had had a clean typescript made of it in February 1917, and Lawrence had revised that typescript at various times during 1917 and then again in 1919.

He rewrote about a tenth of the book completely, and made additions, cuts and changes throughout. What was published in 1921 demonstrated just how much work he had done during the intervening years.

The book which might have been published in 1917 is, of course, in one respect unrecoverable. Lawrence would certainly have revised it at the proof stage if a publisher had accepted it. He also mentioned twice during the week in November 1916 when he finished it that he planned “an epilogue - a small last chapter,” but would not write it “until the whole is sent in to the printer” (*L* iii. 29): “that must wait for the wheel of time to turn” (*L* iii. 36). He had mentioned a similar idea back in July.⁵ Such an “epilogue” might have taken the form of a surviving fragment of text (including the start of a letter from Gudrun describing the birth of Gerald’s son), which Lawrence probably drafted and then abandoned sometime late in October 1916.⁶ That seems a good deal more likely as material for an epilogue than the exchange between Ursula and Birkin which concludes the 1921 novel. On the other hand, no publisher in 1916 would have been prepared to accept a novel by Lawrence which was not yet complete, as Pinker may well have told him; and the typescripts which circulated publishers and friends in the winter 1916-17 had no indication of any ending apart from their conclusions on their (heavily revised) final pages. Perhaps significantly, Lawrence never mentioned the idea of an epilogue again.

III

The 1916 novel is a very different book from the 1921 novel, though large parts of it are almost identical.⁷ This is a paradox which needs to be explored.

There are, to start with, some easily explained differences between the two texts. Lawrence wrote the 1916 novel before he had read James Pryce’s *The Apocalypse Unsealed* or Madame Blavatsky’s *The Secret Doctrine* (*L* iii. 151 & nn. 2 & 3): his 1917 reading left its mark (and more) on the revised version of the novel. When, towards the end of the “Excuse” chapter of the novel published in 1921, both Birkin and Ursula experience

the most intolerable accession into being, the marvellous fulness of immediate gratification, overwhelming, outflooding from the Source of the deepest life-force, the darkest, deepest, strangest life-source of the human body, at the back and base of the loins (*WL* 314)

then we may suspect that they too have been reading Pryce. The novel has acquired an idea of the Hindu chakras, probably from Pryce, which it is using for its own rather obscure purposes. But we are also aware that the novel is going up a *cul de sac*. This is not language which Lawrence would use again in fiction, and it is not a moment which any reader can grasp without prior knowledge of things esoteric. The same is true of other passages towards the end of this chapter: Ursula, stroking Birkin's back and buttocks, becomes aware of "The sense of the awfulness of riches that could never be impaired"; this sense "flooded her mind like a swoon, a death in most marvellous possession, mystic-sure" (WL 316). All that the reader perhaps can do—like Halliday in the Cafe Pompadour, later in the novel—is to read out the passage in mockery of Ursula's mystic certainty; a certainty which two pages later becomes, quite bafflingly, "a full mystic knowledge of his suave loins of darkness" (WL 318). Readers who have struggled with these passages, or been embarrassed for Lawrence's sake because of them, will be pleased to find that there had been nothing equivalent to them in the 1916 version of the novel.

However, that is not the only—or even the major—difference between the two versions at this point. The whole conclusion of what would become the "Excuse" chapter is different in the 1916 version. Some of the differences, of course, are fairly small; at times, the 1921 version simply clarified text which had been opaque or obscure in 1916.⁸ When Ursula brings Birkin a flower at the end of the quarrel, for example, in *The First Women in Love* the short paragraph reads:

"A pretty one," he said, vacantly, taking the flower. He sat looking at it unseeing. (FWL 284)

In the 1921 *Women in Love*, the passage runs:

"Pretty!" he said, looking up at her with a smile, taking the flower. Everything had become simple again, quite simple, the complexity gone into nowhere. But he badly wanted to cry: except that he was weary and bored by emotion. (WL 310)

The text has developed, expanded, and made clear what had been a rather enigmatic moment.

In the 1916 text, Ursula and Birkin then drive to Southwell, where the minster clock is just striking six, and have their tea in the "Saracen's Head": all almost exactly as in the 1921 novel. After tea, they write their resignations, and plan to go away; again as in 1921. In the 1916 novel, however,

they never leave the room; and they do not go to Sherwood Forest by car, do not spend the night there, do not make love. The love-declaration which Birkin makes to Ursula at this point of the novel takes on its own complexity, as he attempts to say both that he loves her, and that he has had enough of “voluptuousness, animal ecstasy” (*FWL* 294). Ursula cannot really understand what he is talking about; and in spite of all her feelings for him, the episode ends with neither of them understanding the other, and Ursula in tears.

It is an extraordinarily moving episode, especially perhaps if one knows the esoteric excesses of the 1921 text. To start with, it is Ursula who is unsure of Birkin, and she expresses her uncertainty by saying:

“I can’t believe you love me even now.”

“What a Thomasine! — Do believe it then. I know you love me,” he said.

