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ENTITLED LAWRENCE, NIETZSCHE, AND THE WILL TO POWER

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LAWRENCE, NIETZSCHE, AND THE WILL TO POWER

BY

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NIETZSCHE'S WILL TO POWER

From the time that the young D. H. Lawrence began to write, Friedrich Nietzsche exerted a powerful influence over him. Throughout his life, Nietzsche's influence retained its potency, displaying itself in Lawrence's misogyny, his excessive use of imagery involving birds and snakes, his exploration of the conflict between emotion and reason, and his examination of contemporary society. Of all the ideas influencing Lawrence, however, it was the concept of the will-to-power which became Lawrence's obsession. In the following discussion, I will examine Lawrence's attitude toward Nietzsche's will-to-power and his attempt to formulate his own conception of this idea in his writing.

Nietzsche's will-to-power was the result of an attempt to find a monistic explanation of human psychology. Nietzsche's fascination with the will resulted from the influence of Schopenhauer, who defined the world as will. In his article "D. H. Lawrence as Friedrich Nietzsche", John B. Humma writes that Nietzsche's conception of the will differed from Schopenhauer in that "this will was hardly conscious will. Rather it was blind, irrational, unconscious, altogether inimical in the view of Schopenhauer." Humma notes that, in Beyond Good and Evil, Nietzsche posits reality as nothing but human "desires and

passions," saying that "we cannot sink or rise to any other 'reality' but that of our 'impulses' since thinking is only a relation of these impulses one to the other."<sup>1</sup>

At first, in searching for a monistic explanation of the will, Nietzsche reduced these impulses to two basic elements: fear and power, fear being the result of the "privation of power," a "negative motive which would make us avoid something," while the will-to-power is "the positive motive which would make us strive for something." In the beginning, Nietzsche meant worldly power which inspired social conformity, the prime example of this behavior being his friend, composer Richard Wagner, whose German nationalism became an important factor in the disruption of their relationship.<sup>2</sup> In his later writings he expanded the concept of the will-to-power to include other types of behavior, such as pity.<sup>3</sup> Finally, the will-to-power provided the explanation for several cultural factors, such as the existence of good and evil. For instance, what is good exists because whoever happens to be in power values it. The opposite case exists for what is not held in esteem by the powerful individual or individuals.

In addition, it is the desire for power which motivates certain religions, such as Christianity, to despise those who

are in power and profess an ethic which calls for the equality of all men and the selfless love of one man for another. Christianity, Nietzsche holds, is a morality of slaves who wish to exalt themselves at the expense of those in authority. He thus sees the will-to-power as the origin of what he calls the "slave revolt" in morality.<sup>4</sup> As Daniel Schneider explains in his essay "D. H. Lawrence and Thus Spoke Zarathustra", "...beneath all talk of 'the spiritual,' the 'higher,' all talk of 'selflessness' and 'loving one's neighbor,' beneath all the romantic liberal talk of 'equality,' 'brotherhood,' and 'the rights of man,' or beneath all Platonic gibbering about 'the Good,' the 'ideal,' the ens realissimum-lies the hairy brute, the predator, the animal seeking domination, omnipotence...Nietzsche, in diagnosing the psychology of the 'higher man,' comments: 'The more he aspires to the height and light, the more strongly do his roots strive earthward, downward, into the dark, the deep-into evil.'"<sup>5</sup>

If, in this context, Nietzsche sees the will-to-power as something negative, he sees it as a positive trait, the basis of the highest cultural achievements in human history. As Walter Kaufmann writes, in his book Nietzsche, "The will to power is thus not only the devil who diverts man from achieving culture: it is also envisaged as the basis of Greek culture which

permeates it with the values of his own will. This man is necessarily dominant, bending the world to serve his needs. He is willing to take chances and, if need be, destroy existing values, even if it means doing evil. For one who would create new values "must first be an annihilator and break values. Thus the highest evil belongs to the highest goodness, but this is creative."<sup>11</sup> Due to the weakness of will prevalent among modern man, Nietzsche required "hardness, and the capacity for long-range decisions."<sup>12</sup>

Thus, Nietzsche reduces all life to the will-to-power and traces the origin of all value to this concept. In The Will to Power, Nietzsche writes, "There is nothing on earth which can have value, if it not have a modicum of power-granted, of course, that life itself is the Will to Power."<sup>13</sup>

The overman is beyond moral value (i.e., good and evil). Moral value, though, is necessary for those to whom Nietzsche refers as "the botched and bungled,"<sup>14</sup> who, without this bulwark of morality would plunge into nihilism. He explains that morality gave these lesser individuals "infinite worth, metaphysical worth, and classed them altogether in one order which did not correspond with that of worldly power and order of rank: it taught submission, humility, etc."<sup>15</sup>



These virtues, which are Christian virtues, are useless and deplorable to the overman, who cannot conceive of submitting to anyone save a greater man and who is incapable of loving anyone other than himself. When it comes to human relationships, the Nietzschean ideal is friendship between two men.

As for women, they are incapable of friendship. The ideal relationship between men and women is analogous to the bond between master and slave. The love of women seems dangerous to Nietzsche. He exhorts man to "fear woman when she loves: then she makes any sacrifice, and everything seems without value to her. Let man fear woman when she hates: for deep down in his soul man is merely evil, while woman is bad. Whom does woman hate most? Thus spoke the iron to the magnet: 'I hate you most because you attract, but are strong enough to pull me to you.'"<sup>16</sup>In Thus Spoke Zarathustra, he says, "The happiness of man is: I will. The happiness of woman is: he wills. 'Behold, just now the world became perfect!'-thus thinks every woman when she obeys out of entire love."<sup>17</sup>

THE INFLUENCE OF NIETZSCHE

Nietzsche's influence is evident in Lawrence's writing. One can detect this influence by reading his early works, such as The White Peacock, with its decidedly misogynistic cast. The Rainbow, one of his first major novels, contains passages which evoke Nietzschean themes. For instance, in the relationship between Ursula Brangwen and her teacher, Winifred Inger, she is indoctrinated into Nietzsche's views: "They took religion and rid it of its dogmas, its falsehoods. Winifred humanized it all. Gradually, it dawned upon Ursula that all the religion she knew was but a particular clothing to a human aspiration....In religion there were the two great motives of fear and love. The motive of fear was as great as the motive of love....Fear shall become reverence, and reverence is submission in identification: love shall become triumph, and triumph is delight in identification."<sup>18</sup>

"So much she talked of religion...In philosophy she was brought to the conclusion that the human desire is the criterion of all truth and all good. Truth does not lie beyond humanity, but is one of products of the human mind and feeling. There is really nothing to fear. The motive of fear in religion is base, and must be left to the ancient worshippers of power, in our enlightened souls. Power is degenerated to money and Napoleonic

stupidity.'

'Ursula could not help dreaming of Moloch. Her god was not mild or gentle, neither Lamb nor Dove. He was the lion and the eagle. Not because the lion and the eagle had power, but because they were proud and strong; they were themselves they were not passive subjects of some shepherd, or pets of some loving woman, or sacrifices of some priest. She was weary to death of mild, passive lambs and monotonous doves."<sup>19</sup>

Here, one can see the influence of Nietzsche in the criticism of religion and the reduction of truth to human rather than divine terms. One can see as well the use of the language of power and the imagery of power in the adoption of the symbol of the eagle and the lamb from Thus Spoke Zarathustra. In his article "D. H. Lawrence and Thus Spoke Zarathustra," Daniel Schneider asserts that "Much of the imagery of Thus Spoke Zarathustra and of Lawrence's writings is peculiar to any romance with a quest motif: apocalyptic and daemonic imagery arising inevitably in depictions of the quest for the fulfillment of desire and in the confrontation of obstacles to fulfillment....The bridge and the rainbow...the circle or the ring, images of eternity and of eternal recurrence....the setting

and rising sun...the serpent and eagle, the sun and earth...are images whose significance readers of D. H. Lawrence will recognize at once."<sup>20</sup> He goes on to examine in depth the image of the eternal recurrence and the significance of death in both authors. I will discuss this significance later in this work.

