

Chapter 3

Lawrence and Selfhood in Human Relationships

Lawrence writes in one of his essays in Phoenix, "Hate is not the opposite of love. The real opposite of love is individuality" ("...Love Was Once a Little Boy"). In the writer's opinion, the relationships of men and women end in terrible conflict between two distinct personalities or sexes. The problem of identity interfering in the love of men and women is clearly seen as Lawrence's major concern in one of his early short stories, "Odour of Chrysanthemums" and one of his best novels, Women in Love.

Throughout his books of essays--Psychoanalysis and the Unconscious, Fantasia of the Unconscious, and Phoenix, one of Lawrence's main interests is the evil effects of modern man being locked up in his self-consciousness or his ego. For the writer, this particular sense, side by side with human need for isolation causes the struggle in the relationship between the sexes and even in that of human beings in general. Therefore, companionship is impossible:

We have abstracted the universe into the Matter and Forces, we have abstracted men and women into separate personalities --personalities being isolated units, incapable of togetherness...

Individualism has triumphed...this is the peculiarity of our society today...the feeling of oneness and community with our fellow-men declines, and the feeling of indivi-

dualism and personality, which is existence in isolation increases...every man is really aware of himself in apartness ... ("A Propos of Lady Chatterey's Lover", Phoenix)

Lawrence's sense of the inward awareness of human self in 'apartness' especially that which leads straight to the conflict in the relationships of men and women, is raised as the main question in "Odour of Chrysanthemums" and is intensified and then solved in Women in Love.

Lawrence came to realize, in the remarkable intellectual leap that carried him from Sons and Lovers to The Sisters (the first version of The Rainbow and Women in Love)...that the modern sexual problem is an identity problem. A properly reciprocal sexual relation is impossible so long as each partner is locked up in self-consciousness, in the modern separate ego...¹

F. R. Leavis, one of Lawrence's most eminent critics, sees the same crucial point as Langbaum does above, particularly in his criticism on Women in Love. "In fact, as his (Lawrence's) affirmation of 'otherness' implies (together with his hatred of 'merging'), he lays peculiar stress on individuality."² Dr. Leavis is attacking John Middleton Murray's charge in his Reminiscences of D. H. Lawrence that in Women in Love, "we can discern no individuality whatever in the denizens of Mr. Lawrence's world". What is essentially emphasized in most of Lawrence's writing is the 'true individuality'. According to Lawrence, the 'true' self is

¹Robert Langbaum, The Mysteries of Identity, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), p. 251.

²F. R. Leavis, D. H. Lawrence: Novelist (A Pelican Book, 1973), p. 230.

not aware of itself: "Paradoxically as it may sound, the individual is only truly himself when he is unconscious of his own individuality, when he is unaware of his own isolation" ("Individual V. Social Consciousness"). The 'true' individual must be free from both the "lie of my all-importance...I am, self-enclosed", and "the vast lie of the social world" ("Pornography and Obscenity"). Moreover, the right kind of selfhood can be obtained only through human relationships. "For it is only when we can get a man to fall back into his true relation to other men and to women, that we can give him an opportunity to be himself" ("Review of The Social Basis of Consciousness by Trigant Burrow"). In Lawrence's eyes, we must live fully and be one with "the outer universe, human and non-human". The true identity is the real and unconscious self, excluding completely its social influences.

"Odour of Chrysanthemums" is regarded as one of Lawrence's best short stories. It was accepted by Ford Madox Ford for the English Review in December, 1909. After just reading its opening paragraph, Ford exclaimed to his secretary that he had found a genius. In "Odour of Chrysanthemums", the writer portrays domestic scenes of the miners' life. In spite of her calm appearance, Elizabeth Bates impatiently waits for her husband, a miner, to come back home from work one evening. Their relationship is not a smooth one and the children know that. Finally he is carried home, not drunk as he usually is, but dead as a result of an accident while working. The story ends with Elizabeth and her mother-in-law cleaning his body. It is here that Elizabeth's bitter mind is described:

She saw him (her husband) how utterly inviolable he lay in himself....the wife felt the utter isolation of the human soul....she knew what a stranger he was to her...Was this what it all meant--utter, intact separateness, obscured by the heat of living....There had been nothing between them... Each time he had taken her, they had been two isolated beings, far apart as now...³

The essential idea lying behind these words is the sense of alienation of both Elizabeth and the husband. Their marriage has been a failure throughout the long years they have lived together. Love which is, to Lawrence, one of our passions, is changeable, not everlasting. He says in the essays "Nobody Loves Me" and "On Being a Man" that no one is forever loveable and after marriage men and women become enemies. Each has changed from what the other has known. The writer, however, gives clues in "We Need One Another" and "The Real Thing" that neither conflict nor happiness is with us forever. One must accept change. "Sex is a changing thing, now alive, now fiery, now apparently quite gone...But the ordinary man and woman haven't the gumption to take it in all its changes." For Lawrence, our 'understanding' is the most precious. New life is to come after autumn and winter. "For us to understand is to overcome. We have a winter of death, of destruction, vivid sensationalism of going asunder, the wintry glory of tragical experience to surmount and surpass...we come forth in first flowers of our spring with pale and ivy blossoms, like bulb flowers"

³D. H. Lawrence, "Odour of Chrysanthemums", The Prussian Officer and Other Stories (Penguin Books, 1945), pp. 221-23. Further references will be to this edition.



("The Reality of Peace").

The time of Elizabeth's real happiness has swiftly gone, leaving only her discontentment. The actual and imaginary chrysanthemums of the story, together with their deathly smell, come to foreshadow the real death and then to symbolize our incapacity to connect, as well as preoccupation with protecting our unique selves. "And man and woman alike, each saves his individual ego, her individual ego, intact, as far as possible, in the scrimmage of love" ("...Love Was Once a Little Boy"). The chrysanthemums are, perhaps, a symbol of the death or destruction of the relationships between men and women. "We can't deliberately do much with a human connexion, except smash it.... All I can see in our vaunted civilization is men and women smashing each other emotionally and psychically to bits..." ("We Need One Another") Thus chrysanthemums do not smell good to Elizabeth any more as they did in the past. "It was chrysanthemums when I married him...when you(her daughter)were born, and the first time they ever brought him home drunk" (p. 210). The relationship with her husband has broken down. As husband and wife, there must be no surrendering in quarrels. For yielding means, perhaps, forever admitting the other's control, together with losing one's own identity.

Lawrence was unwilling to have any one submit entirely to another, such a condition would destroy the precious germ of organic individuality which gives life to so many of Lawrence's fictional heroes.⁴

For Lawrence himself writes in Phoenix,

⁴Frederick J. Hoffman, "Lawrence's Quarrel with Freud", Quarterly Review of Literature, QRL: XX 3-4. 26, 1977, p. 34

When the male and female spirits touch in closest embrace, vivifying each other, not one destroying the other...Each one is himself, and each one is essentially, starrily responsible for himself. Any assumption by one person of responsibility for another person is an interference, and a destructive tyranny. No person is responsible for the being of any other person.

Each, for Lawrence, is very afraid of the other's power, of his own identity being lost and there being no freedom of the self left: "Every man is a menace to every other man". To the writer, women tend to exercise their control or will on their men. He feels their relationship is destructive and their fighting must go on and on:

an extension of self, and a love of having absolute power over another creature. Oh, these women....It is the fight, the fight. It has degenerated into mere fight to impose the will over some other creature ("The Real Thing").

The 'interdestruction' of human relationships in Lawrence's view is a consequence of the modern emphasis on individualism. In his review of Dr. Burrow's The Social Basis of Consciousness, Lawrence insists that sexual repression is neither the root of evil nor the neurosis of modern life. The real trouble is "the inward sense of 'separateness' which dominates every man...What must be broken is the egocentric absolute of the individual". For Lawrence, "the ego in a man secretly hates every other ego" ("The Crown"). The egocentric human being separates himself either for fear of the other's power over him, or for his own desire to control the other. This is the writer's reason for human isolation. "The moment power triumphs, it becomes spurious with sheer egoism...The ego is the false ab-

solute" ("The Crown"). "When, of the two parties, one yields utterly to the other, this is called sacrifice; and it also means death" ("Morality and the Novel"). About the emancipation of women, Lawrence believes that their fight has been won. Thus there is

tyranny of woman, of the individual woman in the house, and of the feminine ideas and ideals in the world....the male is subservient to the female need, and outwardly, man is submissive to the demands of woman....For man has fallen ("The Real Thing").