“Do you? Do I love you? Are you sure?” she asked, for she was mortally frightened. (*FWL* 286)

Her experience is that of feeling “delivered out of her own safe, enclosed keeping. And she could not, she could not allow it, she must draw back” (*FWL* 287). This is quite different from anything in the 1921 novel, where—after a single moment of being “unassured” (*WL* 312)—Ursula is happy in her new experience. In the 1916 novel, Birkin is a little bossy towards her, something of the know-all he is in other episodes (“Do believe it then”): ominously dominant. But, to start with, he is also a good deal more certain of what is happening:

he seemed to have a new, star-like being, that was beyond suffering, so strange and steadfast and absolved.

“Yes,” he said, kissing her fresh cheeks. “I know you love me.”

“Do I?” she asked, looking up at him with a brow tortured by misgiving, a sort of hopelessness.

“Yes,” he said indifferently, hardly heeding her fears (*FWL* 287)

In her “anguish of doubt” (*FWL* 287), she eventually finds his confidence reassuring:

His finger-tips went delicately, finely over her face. They

seemed to take away her fear, almost like removing a veil.

"And do you love me?" she asked, her heart bounding with joy. (*FWL* 287)

He is unembarrassed by the question, and calls her "My love." But as she kisses him, and starts to feel liberated, it is his turn to start feeling uncertain:

"My love," he whispered, bending and kissing her, always kissing her, rather frightened and unsure in this new land.

She knew he was frightened (*FWL* 287)

The kinds of confidence in self and other which the language of James Pryce introduced (and encouraged) in the 1921 novel are totally absent in the 1916 text. On the other hand, in 1916, what is going on between Birkin and Ursula is also clear. There is no esoteric language; instead, they inch their way painfully into a new kind of relationship.

he knew it was the first time in his life he had ever been happy, as flowers are happy, as the heedless things of the earth are happy. He had known ecstasy and delight before, but now, for the first time, he knew the grace of happiness, the strange, immortal serenity. (*FWL* 287-88)

But as soon as we think that they might now be firmly and mutually happy, things shift again. Birkin wishes them to leave their jobs and go away together, but where in the 1921 novel "A new understanding dawned in her face" (*WL* 315) when he suggests it (and her main difficulty is where they should go), the 1916 novel shows her rather more uncertain: "She was startled, and wondering" (*FWL* 288). His certainty that he will just go away with her, and they will be happy, also worries her:

"Are you?" she said, slowly. "Are you going to make me be an anchorite and a hermitess, and you an ascetic? Don't—I don't want to. Promise you won't be an ascetic. You are so terribly extreme." (*FWL* 288)

She quickly gets to her conclusion which, this time, is repeated word for word in the 1921 version of the novel:

"You see, my love," she said, "I'm so afraid that while we are only people, we've got to take the world that's given—because there isn't any other." (*FWL* 289, *WL* 315)

But whereas, in 1921, Birkin in his way and Ursula in her own rather different way agree not to part, the 1916 novel shows Birkin uncertain about any life which he might actually be able to lead with her. He may say “One wants another, truer world,” but his language betrays him even more than it does in the 1921 novel; he ends up, ruefully, “In the world, one must lie—one is a lie” (*FWL* 289).

Ursula, too, is a good deal more rebellious (and less confident) than she would be in 1921. Although she agrees to go away with Birkin, into what he confidently assures her is his own world, her reservations about spending all her time there take on the quality of ironical criticisms of the idea: “I may go to London sometimes to the music-hall, mayn’t I? I love it so” (*FWL* 290). Birkin can only grumble at her: “It bores me. But you do as you like” (*FWL* 290). When it comes to sending in their resignations, it is Ursula who brings them to the point of doing so (in the 1921 novel the decision is mutual); and it is she who objects to the idea of people suspecting the simultaneity of their resigning. In 1921, she will say “I don’t care . . . it doesn’t matter, does it?” (*WL* 317). In 1916 she is much more determined, compared with Birkin’s casualness: “Isn’t it rather horrid, if everybody knows . . . I feel I don’t want them to. It isn’t their affair” (*FWL* 291).

Above all, they do not leave the room to go and make love climactically in Sherwood Forest, as in 1921. They have the same exchange — “Shall we go?” “As you like” (*FWL* 291, *WL* 317)—but what follows is one of Birkin’s most revealingly honest moments. He finds himself wanting Ursula sexually, whilst simultaneously desiring *not* to want her.

It was not this, not this he wanted with her—not the poignant ecstasies of sex passion. Yet he did want them also, with an old craving of habit. And the desire seemed like death to him. For beyond this was the small, yearning hope of a new sort of love, a new sort of intercourse, that was gentle and still and so happy, it was chastity and innocence of itself. This, this new, gentle possession, should be the true consummation of their marriage. (*FWL* 291)

He is thus as theoretical—or hypothetical—about sex as he is elsewhere about relationship in general: it is he who has the *ideas* about what their relationship could be like, what its “true consummation” should be. He is looking for something which—whilst sexual—is also not going to be as violent as “the old, fierce, destroying embrace” (*FWL* 291); he fears that sex of the old kind (at least, of the old kind which *he* has experienced) will destroy relationship. He tells Ursula about his fears—and the last three

pages of the chapter concentrate on this subject almost exclusively.