Nietzsche's language is also employed in a "love" scene between Ursula and Skrebensky in The Rainbow. Their sexual encounter is described as a contest of wills: "He took her into his arms, his consciousness melted away from him. He took her into his arms, as if into the sure, subtle power of his will, and they became one movement, one dual movement, dancing on the slippery grass. It would be endless, this movement, it would continue for ever. It was his will and her will locked in a trance of motion, two wills locked in one motion, yet never fusing, never yielding one to the other."<sup>21</sup>

Nietzsche's language provided Lawrence with terminology and concepts which enriched his literature. While Nietzsche's atheism and misogyny preoccupied Lawrence, it was the Nietzschean concept of the will-to-power which Lawrence found most provocative. Other issues merged and mingled, but this one idea stood prominent among the others. James F. Scott, in his article "Thimble into

Ladybird," discusses Lawrence's early involvement with Nietzsche and his obsession with the concept of the will-to-power: "Of the several volumes of Nietzsche which Lawrence read while living in Croydon, Der Wille zur Macht, an attack upon altruism, especially in its Christian and Democratic form, may well have had the greatest impact on him. Jessie Chambers reports that immediately after he began to read Nietzsche the phrase 'will to power' became a vital part of his vocabulary, as it remained for the next two decades, even though it eventually acquired a negative connotation. What positively impressed Lawrence about Nietzsche, it seems fair to assume, was the German's contempt for the new class of petty shopkeepers who preferred compliance to conflict, valued ease more than ecstasy, and made personal inhibition into an all-encompassing moral ideal, which they represented as Christian self-sacrifice....Nietzsche's antidote was a new heroic-aristocratic morality, preached by Zarathustra and Dionysus, which made the Wille zur Macht the basis of an Umwerthung aller werthe."<sup>22</sup>

Daniel J. Schneider, in The Consciousness of D. H. Lawrence, explains Lawrence's fascination with the will-to-power as an antidote to the pessimism of Schopenhauer (another author who fascinated him and Nietzsche) as well as a confirmation of

Lawrence's own aristocratic vision of a higher man who "scorns the rabble's base desire for money and personal power" and wishes "to destroy what is worn out and hostile to life, and to create a new vital world in which the instincts are not condemned but rather are joyfully affirmed, with the joy of the Dionysian poet who says yes to life..."<sup>23</sup> More importantly, Schneider adds, "Lawrence apparently needed Nietzsche...to support him in his effort to 'come through' and triumph over his Victorian inhibitions."<sup>24</sup>

In a work entitled Apocalypse, Lawrence shows how his moral thinking falls into the Nietzschean pattern. In this exegesis of the Apocalypse section of the Bible, he discovers much in Christian values which stems from a will-to-power. As he begins the essay, he remembers the religion of his boyhood and how he "used to wonder over the curious sense of self-glory which one felt in the uneducated leaders....They were not on the whole pious or mealy-mouthed or objectionable, these colliers...as if the chapel-men really had some dispensation of power from above. Not love, but a rough and rather wild, somewhat 'special' sense of power."<sup>25</sup> Hypothesizing two traditions of Christianity, one based on love, the other on power, he declares that "The Christian doctrine of love even at its best was an evasion. Even Jesus was

going to reign 'hereafter', when his 'love' would be turned into confirmed power. This business of reigning in glory hereafter went to the root of Christianity, and is, of course, only an expression of frustrated desire to reign here and now....And so there crept into the New Testament the Grand Christian enemy, the power-spirit...at the end of the book as Revelation."

"For Revelation, be it said once and for all, is the revelation of the undying will-to-power in man."<sup>26</sup> Here, Lawrence accepts the power impulse in man. Further on, he writes, "Power is there, and always will be. As soon as two or three men come together, especially to do something, then power comes into being, and one man is a leader, a master. It is inevitable." Furthermore, one must "Accept it, recognize the natural power in the man, as men did in the past, and give it homage..." When one does this, "there is a great joy, an uplifting, and a potency passes from the powerful to the less powerful." Lawrence, however, sees the opposite trend in society, a lack of power, even a "will to negate power, which causes power to be replaced by 'authority' and the resulting "grand scramble of ambition, competition, and the mass treading one another in the face, so afraid they are of power."<sup>27</sup> He thus sees Christianity and Christian virtue as the will-to-power.



Here, Lawrence's reasoning is clearly in line with Nietzsche's thinking. Nevertheless, Lawrence had problems with Nietzsche's will-to-power. In his "Study of Thomas Hardy," for instance, Lawrence calls the will-to-power a "spurious feeling" stemming from "a misinterpretation of the sexual attitudes of Old Testament Jews, ancient Greeks, and Italians both in the Renaissance and later."<sup>28</sup> Many authors find it difficult to understand Lawrence's denunciations of Nietzsche. John Humma, in his article "D. H. Lawrence as Friedrich Nietzsche," says, "Lawrence apparently misunderstood-and he was not by any means the first-the real meaning of Nietzsche's will to power....But it is an interesting sidelight to Lawrence's thought that , with few exceptions...he refused either to acknowledge or admire those philosophers and writers of the fairly recent past who in one way or another anticipated his thought."<sup>29</sup>

Whether Lawrence's disagreement with Nietzsche arose from misunderstanding or an unwillingness to give credit to his sources, his reasons for disagreement were important enough to him that they must be examined. As far as the will-to-power is concerned, Lawrence's basic disagreement with Nietzsche is stated explicitly by his spokesman, Rawdon Lilly, in Aaron's Rod, as he conducts a discussion on love with the title character, Aaron

Sisson, in the final chapter of the book.

In this picaresque novel, Aaron is a character who leaves his wife and child behind in his collier-town cottage (an ironic image of the Garden of Eden) and travels through many lands (including London and Italy) in search of something of value. In the midst of these adventures, he meets Rawdon Lilly, who is disgusted with modern society, democracy, and, in particular, the love ethic and modern marriage. At the end of the novel, Aaron has not yet found stability in his life, but finds himself strangely attracted to Lilly and, as he speaks with him, toys with the idea of yielding to him. His consideration of a homosexual relationship echoes Nietzsche's own desire for a relationship with Richard Wagner and his ideal of love in the relationship between two men.<sup>30</sup> During their talk, Lilly tells Aaron that he would like to leave Europe and pursue a "new life-mode."<sup>31</sup> When Aaron asks him if he is going to seek a new religion, Lilly tells him he is through with religion-and love. He tells Aaron that it is time to stop grinding at the old "mill-stones of love and God" and seek a "new mode." He says that we should "begin to be ourselves." When Aaron asks what that means, Lilly replies "everything." Aaron disagrees, answering, "And to most folks, nothing. They've got to have a goal," prompting Lilly to pun, "I loathe goals more than

any other impertinence. Gaols, they are."<sup>32</sup>

Later, they sit, drink, and continue to discuss Aaron's future. Lilly asks him if he has any particular urge. When Aaron evades the question, Lilly explains that "there are only two great dynamic urges in life: love and power...And we've been trying to work ourselves, at least as individuals, from the love-urge exclusively, hating the power-urge, and repressing it. And now I find we've got to accept the very thing we've hated." He goes on to explain that the power urge "is a great life motive. It was that great dark power-urge which kept Egypt so intensely living for so many centuries. It is a vast dark source of life and strength in us now, waiting either to issue into true action, or to burst into cataclysm." In the following statement, Lilly expresses Lawrence's basic disagreement with Nietzsche, a disagreement which will underlie many of the conflicts in his literature: "Power-the power-urge. The will-to-power-but not in Nietzsche's sense. Not intellectual power. Not mental power. Not conscious will-power. Not even wisdom. But dark, living, fructifying power."<sup>33</sup>

This very concentrated passage, raises questions as to what Lawrence means by this differentiation. Lilly attempts to

explain, saying that the aim of the love urge is devotion to another person, while the power urge only seeks the fulfillment of one's creativity, "the displacing of the old leaves, the inception of the new. It is powerful and self-central, not seeking its centre outside, in some God or some beloved, but acting indomitably from within itself."<sup>34</sup>

Nevertheless, power as Lawrence envisions it is like love: both are based on unequal relationships between two individuals in which "there must be one who urges, and one who is impelled. Just as in love there is a beloved and a lover: the man is supposed to be the lover, the woman the beloved. Now, in the urge of power, it is the reverse. The woman must submit, but deeply, deeply submit...to something deep...the soul in its dark motion of power and pride."<sup>35</sup>This power, Lawrence stresses, does not "bully" and does not "force from the conscious will. That's where Nietzsche was wrong. His was the conscious and benevolent will. In fact, the love-will. But the deep power-urge is not conscious of its aims: and it is certainly not consciously benevolent or love-directed."<sup>36</sup>Lilly's statement clearly proceeds from Nietzsche's misogyny and his tracing of love to the will-to-power. However, it establishes what was for Lawrence an important differentiation. While he agreed with Nietzsche's basic premise of power as the

substratum of life, he felt he differed from Nietzsche regarding the definition of power and the ways in which it was expressed.