Ursula is both fascinated and annoyed: "She had not been prepared for this. She felt as if he accused her, accused her of some harlotry" (*FWL* 293). She, after all, shares none of his fears, nor does she participate in his rebellion against the past. Rather sensibly, she suggests that "one can't decide these things in this fashion . . . One can't be so deliberate. It is indecent. We must take what comes" (*FWL* 293). Her slightly indignant insouciance is however met by Birkin's customary stonewalling. He insists that "one chooses. At length, one must choose. I know one must" (*FWL* 293).

All the time, however, he is hoping against hope that she will ignore his theories and just give herself to him, so that he can indulge in passion without blaming himself (presumably blaming her instead). But he ends up rather helplessly telling her that he has had that kind of sex and is finished with it; or, to be exact, "whether I have finished with it—heaven help us, I don't know—" (*FWL* 294). This leaves her in the same state as it leaves him: "'And I don't know,' she murmured, helplessly."

At last he made a move to her.

"At any rate," he said, looking down at her and touching her cheek with the tips of his fingers. "I know I love you—I love your face." The knowledge was a great comfort to him, a rock. "And if we go wrong—I shall know—ich habe es nicht gewollt . . ." (*FWL* 294)

Knowing that he loves her—at least, that he loves her face—is a very odd kind of "rock" on which to found a belief; the contrast between the softness of the face (and the touch), and the hardness of the rock, suggests how much Birkin is trying to convince himself. He also gives himself (in the Kaiser's "I did not want it") the excuse for possible failure with Ursula which—in the 1921 novel—is linked with his failure with Gerald Crich. Such things make Birkin's certainty about his love intensely ambiguous.

The novel is creating an ominous start to the relationship; but it is also showing something tender, paradoxical and realistic, and in particular true to Birkin's theoretical and spiritual nature (he comes to sound very much like the man who would shortly write *The Reality of Peace*). He ends up insisting, once again, that it is not passion which he wants:

" . . . it isn't that.—This is peace, peace of soul—only peace. And the peace is the greatest reality, even if we make war—isn't it?" (*FWL* 294)

Again, the 1917 reader would be getting a very clear signal: the larger stage of war and politics is here reduced to the purely personal stage—and peace is the greatest reality. The chapter thus ends, characteristically, with Birkin talking and talking, about certainty and commitment, and Ursula hardly saying anything. The last line of the chapter, however—the more striking precisely because Ursula has been so silent—reads: “But her eyes were full of sad tears, and she did not answer” (*FWL* 294).

This is enough to suggest how different the episode is in the 1916 novel, even though it grows out of identical elements. The relationship deeply troubles Ursula; it is not (as at the end of the same chapter in the 1921 novel) a matter of her finding that “She had her desire fulfilled, he had his desire fulfilled,” or that “she was to him what he was to her, the immemorial magnificence of mystic, palpable, real otherness” (*WL* 320). That kind of esoteric language has no place in the 1916 novel, which is—appropriately for a novel which has the war so much in focus—continually about conflict and uncertainty.

It was not simply that Lawrence’s reading during 1917 damaged the novel. It would be more truthful to say that in 1916 he would not have found Pryce and Blavatsky especially interesting, whereas by 1917-18 the agonies with which he responded to the world (specifically the world at war) meant that the alternative versions of experience which Pryce and Blavatsky offered him appealed to him deeply, and so almost inevitably infiltrated the text of his novel. The language he started to use—it got into the 1918-19 magazine versions of his *Studies in Classic American Literature* too—is esoteric, and he does not much care if it is shared by others, or whether “mystic, palpable, real otherness” makes much sense to anybody else; it is something which fascinates him. I would suggest that, here, the 1916 novel is much to be preferred to that of 1921.

IV

The 1916 text offers its reader an experience which constantly switches between what will already be known, from the 1921 text, and what will be quite new. At the start of the novel, for example, the first paragraph of the 1921 *Women in Love* is very close to what Lawrence had first typed in July 1916; nearly five years of revisions hardly affected it. The rest of the opening, however, changed massively between July 1916 and 1921; the opening dialogue itself had already changed completely during 1916.⁹ Some of

the changes appeared simply in individual words or descriptions: Gudrun, for example, wears "cherry-coloured stockings" (FWL 4) in *The First "Women in Love"* rather than the "emerald green" ones (WL 8) of *Women in Love*. However, as the episode goes on, it turns out that in *The First "Women in Love"* Gudrun—though wryly jesting about her experience—is a good deal more vulnerable when thinking of the man she might meet, now that she has come home, than she is in *Women in Love*. She says to Ursula that

if there did happen to come along a highly attractive individual of considerable means, and we caught fire like anything, you know, with each other—I might immolate myself.—” She seemed wistful. “I’m getting bored,” she went on, in pathetic complaint. “Things don’t seem to materialise with me, I find” (FWL 4)

The 1921 *Women in Love* offers a rather tougher-minded Gudrun, a different kind of “woman in love”: poised and rhetorical:

if there did happen to come along a highly attractive individual of sufficient means—well—” she tailed off ironically. Then she looked searchingly at Ursula, as if to probe her. “Don’t you find yourself getting bored?” she asked of her sister. “Don’t you find, that things fail to materialise?” (WL 8)

The sisters’ dialogue about having children is also completely different in 1916 and 1921 (WL 9) and, again, in *The First "Women in Love"* both are more vulnerable, less able to provide simple and ironic answers. These crucial changes happen without any change in the events or sequence of the episode; it is as if the characters had grown older, less vulnerable and more armoured, by 1921.

It is characteristic of the differences between the 1916 and 1921 novels that such passages of considerable difference are interspersed with sections which are not much changed, or only affected by small and detailed revisions. So, for example, when Gudrun is frightened of going through the crowd of ordinary collier folk at the wedding, in 1921 Ursula reassures her with the collusive and class-superior “they don’t matter” (WL 13). In 1916, however, it had been sisterly protectiveness and reassurance, not snobbery, which she had offered her sister: “they won’t do anything” (FWL 8). Such careful, local and precise working-over of the text is not, however, what is most remarkable about the revision evident in *Women in Love*. It

may come as a surprise to a reader expecting continuous difference between *The First "Women in Love"* and *Women in Love* that lengthy passages regularly pass with hardly a change being made; chapter XV in its 1921 form, for example, is very nearly identical with its 1916 form. We should remember Lawrence reporting, in November 1916, when revising the part of the book originally written in May-June, that "there was a lot of the original draft that I couldn't have bettered" (*L* iii. 25); and he never did make substantial changes in some places.

When, however, he did start to revise, the new work could quickly take the form of a complete rewriting; and it could extend for pages or even chapters. For example, what became chapter XXV ("Marriage or Not")—apart from its first paragraph—is not just revised in 1921 but wholly rewritten; there is almost nothing similar in the 1916 text. The later part of Birkin's conversation with Gerald in the train on the way to London in chapter V ("In the Train") is much revised; while the conversation between Gerald and Birkin about the Pussum in chapter VIII ("Breadalby") is quite different, and so is a great deal of the conversation between Birkin and Ursula in chapter XI ("An Island"). Page after page between Gerald and Birkin in chapter XVI ("Man to Man"), as well as the conversation about marriage between Birkin and Gerald in chapter XXV, could come from a different novel completely; while I have already discussed the crucial changes made to the exchange between Birkin and Ursula in the *Saracen's Head* in chapter XXIII ("Excuse"). It is striking that a number of the particularly agonized quarrels are also heavily revised or completely rewritten: Birkin's rage with Hermione in chapter III ("Class-room") and his disagreement with Ursula in chapter XIII ("Mino") are both quite different, as are the arguments in chapter XIX ("Moony") and chapter XXVI ("A Chair"). A number of crucial monologues, too, are completely rewritten; for example, Birkin's version of "the black river of corruption" (*WL* 172) in chapter XIV ("Water-Party"), and his musings in bed at the start of chapter XVI ("Man to Man"), as well as the extended meditation in chapter XIX ("Moony"), where again extra pages had to be added to the 1917 typescript to accommodate the changes; and Ursula's thinking aloud at the start of the same chapter is also heavily revised.

Lawrence's habits of revision thus ensured a general review of a good deal of the text of *The First "Women in Love,"* the close revision of many passages, and the complete re-writing of a number of key episodes. Above all, it was the relationship between Birkin and Ursula which changed in the 1921 novel; the rewritten five pages which transformed the end of chapter

XXVI ("A Chair") and the ending of the novel in chapter XXXII ("Exeunt") did more than most to change the relationship into a more dynamic, more robust one in 1921. In *The First 'Women in Love,'* the characters are often far less sure of themselves and of each other.

A particularly interesting aspect of the revision is that it regularly concentrates on the way sequences end; sometimes just by rewriting the last sentence of what (in the 1917-19 revision) were passages being turned into chapters, sometimes by revising almost up to the chapter ending itself, sometimes by completely rewriting the whole sequence culminating in that ending.¹⁰ The number of chapters in the novel, eventually thirty-two, many of them created for the first time in the 1917-19 revisions, ensured that its structure would be very different from that of its predecessor *The Rainbow*, which although of similar length had had only sixteen chapters. The new, smaller units of *Women in Love* tended increasingly to become units where extensive change might be required by the development of a particular scene; but such changes might well not continue into, or very much affect, the next unit, so that (for example) the massive changes at the ends of chapter XIII ("Mino") and chapter XXVI ("A Chair") are succeeded by almost completely unchanged openings to chapter XIV ("Water-Party") and chapter XXVII ("Flitting"). The unusual character of the revised structure—thirty-two chapters which often have the quality of individual scenes or film stills—was still further developed in the final revision of 1921, when some (for example "Man to Man" and "Woman to Woman," "Threshold" and "Excuse") were given titles suggesting parallel or balance, and as many as twenty were given single-word titles, stressing again their individual integrity as units. (The contrast with *The Rainbow* incidentally thus grew even more marked: chapter one of the earlier novel had been "How Tom Brangwen Married a Polish Lady": chapter one of the 1921 novel became "Sisters.")