The central difference, according to Lawrence, was Nietzsche's emphasis on consciousness and "mental" power. This might be traced to Lawrence's interpretation of what Nietzsche meant when he stressed the importance of knowledge and the "will to truth."<sup>37</sup>When Lawrence discriminates between "conscious will-power" and "dark, fructifying power" he mentions a distinction formulated in his theoretical work Fantasia of the Unconscious. In this work, he postulates "two planes of consciousness....We will call the lower plane the sensual, the upper the spiritual."<sup>38</sup>In addition, there is a will pertaining to each plane.

As he elaborates upon this distinction, Lawrence restates Lilly's cultural theory from Aaron's Rod: "For many ages," he says, "we have been supressing the avid negroid, sensual will. We have been converting ourselves into ideal creatures, all spiritually conscious, and active dynamically only on one plane, the upper spiritual plane...we are sympathy-rotten, and spirit-rotten, and idea-rotten."<sup>39</sup>

When Lawrence relates his idea of the will to his vision of human relationships, he turns to the topic of love and a general repudiation of modern, Christian love: "love and benevolence are our poison...because there is practically no spontaneous love left in the world. It is all will, the fatal love-will and insatiable morbid curiosity."<sup>40</sup>

In his novels, Lawrence explored these ideas and applied his theories to an examination of human relationships. In the foregoing discussion, I will explore his definitive novelistic statement on the will-to-power, Women in Love, a novel which is structured around two relationships which illustrate the two "wills" of his psychological paradigm and the kind of love expressed by these wills.

URSULA AND BIRKIN:  
CONJUNCTION IN DARKNESS

Women in Love is Lawrence's novelistic rebuttal to Nietzsche. Its main theme is the will-to-power and its imagery, much of it taken from Thus Spoke Zarathustra, supports this theme. Lawrence presents us with geographical metaphors for both Lawrence's sensual will and Nietzsche's spiritual will. He symbolizes the former in the collier town of Beldover, an "underground" world populated and energized by the coal-miners, who literally spend their time underneath the earth. They represent the instinctual life of man. This is the world of Ursula and Gudrun Brangwen.

Both women vary in their attitudes toward their home. Ursula is "inured to this violation of a dark, uncreated, hostile world."<sup>41</sup> Gudrun, however, is ambivalent because, in her capacity as an artist, she has travelled and exposed herself to the world of intellect. Still, her own corner of the country strangely enchants her. She remarks that it "is like a country in an underworld...The colliers bring it above-ground with them, shovel it up. Ursula, its marvellous, it's really marvelous-it's really wonderful, another world. The people are all ghouls, and everything is ghostly. Everything is a ghoulish replica of the real world, a replica, a ghoul, all soiled, everything sordid. It's like being mad, Ursula."<sup>42</sup> Lawrence emphasizes her lack of



connection to the earth, as he does with other characters in the novel, by identifying her with air: "she felt as if she were treading in the air...as if at any minute she might be precipitated to the ground."<sup>43</sup>

Lawrence identifies the Nietzschean spiritual will with Willey Green, where Ursula teaches grammar school. In connection with Willey Green, Lawrence presents us once again with an aethereal image. Willey Green is over a hill, in a "purer country." Lawrence associates it with the creative will and renders it with images of abundance: "Yellow celandines showed out from the hedge-bottoms, and in the cottage gardens of Willey Green, currant-bushes were breaking into leaf, and little flowers were coming white."<sup>44</sup>

In this pure country Lawrence brings all the main characters together in a wedding ceremony. Marriage functions as an important theme in the novel. At one point, Rupert Birkin declares that he wants an "ultimate marriage."<sup>45</sup> Indeed, the floral images of the Willey Green gardens emphasize the creative act of marriage. At this ceremony, Lawrence introduces us to Gerald Crich. He is equated with Zarathustra and, in Lawrence's view, serves as a repository of Nietzsche's ideas. Seen through

Gudrun's eyes here, he appears as a "fair, sun-tanned type, rather above middle height, well-made, and almost exaggeratedly dressed. But about him also was the strange, guarded look, the unconscious glisten, as if he did not belong to the same creation as the people about him....There was something northern about him that magnetized her. In his clear northern flesh and his fair hair was a glisten like sunshine refracted through crystals of ice. And he looked so new, unbroached, pure as an arctic thing."<sup>46</sup>

This passage works on a number of levels. On one level, it connects Gerald and Gudrun. On another, it places them on an exalted plane. The mountain and arctic imager identify them with the Nietzschean "spiritual will." John Burt Foster Jr., in his book Heirs of Dionysus, covers Lawrence's use of snow imagery quite extensively. In this context, Foster states, Lawrence's description of Gerald "functions as a 'symbolic cluster' which relates freezing water to other strands of imagery....Witness Lawrence's numerous descriptions of the moon." All of these images of crystallization are associated with consciousness, which is compared to a mirror. At one point, Birkin scolds Hermione, "You've got that mirror, your own fixed will, your immortal understanding, your own tight conscious world, and there

is nothing beyond it."<sup>47</sup>

This imagery also points out the isolation of excessively spiritual people. Lawrence enhances the impression of isolation by describing Gerald as guarded, guarded by his opinions, class distinction, conventions, even by clothing. Gerald is uncomfortable when he is naked and is disgusted when he sees Halliday and Libidnikov naked in Halliday's London apartment. Gudrun is also isolated within the icy region of ideas. She has trouble relating to people as human beings, and prefers abstracting them into "characters in a book" or art objects.<sup>48</sup>

Joining Gerald and Gudrun on this mental plane is Hermione Roddice. Lawrence connects her with the flowers growing in the churchyard on Willey Green, as her pale yellow color of her dress blends with the color of the flowers and she carries "a lot of small rose-coloured cyclamens."<sup>49</sup> The ostrich feathers surmounting her head also disconnect her from the earth. In her case, her spiritual qualities indicated a "void" within her.<sup>50</sup> She illustrates a theme which Lawrence expresses throughout the book, that of the sexual repression of those living on the ideal plane. This is a theme which we have seen in Aaron's Rod and Fantasia of the Unconscious. In both of these works, Lawrence complained of

our preoccupation with the love ideal, connected with consciousness and conscious will-power, and our ignorance of the "dark, fructifying" sources of power. In this scene, Ursula sees her as "full of intellectuality, and heavy, nerve-worn with consciousness."<sup>51</sup> She is interested in benevolent social causes. It is also mentioned that she has had "intimacies of mind and soul with various men of capacity."<sup>52</sup> This last item indicates a certain sexual lack within her, confirmed by Lawrence's remark that "there was a terrible void, a lack, a deficiency of being within her...she wanted someone to close up this deficiency, to close it up for ever."<sup>53</sup>

Lawrence also introduces us to Rupert Birkin, who functions as a foil for Gerald and a spokesman for Lawrence. Unlike Gerald, who is socially conspicuous, Birkin does not stand out from the crowd. Instead, he camouflages himself, "taking the tone of his surroundings, adjusting himself quickly to his interlocuter and his circumstance."<sup>54</sup> If Gerald sheds an intellectual glow, Birkin is dark to the point of obscurity: "There was a certain hostility, a hidden ultimate reserve in him, cold and inaccessible."<sup>55</sup> And, whereas Gerald pays meticulous attention to social convention, Rupert does not: for example, he arrives at the wedding tardy and carelessly dressed.

At the beginning of the novel, Birkin and Hermione are sexually involved. Birkin's tie to Hermione represents his tie to the intellectual world, from which he is trying to escape. His bond to her keeps him from realizing the full potential of his nature. He bitterly protests her restrictiveness and mocks her posturing on subjects as reform, freedom, and liberty. Birkin genuinely wants reform and proposes a new way of living, which one might call "living from the loins." But Hermione, while she claims to advocate sensuality and freedom of the spirit, chains herself to her mind and the knowledge which it holds, rendering everything else, including her sensuality subservient.

In the chapter entitled "Class-Room," Birkin visits Ursula's classroom in his official capacity as superintendent. Hermione intrudes upon his activities and engages Birkin and Ursula in a discussion about education, in which she wonders whether formal education corrupts the childrens' capacity for spontaneous action. Birkin uses this as an opportunity to attack Hermione for her questioning. "You are merely making words," he says. "Even your animalism, you want it in your head...your passion is a lie...it isn't passion at all. It is your will. It's your bullying will. You want to clutch things and have them in your power. You want

to have things in your power. And why? Because you haven't got any real body, any dark sensual body of life. You have no sensuality. You have only your will and your conceit of consciousness, and your lust for power, to know."<sup>56</sup>

He clarifies his position further when he complains that her spontaneity seems to him something contrived, a deliberate attempt to be spontaneous, rather than the actual act emerging from spontaneity, which does not have to be consciously willed, but simply takes place. This becomes clearer when Ursula asks him if he really wants sensuality. He responds by saying, "Yes...that and nothing else...the great dark knowledge you can't have in your head-the dark involuntary being. It is the death of one's self-but it is the coming of being into another."<sup>57</sup>

The Birkin-Hermione relationship reaches a crises in the "Breadalby" chapter, during which Hermione entertains guests at a picnic. These guests include Birkin, Ursula, Gudrun, and Gerald. Lawrence depicts the mood of the party as "mental and very wearying...Birkin was down in the mouth...Ursula and Gudrun, both very unused, were mostly silent, listening to the slow, rhapsodic sing-song of Hermione."<sup>58</sup>It is as though these people do not exist for Hermione save as objects for the attentions of her "benevolent

love-will." The hollowness of her social concerns is also exposed throughout the novel, particularly when she discusses education of the people.

The ensuing conversation concerning education gives clues to the orientation of the characters' wills according to the biological paradigm established in Fantasia of the Unconscious. Hermione sees the beauty of knowledge as the sole reason for education, while Gerald views it as a sort of athletic endeavor, like "gymnastics," the end being "the production of a well-trained, vigorous, energetic mind."<sup>59</sup> The operative word here is mind and the overemphasis of it at the expense of the more vital centers of consciousness. In another sense, his emphasis on the production of well-trained minds reminds one of Hitler's (mistaken) evocations of Nietzsche. Gerald's speech also indicates his position as head of a large coal-mine, interested in the capacity of his work-force. Birkin does not view knowledge in the same exalted light. For him, knowledge in the mind is incomplete, "of things concluded, in the past." He compares this knowledge of the past to "bottling the liberty of last summer in the bottled gooseberries."<sup>60</sup>

Following this discussion, Birkin, weary of Hermione's

opinions and her bullying, refuses to walk with the rest of the party. This outrages Hermione's sense of power over him, and she comes back to the house, where she finds him copying a Chinese drawing. When she asks him why he is copying the drawing, he mockingly tells her that he wishes to "know" it, making fun of her quest for knowledge and throwing its falsehood in her face. After she asks him how he knows it, he describes a knowledge which she can never obtain, the kind of intuitive knowledge which the Western mind cannot appreciate: "I know what centres they live from (the geese in the drawing) -what they perceive and feel-the hot, stinging centrality of a goose in the flux of cold water and mud-the curious bitter stinging heat of a goose's blood, entering their own blood like an inoculation of corruptive fire-fire of the cold-burning mud-the lotus mystery."<sup>61</sup>His incantatory speech catches her off guard, cutting off her mental will and leaving her in a drugged state, as if the speech has produced an hypnotic trance. His sensual knowledge of the blood is something she cannot "know" in the way she means, cannot grasp with her mind or her will. As Lawrence writes, "use all her will as she might, she could not recover."<sup>62</sup>Throughout the ensuing dinner-party, her sickness creeps into the conversation, as the others become "arrested by her unconscious but all-powerful will."<sup>63</sup>This sickness Lawrence describes as "nausea," a word Nietzsche often



uses to convey his disgust at modern society.

Her disgust culminates when she again discovers Birkin alone, this time reading. His inner inviolability drives her to the pitch of madness. Despairing of ever knowing the eternally elusive Birkin, she must destroy him: otherwise her tenacious will must collapse. So, feeling that her "whole mind was a chaos, darkness breaking in upon it, and herself struggling to gain control of her will,"<sup>64</sup> she picks up a lapis lazuli paperweight and strikes him. She fails to knock him unconscious, however, and he escapes from the house, through the grounds surrounding it, and into the hills above.

There, among the wild vegetation, he attains the physical fulfillment he cannot enjoy with Hermione. This differs from the attainment felt by Hermione upon Birkin. The mental will, having repressed its physical side, can only satisfy itself through destructive violence. It cannot appreciate the physical merging which Birkin experiences in the following passage: "He was happy in the wet hill-side, that was overgrown and obscure with bushes and flowers. He wanted to touch them all." Whereupon he divests himself of clothing, representing his tie with civilization, and he sits among the primroses, which clothe him to his arm-pits,

delighting in the primroses' "cool, subtle touch." But, eager for sharper delights, he runs the gauntlet of a "clump of young fir-trees," feeling the sting of their snapping as he moves among them.<sup>65</sup>

Having made his break with Hermione, Birkin searches for a new relationship, one which will break the traditional pattern of sexual relationships. He abhors the accepted view of love and marriage. The influence of Nietzsche appears in passages where Birkin complains about women wanting men to be their appendage. Marriage appalls him, filling him with visions of couples huddled in their cottages, separated from other couples in isolated domesticity. His perspective evokes Nietzsche's view of marriage in this passage from Thus Spoke Zarathustra: "thus I name the will to create the one that is more than those who created it. Reverence for each other, as for those willing with such a will, is what I name marriage. Let this be the meaning and truth of your marriage. But that which the all-too-many, the superfluous, call marriage-alas, what shall I name that? Alas, this wretched contentment in pair! Marriage they call this: and they say that their marriages are made in heaven."<sup>66</sup> Instead of this "egoisme a deux,"<sup>67</sup> Birkin wants "company in proud indifference,"<sup>68</sup> what he later refers to as "star equilibrium,"<sup>69</sup> in which the man and

the woman are polar opposites balanced in a "mystical conjunction,"<sup>70</sup> neither asserting his own will upon the other, but a union in peace and indifference.

The idea of a union with Ursula first occurs to Birkin during a ballet in which she participates with Hermione and Gudrun. As Gudrun clings to Ursula with "heavy, desperate passion," smiling at her with "subtle malevolence," Birkin, attracted to her helplessness, perhaps reminded of his own situation with Hermione, sees her as "his future."<sup>71</sup> It is highly likely, too, that her helplessness appeals to his paternalism, chauvinism, and will-to-power: her pliant nature, he probably believes, would readily yield to his demands.

Shortly after his episode with Hermione, Birkin rents an apartment near a mill pond with the intention of using it as a retreat. The location reinforces the theme of the return to nature, which Lawrence established in the hillside scene following his encounter with Hermione. The relationship with nature is symbolic of his search for a relationship in which both participants may express themselves without impinging their will upon each other.