V

I would like, finally, to consider the novel's ending and its crucial relationship with the First World War. The 1921 novel's penultimate chapter "Snowed Up" is very similar to the 1916 novel's penultimate chapter XII. There are additional sentences, extending, amplifying, but not essentially modifying the action. Only at moments—as when Gudrun feels "forlorn with insistence and triumph" (WL 444), as opposed to "forlorn with insis-

tence and terror” (*FWL* 410)—is there a real change of meaning. Just occasionally the 1921 version appears a little too pointed; as when Gudrun—thinking about the following day, when she might go with Gerald to England, or to Dresden with Loerke, or to Munich to a girl-friend—draws her reflections to an end:

And today was the white, snowy, iridescent threshold of all possibility. All possibility—that was the charm to her the lovely, iridescent, indefinite charm—pure illusion. (*FWL* 432, *WL* 468)

The openness is both attractive and ominous: it is, after all, “pure illusion.” The 1921 novel however adds an additional sentence:

All possibility—because death was inevitable, and nothing was possible but death. (*WL* 468)

That cynical extra sentence is perhaps a little too deliberately focused upon what is going to happen next.

The strangest things are changed at times, however. After Gerald has attempted to strangle Gudrun—in a passage almost identical in 1916 and 1921—Loerke faintly protests: “‘That also,’ he said in his thin, bitter voice: ‘that’s the sport.’ He was acridly sarcastic” (*FWL* 436). In 1921, his protest would become: “‘Monsieur!’ he said, in his thin, roused voice: ‘Quand vous aurez fini—’” (*WL* 472). Why were such changes important? Loerke’s first words to Gerald when the latter discovers them also changed, from “‘s ist aus” (*FWL* 435) to “‘All gone!’ he said.” (*WL* 470). Some play with German and French and English appears to be going on; Loerke’s characteristic slipperiness itself slides and slips.

Gerald’s final walk to his death is nearly identical in the two texts. But the end of the novel, in the next chapter, shows one of the fundamental differences between 1916 and 1921. For one thing, Birkin’s reaction to Gudrun is very different; he is “full of judgement,” and she is conscious that he judges her (*FWL* 440); his manner is “damning” (*FWL* 441), altered to “abstracted” in 1921 (*WL* 477). But this is linked with Birkin’s utterly different series of responses to dead Gerald. Birkin’s grief

was chiefly misery. He could not bear that the beautiful, virile Gerald was a heap of inert matter, a transient heap, rubbish on the face of the earth, really. (*FWL* 441)

His reflections on Gerald would, in the 1921 text, turn into a strange kind of consolation; he would develop his ideas of “the mystery of creation” as “fathomless, infallible, inexhaustible” (*WL* 479), and he would find them a

profound comfort. In 1916, just the opposite happens. Birkin is frozen too: dead like Gerald.

And still Birkin's heart was frozen in his breast. This, then, was the end. He had loved Gerald, he loved him still. But the love was frozen in his breast, frozen by the death that possessed himself, as well as Gerald. (*FWL* 442)

There are no consoling thoughts about creation or the creative mystery. Only when Birkin breaks down into tears do the 1916 and 1921 texts briefly come close again. But developments swiftly follow in 1921—Birkin's insistence to Ursula that he has loved Gerald, Ursula's complaint "You've got me" (*WL* 480), and the ending of the novel concentrating entirely on the relationship between Birkin and Ursula. It ends, of course, with them both back in England, talking about "two kinds of love," and (as always) disagreeing, down to the famous last line: "'I don't believe that,' he answered" (*WL* 481).

None of this had happened in 1916. Birkin's tears of grief over Gerald horrify Ursula and she slips wordlessly out of the room at the bottom of the novel's penultimate page—and thus out of the novel for good. It is not with the relationship of Birkin and Ursula that this text will end. There remains a single, strange, deeply moving final page of Birkin's mourning for Gerald, containing some of Lawrence's most emotional writing. It is not just grief for dead Gerald: "It was not the death he could not bear, but the nothingness of the life and the death put together. It killed the quick of one's life" (*FWL* 443). And the novel ends like this:

He could not bear it. His heart seemed to be torn in his chest.

"But even then," he strove to say, "we needn't all be like that. All is not lost, because many are lost.—I am not afraid or ashamed to die and be dead." (*FWL* 443)

Against the grain, Birkin thus stresses what he barely believes: that all is not lost, in spite of the many who are lost. He is oddly like Milton's Satan, insisting against overwhelming odds that "All is not lost . . ." (i. 102). But what he feels is death.

In 1917, of course, this could only have been read as a direct reference to the war, and to its dreadful losses, with Birkin attempting to stand clear and see differently. But the novel was by now beyond all hope of being published, partly because of the final context in which the novel can be set: perhaps the most significant of all. The 1916 *First* "Women in Love"

is a war novel to a much greater extent than the 1921 text; in part because one reads it differently, as the work of 1916, and in part because some passages which were subsequently cut, or changed, bore very heavily on the world of 1916-17 and would have struck 1917 readers with particular force.

VI

So, for example, the discussion of contemporary ideas in what was then the first chapter of the novel is significantly different from the discussion published in 1921, in which Hermione's discussion with the bridegroom about "nationality" (*WL* 28) would be the starting point, and the discussion would go through ideas of patriotism, emulation, and capitalism. In 1916 the discussion had been "about the building of Dreadnoughts"¹¹:

"I cannot believe in these great armaments," she was saying. "The state forbids the individual to carry arms . . . Why should Britannia and John Bull go armed to the teeth, when you and I may hardly carry a pen-knife?" (*FWL* 23)

Theobald Lupton, the bridegroom, is of course a "naval officer, manly and up to his duty" (*FWL* 18), and such a discussion is entirely appropriate. Gerald, of course, follows up the argument keenly: "Who is going to forbid nations to carry arms?" (*FWL* 23) Birkin however offers the idea of an international police force which can "arrest" a nation behaving badly: it would be better, he says, to concentrate on nations which behave badly than on individuals. "It isn't the individual that wants watching, it is these great uncouth Bill Sykeses, the nations . . . your life isn't safe five minutes, in the hands of your nation" (*FWL* 23-24). Reading all this in the spring of 1917 would have been an extraordinary and (for many people) a thoroughly offensive experience; it had only been in May 1916 that conscription had been introduced into the British army, but such writing offered a direct contradiction to ideas of conscription, as much as it did to patriotism. If Ursula had been offensive about the individual serving his country in *The Rainbow* (in ways that may have contributed to the decision to prosecute the book¹²), this was a good deal worse.

And the book keeps up a kind of running battle with the fact of the war. In the classroom with Hermione and Ursula, Birkin's monologue just before they all leave is, in 1916, twice as long, and directly applicable to the war-situation:

We are the last products of the decadent movement, the analytic, lyrical, emotional, scientific movement which has had full sway since the Renaissance, and which we've been so proud of . . . it is knowledge, knowledge all the while, this passion, this emotionalism, this soldiering, it is a form of immediate anthropology, we study the origins of man in our own immediate experience, we push right back to the first, and last, sensations of procreation and of death. (*FWL* 36-37)

Birkin's ideas, caught thus on the wing, are barely comprehensible; but it is clear that, to him, "soldiering" is one of the revealing catastrophes of our civilization. Birkin continues by stressing how

in reality, the whole of the people in the world are going one way now, in a helpless herd, down the last slopes of sensational knowledge into the gap of darkness we came out of. It is the road to death. But if we want death, then nothing but death will do for us—like the leaves in autumn. (*FWL* 37)

Again, the apocalyptic idea would, in 1917, inevitably have translated itself into a commentary on the contemporary situation. England and Germany are both helpless herds, going down the last slopes into death. Talking to Ursula on the island, Birkin asks if "we are not going all merely to perish in the final glistening experience of death and killing" (*FWL* 119); talking to her in his Nottingham rooms, he explains why he thinks contemporary men are so futile: "they take to fighting and killing each other, and raking up old phrases" (*FWL* 139). So much for contemporary appeals to patriotism and nationhood. The allusion to the rising waters at the start of the chapter which became "Moony" was, in 1916, not simply to "the tide of nothingness" (*WL* 244) but to "the tide of destruction": "The world was in flood again, and there was no Noah, and no Noah's ark this time" (*FWL* 225).¹³ Even when Ursula sings so that Gudrun can do eurhythmic movements, in the 1916 novel she incongruously comes up with "It's a long long way to Tipperary," that most famous of wartime marching songs: it would have been hard to locate the novel more precisely in wartime (the song had only been published in 1912). None of these examples survived into the 1921 novel.

Alongside these continual allusions to war and death, too, other references and allusions take on a new meaning. When Birkin looks out of the train window on the way to London, and thinks "Well, if mankind is de-

stroyed, if our race is destroyed like Sodom . . .” (*FWL* 49), in 1917 it would have been clear that he was continuing his attack on the barbarity of contemporary England at war. When he comments about Gerald, in the Cafe Pompadour, “He was in the last war” (*FWL* 54, *WL* 64), the 1917 context would immediately have suggested, to a contemporary, “i.e. the war before this one”; when he says to Ursula, in the episode on the island, that people “maintain a lie, and run amok at last” (*FWL* 113, *WL* 127), it would have been clear what form he thought that running amok had recently taken.

These examples could be multiplied many times, of course. There is still one final way, however, in which we can think of the book as a 1917 novel; by considering its potential appearance in print in the spring of 1917.