This setting unites Ursula and Birkin alone for the first time. They delight in the pond and its islands. Yet the influence of Hermione manages to intrude. Birkin still identifies himself with the world of ideas, the world of "bottled" past experiences, and cannot keep himself from casting a metaphorical spell upon the scene and inserting his moral opinions. He calls mankind "a dead tree, covered with fine brilliant galls of people" and classifies them as "apples of Sodom...Dead Sea Fruit...It isn't true that they have any significance-their insides are full of bitter, corrupt ash."<sup>72</sup> He complains about his lack of life, stating that he can't get his "flower" to "blossom (The flower imagery in this scene is part of a series of floral images which, according to John Burt Foster Jr., serve "to accentuate the contrast between organic vitality and connection, on the one hand and isolation, degraded life and deathly petrefaction on the other)."<sup>73</sup> Ursula is repelled by all this talk, however, "stiffening herself against this, it was too picturesque and final." She reserves her opinions, though, until he brings up the subject of love, which he rejects as an absolute value. This irritates Ursula, who argues that his preoccupation with mankind reveals a love for it. When he reluctantly admits his love and calls it a "disease" of which he hopes to be "cured." She then asks him what he does believe in, if he doesn't believe in love.

He answers, "the unseen hosts." Ursula remarks that his hosts are "a poor show." His theoretical musings spoil their interlude when they gaze upon a group of daisies floating on the water. Ursula appreciates their loveliness. Birkin sees them as a "perfect democracy...the golden mob of the proletariat." Disgusted by this view, Ursula blurts out, "How hateful-your hateful social orders!"<sup>74</sup> His attitude toward love indicates his reluctance to submit herself to it. Instead, he clings to the theoretical posture of Hermione, keeping everything on a shallow, verbal level. The relationship with Hermione is comfortable because they can have a sexual existence together without committing themselves to anything deeper or shedding their conceptual selves.

In the next chapter, "Carpetting," Lawrence brings Hermione, Gudrun, Ursula, and Birkin together. Hermione, as usual, takes charge and tells Birkin how to furnish his apartment. In the midst of her orders, a discussion arises about an incident from the chapter titled "Coal-Dust," in which Ursula and Gudrun encountered Gerald sitting upon his r w horse at a railroad crossing waiting for an approaching train. The horse, frightened by the oncoming train, began to bolt. Gerald, though, digging into its flanks with his spurs until the animal's sides became bloody, controlled it. When his treatment is brought up, Gerald

launches a discussion on the will, which bolsters Lawrence's theory of the dual will. Gerald makes the point that a horse has the same will as a man, the difference being that the horse "has no mind strictly,"<sup>75</sup> and that it is necessary to overcome the horse's will by means of one's own mental will. Gerald reveals his preference for mind over animal instincts in this speech. He also exposes his basic mistrust of his sensuality, which he either represses or expresses in acts of brutality, such as his treatment of the horse.

Responding to Gerald's idea of the will, Hermione interpolates: "If only we could learn how to use our will...we could do anything. The (mental) will can cure anything, and put anything right...if only we use the will properly, intelligibly." Birkin thereupon asks what she considers the proper use of the will, she says that "a great doctor" told her that one could cure a bad habit by forcing oneself to do it, and that she had cured herself of "nerves" through her use of will. Here, Lawrence implies that the mental will uses unnatural, artificial means to curb the natural instincts. This split between what is natural and unnatural is emphasized by Lawrence's description of Hermione as "split between what she seemed to feel and experience and what she actually said and thought."<sup>76</sup> This power of which she

speaks, which Nietzsche calls the power of self-overcoming, is seen as actually inimical to the mind. In Hermione's case, as we have seen, she is continually troubled by a "sense of nausea, a sort of sea-sickness."<sup>77</sup>

As the conversation continues, Gerald, elaborating on his theory of the will, says that a horse has "two wills (Lawrence himself at one point describes Gerald as having a "dual consciousness").<sup>78</sup> A horse, strictly, has two. With one will, it wants to put itself in the human power completely-and with another, it wants to be free, wild. The two wills sometimes lock-you know that, if ever you've felt a horse bolt, while you've been driving it."<sup>79</sup> When Gerald speaks, of course, he has his own dual impulses in mind. He himself, feels restrained by his mind's power of self-overcoming.

Birkin curiously assents to Gerald's monologue when Ursula asks why a horse would want to surrender itself to human power, saying that this surrender represents the "last, perhaps highest love-impulse: resign your will to higher being."<sup>80</sup> This statement is interesting because it shows Birkin's tie to Hermione. Even though he would like a new type of relationship, he still is tied to the concept of mental power and instinctual repression.

When he elaborates on his statement, moreover, it shows the influence of Nietzsche's misogyny and the relationship that has to the idea of the will-to-power: "Woman is the same as horses: two wills act in opposition inside her. With one will, she wants to subject herself utterly. With the other she wants to bolt, and pitch her rider to perdition. It's a dangerous thing to domesticate even horses, let alone women."<sup>81</sup>

Ursula suspects that he wants to use her as Gerald uses his horse, subordinating her for his own purposes, even though they are attracted to each other. In "Mino," he proposes his idea for a relationship with her, a relation which wouldn't lend itself to the strictures of love, one where they would meet in darkness, outside of their everyday selves. He says, "I want to find you, where you don't know your own existence, the you that your common self denies utterly. But I don't want your good looks, and I don't want your womanly feelings, and I don't want your thoughts or opinions nor your ideas-they are all bagatelles to me."<sup>82</sup> Ursula interprets this as a desire to have everything his way, without leaving her anything. In fact, she thinks he only wants power over her.

Her impression is reinforced by a symbolic vignette in which



Ursula and Birkin see a cat trotting "lordly" along a path. A female cat crouches submissively before the tom, only to be greeted with repeated blows to her face. Ursula asks Birkin why the male cat behaves this way. Birkin replies, "They are on intimate terms." She then goes over to the tom and tells it to stop hitting the mino, calling the tom a bully. Birkin disagrees with her, though. It is not bullying, he says. "He is justified," Birkin argues. "He is only insisting to the poor stray that she shall acknowledge him as a sort of fate, her own fate...he wants superfine stability." Ursula, though, angrily replies that: "It is just like General Crichton with his horse-a lust for real bullying-a real "Wille zur Macht-so base, so petty." While Birkin agrees that the "Wille zur Macht" (Will to Power) is "a base and petty thing," in this case, the tom is trying "to bring the female cat into a pure and stable equilibrium, a transcendent and abiding rapport with the single male...It is a *volonte de pouvoir*, if you like, a will to ability."<sup>83</sup>

Birkin's behavior in this scene contradicts his views on human relationships. In the chapter "Moony," Birkin reflects on culture and human relationships. According to Birkin, there are two types of culture, relative to the will adopted by each respective culture. Moreover, every culture must die, relative to

the type of culture involved. In one way, a civilization "breaks away from its organic hold on life and hope, we lapse from pure integral being, from creation and liberty, and we fall into the long, long African process of purely sensual understanding." This way pertains to the process of dissolution of the "dark races."<sup>84</sup>

Another way is the path followed by the "white races, having the Arctic north behind them, the vast abstraction of ice and snow...a mystery of ice-destructive knowledge, snow-abstract annihilation." Regressing from the story momentarily, Lawrence asks, "Is our day of creative life finished?" In other words, are we condemned to decay into purely mental beings, who are only able to function analytically and experience physical sensation through the mind, or purely physical beings cut off from intellectual existence?<sup>85</sup>

If these are the cultural alternatives, what is the way between the horns of this dilemma? Or, in other words, what Nirvana can free us from this circle of Yin and Yang? According to Birkin, it is the "way of freedom...the paradisaal entry into pure, single being, the individual soul taking precedence over love and the desire for union, stronger than any pangs of emotion, a lovely state of free proud singleness, which accepted

the obligation of the permanent connection with others, and with the other, submits to the yoke and the leash of love, but never forfeits its own proud individual singleness, even while it loves and yields."<sup>86</sup>If he is committed to the individual maintaining his or her integrity within the relationship, however, how can this be reconciled with the statements about female submission?