VII

In 1917, publication of *The First “Women in Love”* would have coincided closely with *Prufrock and Other Observations*, T.S. Eliot’s first book of poems, which came out in an edition of 500 copies in June 1917; with the first three cantos by Ezra Pound, which appeared in *Poetry* in June, July, and August 1917; the novel would have appeared a few months before Edward Thomas’ first book of poems (*Poems* by Edward Eastaway), published on 10 October (Thomas had been killed on 9 April); and it would closely have followed works such as Isaac Rosenberg’s “Break of Day in the Trenches” (published in *Poetry* in December 1916) and (strikingly) the first English publication of James Joyce’s *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, which appeared in an edition of 750 copies on 12 February 1917.

We tend today to think of *Women in Love* as a novel which—appearing as it did in England in June 1921—finds its natural place among post-war works such as Joyce’s *Ulysses*, published early in 1922, and Eliot’s *The Waste Land*, written late in 1921 and appearing the following year. But *Women in Love* began as a novel of the middle of the war, and might well have been published alongside the writing of Joyce and Eliot which was coming out in 1917. Its publication in 1917 would have made it not just possible but necessary to read it as a novel which, while deliberately not involving itself with the period of war, placed its version of society’s mechanical obsession and violent break-up right in the middle of the war. Lawrence once remarked that “The book frightens me: it is so end-of-the-world” (*L* iii. 25): an appropriate book for a Europe poised between the horrors of the battle of the Somme in the summer of 1916, and the longer

nightmare of Passchendaele, which would begin with the rains of August 1917. But he also hoped that "it is, it must be, the beginning of a new world too" (*L* iii. 26); not a new world fitfully and uncertainly re-building itself in the weariness of the post-war period, but one which challenged the whole ethos of what one publisher's reader (who advised the rejection of the novel in January 1917) called "the forms of English civilisation." The report by that reader (for the publisher Constable) ran, in part:

. . . we feel that the present would be a most unfavourable time for the publication of the book in its present form. In the first place, there are the writer's expressions of antipathy to England and the forms of English civilisation. At the present time, when people are sacrificing all that is dearest to them for their country, such expressions are we think bound to rouse the resentment both of the reviewers and the public. In the second place, the destructive philosophy as it is expressed in this book would we think be particularly unwelcome at the present time, and the same might perhaps be said of the author's 'detached' attitudes toward the events of the present day. (*WL* xxxiv)

The accusation that Lawrence expressed "'detached' attitudes toward the events of the present day" shows how much the war was setting the report's agenda; and it is true that the "new world" which Lawrence thought his book might initiate turned out to be one which neither he nor anyone else would be allowed to inhabit. That, however, should not prevent us from seeing *The First "Women in Love"* as a piece of fiction generated in—and in many ways poignantly addressed to—the England, and the Europe, of the First World War: not to a post-war world disillusioned with society, and resigned to its fate, but one actually fighting a war. In the book's analysis, the "forms of English civilisation" were symptomatic of the very civilization which, as a final irony, prevented the book itself from appearing.

In the 1916 novel, too, Gudrun and Loerke fantasize about the end of the world in terms of the limitations of democracy: they imagine how "the world became so perfect that by unanimous consent it committed suicide, because it had come to pass that any step taken by any man was an infringement of the rights of some other man" (*FWL* 418). But, in an eerie prediction of the future, they also enjoy "some mocking dream of the destruction of the world by the ridiculous catastrophe of man's invention: a man invented such a perfect explosive that it blew the earth in bits among the stars . . ." (*FWL* 418). The summer of 1917 would be marked by

massive explosions of mines at Messines Ridge, in the greatest series of man-made explosions the world had ever seen. One eye-witness commented: “None of us had seen anything like it ever. It was just one mass of flames. The whole world seemed to go up in the air” (Macdonald 42). The 1916 novel was abreast of its time in ways for which it has not yet been given credit. In the 1921 novel, Gudrun and Loerke develop the explosive fantasy a little further, but this time in irony: a perfect explosive is again invented, which

blew the earth in two, and the two halves set off in different directions through space, to the dismay of the inhabitants (WL 453)

Not, thus, with the point and attack of the 1916 novel; but there is evidence that Lawrence was revising at least some of the Loerke/Gudrun passages in September 1917, when he would have known about the events of Messines Ridge,¹⁴ and might very well have wanted to offer a mocking prediction about the future, rather than a dreadful confirmation of the present.

In that way, the novel itself moved on in its response to the war. As Lawrence would write in 1919,

it is a novel which took its final shape in the midst of the period of war, though it does not concern the war itself. I should wish the time to remain unfixed, so that the bitterness of the war may be taken for granted in the characters. (WL 485)

That bitterness can now, I think, at last be seen for what it is, in the 1916 novel. What is, finally, dreadful to Birkin—and perhaps to the reader—is experience in which the individual manages “never to struggle clear—never to struggle clear” (FWL 443). Although Lawrence in 1916 did his best to stress the novel’s positive qualities—“it is, it must be, the beginning of a new world”—he also showed how deliberately he had reached that conclusion (“it is, it must be”). And the first part of that sentence remarks “The book frightens me: it is so end-of-the-world.”¹⁵ That, I think, properly suggests the quality of *The First “Women in Love”*. Birkin is haunted by the tragedy of Gerald because “It was not the death he could not bear, but the nothingness of the life and death put together” (FWL 443). The wartime novel found not just the deaths in war unbearable, but “the nothingness of the life and death put together”: its summing-up of the civilization which led to such a war. *The First “Women in Love”* may come to be

regarded as a minor offshoot of a major work, or it may—and I believe it should—come to be seen as a great novel in its own right. I suspect, too, that it may come to haunt its readers as that rare thing, an authentically tragic twentieth-century novel.