Kingsley Widmer, in his essay "D. H. Lawrence and the Nietzschean Matrix." contends that this passage in "Mino" proves that Lawrence's will-to-power is identical with the Nietzschean will-to-power he supposedly repudiates. Widmer says, "When Birkin demands that Ursula give up her 'assertive will' and surrender to him, she rightly sees this as a demand of bullying and domineering male will, though she gives in out of need and love. Lawrence has hardly succeeded in transforming the Will to Power into a clearly different 'superiority,' 'vitality,' 'fuller being,' or 'dark power,' however much he attacks will as cerebral, manipulative, destructive. He simply struggles with variations within the Nietzschean matrix." While Widmer rightly attacks Birkin's statements in this chapter, he is wrong, however, in characterizing this as Birkin's (and Lawrence's) attitude throughout the novel. The fact is that Birkin, because he is still attracted to the older, intellectual world of Hermione, does

not completely believe in his ideology when he speaks these words. As we will see, he does change his attitude and shows this in his yielding to Ursula, a yielding which marks a complete break with his past existence. Widmer completely ignores this process of character development and seems to assume that a novelist means everything his characters say. Lawrence, though, uses Birkin's dialogue ironically, and exposes this irony through Birkin's subsequent behavior.<sup>87</sup>

Furthermore, John Burt Foster Jr. notes that Birkin "restates" rather than interprets Nietzsche in "Mino." He notes the careful shading Lawrence uses in reconstructing the "Wille zur Macht" as the "volonte de pouvoir." In this way, Foster says, Birkin appeals "to a conception of power that emphasizes how connection awakens previously latent areas of the self, resulting in a new fullness of being." Foster argues that Birkin, in referring to the mino as "a fluffy sporadic bit of chaos" who must be brought by the tom into "a transcendent and abiding rapport," means that her surrender to the tom results in fuller being for her. By the same token, the tom's existence would be just as chaotic without her surrender. Lawrence is arguing for "ability" over raw power. Thus, Foster says, this relationship between the two affirms "individuality" resulting from the "connection."<sup>88</sup>

Ursula considers Birkin's proposal and discusses the matter with Gudrun. Seen through the prism of Gudrun's hard, analytical mind, Birkin's proposal seems suspect. "He would want to control you entirely. He cannot allow that there is any other mind than his own....He couldn't bear it if you called your soul your own."<sup>89</sup>While this appears true on the surface to Ursula, she sees the limitations of Gudrun's way of thinking: "She (Gudrun) finished life off so thoroughly, she made things so ugly and so final...This finality of Gudrun's, this dispatching of people and things in a sentence, it was all such a lie...How stupid anthropomorphism is! Gudrun is really impudent, insolent, making herself the measure of everything."<sup>90</sup>What Ursula sees is that the human mind, no matter how well it can grasp completed facts, is not the measure of truth, nor the measure of man's being. Other forces exist which not only deserve, but require expression.

The urgency of expressing these forces is brought out in the chapters "Water Party" and "Sunday Evening," when the alternatives to expressing one's full being, mechanical existence and death, is explored. During a "water-party," Gerald's sister drowns along with her boyfriend. The theme of death appears throughout the novel. The importance of death stems from the urgency of deciding how one should live one's life, knowing that its end impends.

Living is an obsession with Birkin, who contends that death is better than a pointless existence. He sees death in another significant sense, however. In this other sense, death is creative, the path to new existence, producing "fleurs de mal,"<sup>91</sup> Indeed, Lawrence portrays Diana's death as a violent fulfillment when her body is discovered in the act of strangling her boyfriend as both were drowning. Their death is life lived at its most extreme and intense. For Lawrence, the equivalent of death is sex, for, in sex, one loses consciousness which is the source of stagnation in life. In sex, the forces of the dark, subconscious will express themselves, renewing its participants. In the context of this death scene, the river in which they drown represents the sensual existence of man, containing much that is muddy and foul, but also the source of much that is vital to the continuation of the human race.

Ursula ponders the idea of death and compares it to the mechanized existence of those to whom the spiritual will dictates: "she knew, with the clarity of ultimate knowledge, that the body is one of the manifestations of the spirit, the transmutation of the integral spirit is the transmutation of the physical body as well. Unless I set my will, unless I absolve myself from the rhythm of life, fix myself and remain static, cut off from living, absolved within my own will. But better die than live

mechanically a life that is a repetition of repetitions. To die is to move on with the invisible. To die is also a joy, a joy of submitting to that which is greater than the known, namely the pure unknown. That is joy. But to live mechanised and cut off within the motion of the will, to live as an entity absolved from the unknown, that is shameful and ignominious. There is ignominy in an unreplenished, mechanised life."<sup>92</sup>

According to critic James C. Cowan, this idea of "Creative Death" (this phrase is the title of a "fragment" written by Henry Miller about D. H. Lawrence) has "long been recognized as a central Laurentian concept. One critic, Colin Clarke, in *River of Dissolution: D. H. Lawrence and English Romanticism*, has explored extensively the implications of Lawrence's related concepts of destruction, dissolution, decomposition, corruption, and reduction." Cowan agrees with Clarke when the latter distinguishes between "corruption that is creative and corruption that is not."<sup>93</sup> He then finds this distinction made explicit by Lawrence in his essay "The Crown": "And corruption, like growth, is only divine when it is pure, when all is given up to it. If it be experienced as a controlled activity within an intact whole, this is vile...When corruption goes on within the living womb, this is unthinkable." Cowan translates this distinction into

ordinary terms by saying that one form of corruption leads to "life, the other to death." Sex is a pure form of corruption leading to life. For, as Cowan points out, quoting from "The Crown." "In sex, we have plunged the quick of creation deep into the cold flux of reduction, corruption, till the quick is extinguished."<sup>94</sup>

Daniel Schnieder points out the Nietzsche shared this regenerative view of death, saying that, "For Nietzsche the idea of dying and rebirth is an essential part of the metaphor of 'going under' which Zarathustra announces at the onset (of Thus Spoke Zarathustra). The sun must set: man must die. The sun must rise: man must be reborn as the overman. Because 'the worst enemy you can encounter will always be you, yourself,' the overman must learn how to die: 'You must wish to consume yourself in your own flame: how could you wish to become new unless you had first become ashes!'....The creator must submit to 'suffering' and 'much change': 'Indeed, there must be much bitter dying in your life, you creators'....And when the time comes to die, the overman must not cling rotting to the branches of life, he must learn to die 'the death that consummates.'"<sup>95</sup>

In this context, the Birkin-Ursula relationship contains



"Creative Death," a corruption which leads "to life." When Birkin and Ursula eventually give themselves to each other, from their deepest, darkest selves, it results in a renewal for both of them. Their encounter frees Birkin from his ties with Hermione and her intellectual world. Instead, "there was a darkness over his mind. The terrible knot of consciousness that had persisted there like an obsession was broken, gone, his life was dissolved in darkness over instincts. Her submission appeals to his power instinct (in this fashion she is much like the horse in "Coal-Dust," which must be broken to his will) and her "mockery" appeals to his desire for self-annihilation. The lack of freedom caused by his emphasis on "conscious will-power" offers the sensual instincts only these two violent alternatives for expression.

Birkin repudiates these forms of expression, referring to it as the "Dionysic-ecstatic way."<sup>99</sup> Birkin here refers to a Nietzschean dichotomy between reason and instinct, the former represented by the god Apollo, the latter by the God Dionysus. James C. Cowan, in his article "D. H. Lawrence's Dualism: The Apollonian-Dionysian Polarity and The Ladybird," explains that "The Apollonian principle of individuation in consciousness involves the rational faculty of logical reason." The Apollonian spirit separates oneself from the outer world through "the

objectifying intellect." In contrast, "Under the magic of the Dionysian force, not only does the bond between man and man again close together, but alienated, hostile, or suppressed Nature celebrates her festival of reconciliation with her lost son, man."<sup>100</sup>

Nietzsche wished to incorporate more of the Dionysian spirit into life, emphasizing the return to values derived from nature (meaning our animal nature) and the restoration of the Dionysian spirit of joy into life (in particular through the Dionysian arts of song and dance). Nietzsche himself, as he approached madness, signed his letters 'Dionysus'<sup>101</sup> (it is important to note that Gerald is compared to Dionysus in a bathing scene at Hermione's party).<sup>102</sup>

Despite Nietzsche's admiration of Dionysian values, Cowan notes that "Nietzsche did not...thereby endorse the Dionysian per se, but only the synthesis of this passion with the Apollonian 'principle of individuation.' The Dionysian alone, far from being glorified, is pictured throughout as a 'fever' that, left unchecked, led to 'sexual licentiousness.' As Nietzsche puts it, 'precisely the most savage beasts of nature were unfettered here, to the point of that disgusting mixture of voluptuousness and

cruelty which always seemed to me the proper 'witches' brew.' Only the Apollonian principle of the Greeks could 'control this destructive disease...harness the Dionysian flood, and...use it creatively."<sup>103</sup>In this passage, Cowan implies that, although Nietzsche sees the importance of including the Dionysian impulse within the mainstream of life, it should, nevertheless, be subordinate to the rational faculty.

Birkin also sees this Dionysian passion as destructive and tries to keep the experience of ecstasy out of his relationship with Ursula, comparing it to "going round in a squirrel cage."<sup>104</sup>When he and Ursula make love, passion is conspicuously absent. In its place there is an atmosphere of peace and stasis and an absence of any "thoughts or any desires or any will." They are "content in bliss" and exist in "gentle communion, no other, no passion now."<sup>105</sup>One might say that a certain balance between Dionysian and Apollonian forces is achieved between Ursula, representing the Dionysian impulse of passion, and Birkin, representing reason. It is, in Cowan's words (which he applies to another relationship in Lawrence's short story, "The Ladybird"), "an elision of power and love, not Christian, submissive love but 'profane' love that is elemental and subversive."<sup>106</sup>

**GUDRUN AND GERALD:  
FROST DESTRUCTION**

In contrast to Ursula and Birkin, passion becomes the dominant element of the relationship between Gerald and Gudrun. Passion in this context is invariably associated with violence. The appeal of violence relates to Lawrence's theory of the dissolution of European civilization, whose exclusive emphasis on the intellect is inherently self-destructive.

The relationship between passion and violence in their liaison appears in the episode with the horse in "Coal-Dust." In this scene, when Gudrun first sees Gerald, his physical appearance appeals to her aesthetic sense: "He was well set and easy, his face with its warm tan showed up his white coarse moustache, and his blue eyes were full of sharp light as he watched the distance." Yet, the subsequent events appeal to the scarcely acknowledged instincts of her blood, as the locomotive approaches and Gerald pulls back the horse which begins to "wince away." As the battle continues between horse and man, Gudrun looks upon the scene "with black-dilated, spellbound eyes. But he sat glistening and obstinate, forcing the wheeling mare, which spun and swerved like a wind, and yet could not get out of the grasp of his will, nor escape from the mad clamour of terror that resounded through her, as the trucks thumped slowly, heavily, horrifying, one after

the other, one pursuing the other, over the rails of the crossing." The sight of the bolting horse subjected to the man's will makes Gudrun "faint with poignant dizziness, which seemed to penetrate to her heart....Gudrun looked and saw the trickles of blood on the sides of the mare, and she turned white. And then on the very wound the bright spurs came down, pressing relentlessly. The world reeled and passed into nothingness for Gudrun, she could not know any more."

The attraction here for Gudrun lies in the fact of the test of wills in which one violently dominates the other. It also stems from the cold indifference of the man to the pain and suffering of the other. In addition, the act of violence releases her inhibited impulses both toward violence and suffering. In this way, she identifies with both the man and the horse. Thus, when both impulses are acted out, she achieves a release from the repressive will momentarily. Once he is finished, however, she once more retreats into her will, "calm and cold, without feeling." She has achieved her passion, but it has been fulfilled by external means. At the same time, she hates Ursula for telling Gerald to stop, hating her "utterly for being outside herself."<sup>107</sup>

Unlike Ursula and Birkin, Gerald and Gudrun, they do not

discover each other among the peace of nature, but at the scene of nature's violation and subjection. Moreover, they do not reveal anything to each other about feelings or thoughts. Instead, they encase themselves in their respective wills.

Lawrence later brings Gerald and Gudrun together in the chapter "Water-Party" in a scene which relates symmetrically to the scene in "Coal-Dust" in which Gudrun, having retreated from the party in which Gerald's sister drowns, begins to dance to Ursula's singing, but is interrupted when Gerald's cattle intrude. Gerald and Birkin arrive almost simultaneously, as she drives the cattle away. Gerald warns her that the cattle are not "safe" and that she might "drive them mad." When she doesn't heed him, he adds that they are his cattle. She replies, "how are they yours! You haven't swallowed them. Give me one of them now." She then asks him, "You think I'm afraid of you and your cattle, don't you?" He asks her, "Why should I think that?," whereupon she slaps him.

Gudrun responds to her own action by feeling "an unconquerable desire for deep violence against him. She shut off the fear and dismay that filled her conscious mind. She wanted to do as she did, she was not going to be afraid." Gerald,

however, becomes "deadly pale" and "a dangerous flame" darkens his eyes. He is rendered speechless by the blow, but feels "his heart stretched almost to bursting with a great gush of ungovernable emotion. It was as if some reservoir of black emotion had burst within him, and swamped him." He says to her, "You have struck the first blow," and she responds, "And I shall strike the last."<sup>108</sup>

In this episode, Lawrence once more connects Gerald and Gudrun in a scene where nature becomes subjected to man's conscious will. Here, however, the cattle symbolizes Gerald's physical being, which she misuses. His statement and her reply also foreshadow the sadomasochistic pattern of their relationship. Their relationship becomes a battle for control which is mutually destructive. In this scene, Gudrun controls Gerald. Having physically attacked him, she has touched him at a source over which he has no real control, knocking him momentarily unconscious. As they walk together immediately afterward, his mind is "gone" and he tries to grasp "sufficient mechanical control, to save himself." Only when his conscious will is in control, can he maintain himself. When this is cut off, he becomes helpless.<sup>109</sup>



Lawrence inverts many of the narrative patterns and images associated with Birkin and Ursula in depicting the relationship between Gerald and Gudrun. As with Birkin and Ursula, Gerald and Gudrun are brought together by death. With Birkin and Ursula, it was the death of Gerald's sister Diana. Here, the death of Gerald's father becomes the occasion of the consummation of their passion. Unlike Birkin and Ursula, the two do not submit to the forces of creative death, but use their relationship to resist death. Sex for them is a form of will power. It is a branch to which they cling to avoid being carried down the stream of life.

Their lovemaking lacks the atmosphere of peace surrounding Ursula and Birkin. Instead, it depends exclusively on passion. Also, instead of liberating both parties, only one is freed in this act, Gerald, who attains his freedom through Gudrun's subjection. Gerald depends on her to fill his physical void and, in the moment of orgasm, passes into her so that she can become a womb for him. The images of birth associated with Birkin and Ursula's lovemaking are inverted here, for in this situation neither is reborn nor is a world created. Instead, both parties are nullified in a choking atmosphere of death and decay.

All of this is conveyed in the language of death. Gerald's

presence in Gudrun's bedroom is portrayed as a defilement and an intrusion. He enters the room with muddy feet, literally tracking the chamber with his own decay. He states, "I came because I must....Otherwise, my brain would burst." In other words, she must be a sacrifice to his will that he might continue his rational (mechanical) existence. The ensuing action is a picture of annihilation, as he crushes the life out of her and she seems "to melt, to flow into him, as if she were some infinitely warm and precious suffusion filling into his veins, like an intoxicant....So she lay cast upon him, stranded, lifted up against him, melting and melting under his kisses, melting into his limbs and bones....Till she seemed to swoon, gradually her mind went, and she passed away...and she lay still, become contained by him."