Notes

1 The history of the publication of early versions of Lawrence's texts offers no real parallel to *The First "Women in Love"*. The first surviving long draft of *Sons and Lovers* will shortly be published, as *Paul Morel*, in the *Cambridge Edition of the Works of D.H. Lawrence*. It was, however, never finished, let alone submitted to a publisher. The first draft of *The Plumed Serpent* has been published, as *Quetzalcoatl*, ed. Louis L. Martz (Redding, 1995), but this was a state of the text which Lawrence himself had no intention of publishing, as he always knew that he was going to rewrite the book. 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). In July 1929, Lawrence did consider publishing the first, but only as a solution to his English and American publishers' desire for a *Lady Chatterley* novel which they could publish: he himself was very dubious about bringing it out. He could "easily make it passable. But shall I? shall I print a crude first version?" (*L* vii. 383-84, 391). Up to July 1929 he showed no desire to publish it; and he never made any attempt to publish the second version.

2 DHL did not do so, and Methuen apparently made no attempt to enforce the repayment. Methuen had also declared that no copyright could exist in *The Rainbow* (*L* ii. 457 n. 2), thus presumably attempting to rule it out as one of the three novels for which they had a contract.

3 *The Trespasser*, *Love Poems*, *Sons and Lovers*, *The Widowing of Mrs. Holroyd*, and *The Prussian Officer* were all still available from Duckworth in 1916; by 1915 they had also acquired the rights to DHL's first novel *The White Peacock* and had published a new edition.

4 In the spring of 1917, Ottoline Morrell threatened action if the book were published; in 1921, Philip Heseltine managed to extract £50 from Secker (and have changes made) on the grounds of the book's libels on him. At least twelve people might, however, have found recognizable versions of themselves or their family members in the book: Heseltine, Minnie Lucy Channing, Ottoline and Philip Morrell, Louie Burrows and the Burrows family, Thomas Philip Barber and members of the Barber family, John Middleton Murry, Maxim Litvinov, Bertrand Russell,

William Henry Hocking, Anne Estelle Rice, Gordon Campbell, and Eleonora Duse. See *FWL* Introduction, pp. xl-xlvi

5 “I have finished my novel - except for a bit that can be done any time” (*L* ii. 621); “There is a last chapter to write, some time, when one’s heart is not so contracted” (*L* ii. 627).

6 See *FWL* xxxi and *WL* xxxi. The fragment runs:

A year afterwards, Ursula in Italy received a letter from Gudrun in Frankfurt am Main. Since the death of Gerald in the Tyrol, when Gudrun had gone away, ostensibly to England, Ursula had had no news of her sister.

“I met a German artist who knew you,” Gudrun said “and he gave me your address. I was silent for so long because there was nothing I could say.

I have got a son—he is six months old now. His hair is like the sun shining on the sea, and he has his father’s limbs and body. I am still Frau Crich—what actually happened is so much better, to account for one’s position, than a lie would be. The boy is called Ferdinand Gerald Crich.

As for the past—I lived for some months with Loerke, as a friend. Now I am staying (*WL* xxxi)

7 “His revision [of the TS which became *Women in Love*] affected over 90 per cent of the pages of TSII; he also rewrote 10 per cent of it. He inserted nine pages in his own handwriting; he typed and inserted a further eight replacement or additional pages; he inserted interlinear revision on thirty-five pages so extensive that at most only a few words of the original typescript remained, and often not even those; on a further twenty-four pages his revision was so heavy that only a few pages of the original typescript survived. In this way, 76 pages out of 766 were effectively rewritten.” (*WL* lvi)

8 For full discussion of the 1917 changes see *TE*, pp. 391-98.

9 The original July 1916 dialogue appears in *FWL*, explanatory note on 2:25.

10 From *WL*, chapters II, IV, IX, XII, XIII, XVII, XVIII, XIX, XXI, XXIII, XXIV, XXV, XXVI, XXXI, and XXXII end significantly differently in the 1921 novel from their equivalent appearance in the 1916 novel.

11 Dreadnought was the name of the first of a new class of heavy British battleships launched on 18 February 1906, which provoked Germany and other maritime powers into building similar ships; the name quickly became applied to

any large battleship with its armaments all of one calibre.

12 See *TE*, p. 278.

13 The allusion may have provoked his suggestion of a title in November 1917, when it is possible that this section was revised and the reference removed: "I think I'll call it 'Noah's Ark'" (*L* iii. 183).

14 See *WL*, explanatory note on 427:2.

15 The Introduction to the Cambridge edition of *Women in Love* used those 1916 comments as its final comment on the novel (*WL* lxi), but the remarks apply, of course, to *The First "Women in Love"* rather than to the later book.

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