Once they have finished, Gerald, like Birkin, feels reborn. His birth, though, has come at Gudrun's expense, indeed through her death. He has found "relief" after having poured "all his pent-up darkness and corrosive death" into her. "And she, the subject, received him as a vessel filled with his bitter potion of death. She had no power at this crisis to resist. The terrible frictional violence of death filled her, and she received it in an ecstasy of subjection, in throes of acute, violent sensation."<sup>110</sup>

As the novel progresses, both Gerald and Gudrun become distanced from each other and the world in which they exist, encased within the hard, cold shells of their wills. For each of them, ideas concerning the subjugation of nature to the human will assume greater importance. Gerald becomes consumed with the idea of the mechanization of man through his capacity as the head of the family coal-mine, which functions as a metaphor for man's lower nature. As the "Industrial Magnate," Gerald sees the mines as the opportunity to assert his will against the miners so that the mines work as the perfect machine with Gerald serving as the God of the machine. He is filled with visions of coal cars "bearing his initial" and sees "his power ramified" through "the great colliery villages which depended entirely on his mines." In the midst of his vision are the miners themselves, "slightly distorted human beings with red mouths, all moving subjugate to his will....Suddenly, he had conceived the pure instrumentality of mankind. There had been so much humanitarianism....The sufferings and feelings of individuals did not matter in the least...What mattered was the pure instrumentality of the individual." At the head of this vast mechanism rules Gerald, establishing "the very expression of his will, the incarnation of his power" on his conquest of men and matter through the power of his mental will.<sup>111</sup>

Gudrun, meanwhile, immerses herself in aesthetic theory. Abstract art in particular fascinates her. In the final section of the novel, she meets an artist named Loerke at a mountain resort where she, Gerald, Ursula, and Birkin are staying. Loerke appeals to Gudrun in a way which Gerald cannot. He is not physically attractive. She compares him to a "rabbit or a bat, or a brown seal."<sup>112</sup> However, she is attracted by his ideas. In Loerke, though, Gudrun finds a repository of compatible ideas, a man who has "a tremendous power of understanding, of apprehending her living motion" and yet in "the last issue cared about nothing...troubled about nothing...a pure, unconnected will."<sup>113</sup> They revel in each other's nihilism and commune in pure knowledge of the past, often carrying on their clever conversations in several languages at once.

With Loerke, Gudrun achieves the effect of a sexual relationship in the mind through their mutual fascination with primitive art, which contains "the inner mysteries of sensation."<sup>114</sup> Here, they evoke Birkin's rebuke toward Hermione for wanting sex "in the head." They also evoke Gerald's attempt to subordinate everything to machinery when they discuss Loerke's theory of art serving industry. The main topic of conversation, though, is the inhuman ideal in art.

Loerke explains his theory when he, Ursula, and Gudrun examine one of his works, portraying a naked young girl sitting on a horse and hiding her face in her hands. The horse is the very image of power: "It was a massive, magnificent stallion, rigid with pent-up power. Its neck was arched and terrible, like a sickle, its flanks were pressed back, rigid with power." Ursula is disgusted by this raw, anti-natural depiction of power and declares that the horse is "stock and stupid and brutal," unlike real horses, which are "quite delicate and sensitive, really (Loerke's mental subjugation of the horse to artistic form is comparable to Gerald's physical subjection in "Coal-Dust")." Her criticism bemuses Loerke, who states that the "horse is a certain form, part of a whole form. It is part of a work of art...it has no relation to anything outside that work of art...you must not confuse the relative world of action with the absolute world of art."<sup>115</sup> Loerke's nihilism here is similar to the Birkin of the earlier chapters of the book. Only here he has accomplished in art what Birkin frivolously wished for earlier, the annihilation of the human world.

Gerald exists for Gudrun as just such an object as Loerke described, "sheerly beautiful, he was a perfect instrument...His instrumentality appealed so strongly to her, she wished she were

God, to use him as a tool (this echoes Gerald's thoughts about the "instrumentality of mankind" in "The Industrial Magnate")."<sup>116</sup> Her reaction to him as human being, however, is drastically different. Her final opinion of him as a man is tinged with irony. She admires his will and his ability to bring order out of chaos and put his ideas in motion. However, she does not believe in these ideals regarding the great social machinery in man. She is unable to commit herself as a wife or lover to him, so enclosed is she in the world of her own ideas, so divorced is she from humanity and nature in general. After Birkin and Ursula leave, disenchanted with the "northern" atmosphere, their relationship becomes more strained. Gudrun drifts into verbal mockery and Gerald into physical violence. As they grow increasingly isolated from each other, their passion becomes increasingly violent in a sado-masochistic way. For example, in the chapter "Snowed Up," Gudrun makes fun of Gerald, calling him a fool and suggesting the he love her "a little more" and want her "a little less." The scene ends with her tenderly consoling Gerald, an action rewarded with a violent sexual assault from him.<sup>117</sup>

Lawrence shows the ultimately suicidal nature of the "spiritual will" toward the end of "Snowed Up." In this chapter, which climaxes the relationship between Gerald and Gudrun, Gudrun

decides to call off their liaison. Later, Gerald catches her and Loerke picknicking in the snow, whereupon he finally unleashes all of his repressed violence by striking Loerke twice and strangling Gudrun. Just stopping short of killing her. But, true to her word, Gudrun strikes the last blow, as Gerald undergoes the process of snow-degeneration which Birkin predicted for the "white races" of Europe. Here, Lawrence turns Nietzsche's images of snow and mountains, associated with his overman Zarathustra, against him. Gerald climbs increasingly higher up a snowy mountain until he "slithers" down one slope and finds himself between two ridges. He continues to wander, however, until finally "something breaks "in his soul" and freezes to death, becoming a frozen block of European nihilism.<sup>118</sup> Metaphorically, Gudrun also becomes frozen. Upon hearing the news of Gerald's death, she has no reaction, save a look of irony. She is indeed a "cold woman."<sup>119</sup>

## **CONCLUSION**



Both D. H. Lawrence and Friedrich Nietzsche saw the 20th century as the field for a crisis in western civilization and sought to determine new values to avert this crisis. Both found the answer to the problem, which they saw as philosophical nihilism, in the will-to-power. Lawrence, though, read into Nietzsche's emphasis on "truth" and "knowledge" an intellectual fundamentalism which clashed with Lawrence's views regarding western culture. Lawrence believed that western society had become too entrenched within the world of ideas, to the extent that it ignored a vital source of life within one's physical nature. To Lawrence, one's instincts (or physical mind, if you will) contained a dynamic knowledge and truth which the intellect could never attain. Knowledge of the mind could only grasp what already occurred, whereas the physical mind in the act of physical passion could attain a height of being which the repressive will of the mind expressly forbid. Ultimately, Lawrence saw the Nietzschean will, with its central doctrine of self-overcoming, as destructive and suicidal in the sense that out sensual impulses, when repressed, will express themselves more urgently and violently. In other words, the more we attempt to control ourselves, the less control we have.

On the surface, one may see Nietzsche and Lawrence

as identical thinkers. This, though, is a mistake. They share similarly misogynistic views, for example. Indeed, toward the wne of Women in Love, Ursula becomes Birkin's acolyte, telling Gudrun that she does not believe in love, but in something "inhuman."<sup>120</sup>For Lawrence, as for Nietzsche, it was important that women will with the same will as the men with whom they share their lives. Nietzsche and Lawrence, too, shared the view that Christian virtues were corrupt. Nietzsche resembles Lawrence as well in several passages in other ways. For instance, Zarathustra in the first book of Thus Spoke Zarathustra, commands the people of the market place to respect the the Earth. He also criticizes the trend of rationalism which has prevailed since the time of Socrates, claiming that the rise of dialectics corresponded to the decay of Greek society. Man's mind, according to Nietzsche, is superior to the animals because he is not as strong as they are and needs reason more than they. Both authors also share imagery. For instance, bird imagery saturates the works of both men.

And yet the thrust of both authors is different. They work from different sensibilities. Nietzsche owes more to the Greek philosophers and the Greek ideal of moderation. His will-to-power is ultimately a tool of discipline, to refine the mind that it might find its goal. Lawrence owes his sensibility to his

upbringing among the coal-mines, those underground sources from which his miner father brought those vital "underground" instincts of life which Lawrence valued. Nietzsche fundamentally, as his doctrine of self-overcoming shows, favors repressing the instincts, whereas Lawrence believed that it was important for these instincts to work themselves out. As Women in Love shows, both men, in juxtaposition, reveal a powerful dialectic, working itself out in the two important relationships of Lawrence's novel, the Nietzschean relationship between Gerald and Gudrun and the Lawrencian relationship between Ursula and Birkin.

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