The writer prefers the old status of man and woman--man must be the leader with his woman behind him. The truth behind their battle is that woman's characters are stronger.

Instead of being assertive and rather insentient, he(man) becomes wavering and sensitive. He begins to have as many feelings--nay, more than a woman...He worships pity and tenderness and weakness, even in himself. In short, he takes on very large the original role of woman. Woman meanwhile becomes the fearless, inwardly relentless, determined positive party. She grips the responsibility. The hand that rocks the cradle rules the world...She is now a queen of the earth, and inwardly a fearsome tyrant....Ultimately she tears him to bits.

Therefore we see the reversal of the old poles...Make her yield once more to the male leadership....You'll have to fight to make a woman believe in you as a real man, a real pioneer (Fantasia).

After the fight, each retreats into "the final state of egoism": each becomes cold and indifferent to the other. To Lawrence, both egoism and the exercising of power lead to a broken relationship. It is the same idea Birkin is fighting against in

Women in Love. True togetherness, to Birkin and Lawrence as well, can be achieved only through man's and woman's struggle out of their 'self-seeking':

Sex as a fatal goal....is the essential theme of modern tragedy...companionship between a man and a woman is always an illusion, and always breaks down in the end. They must fight their way out of their self-consciousness (Fantasia).

When the self becomes a "great I AM", it means nothing at all. For Birkin or Lawrence, the absolute state yearned for is the 'real unconscious' self of man and woman through their union. "In this and through this we become real individuals, without it, without the real contact, we remain more or less nonentities" ("We Need One Another"). The idea about the ideal self is illustrated in detail in the Ursula-Birkin relationship. But a union stemming from the power and the importance of the self, has a tragic ending in Lawrence's opinion. This destructive relationship is exemplified in the relationships of Elizabeth and her husband in "Odour of Chrysanthemums", and Gudrun and Gerald in Women in Love.

Women in Love, Lawrence believed, was his best novel. The chief concern of the story is the relationships of two pairs of lovers: Ursula Brangwen, a school teacher and Rupert Birkin, a school inspector; Gudrun Brangwen, an artist and Gerald Crich, a mine owner. The outer and inner life of each, as well as their conscious and unconscious interaction are portrayed. The central setting is shortlands, except towards the end of the book when all four go to a winter resort in the Austrian Tyrol where Gerald dies, Gudrun joins Loerke, a German sculptor leav-

ing for Dresden and Ursula and Birkin travel southward to Italy.

Lawrence's idea that the conflict in human relationships results from the problems of human sense of 'self-enclosure' and the exercising of power or will is shown in Women in Love through the 'interdestructive' bond of Gerald and Gudrun. Part of the struggle has already been illustrated in the description of Elizabeth's state of mind in "Odour of Chrysanthemums".

In Women in Love, the principal female characters such as Mrs. Crich, Hermione, Ursula, and Gudrun are denounced for being preoccupied with self-detachment and willpower. We see Gudrun, in particular, recover from dizziness after watching Gerald controlling the mare in "Coal-Dust": "she herself was cold and separate, she has no more feeling...She was quite hard". 'Cold' and 'separate' are, in general, key Lawrentian words for women's characters after clashing with their men. Women's wills are hardened. In this mare scene, Gudrun and the mare are described as being almost alike: "Gudrun was as if numbed in her mind by the sense of indomitable soft weight of the man bearing down into the living body of the horse..."⁵ Gudrun, too, is subject to Gerald's forceful power like other girls and her being 'cold' and 'separate' shows her ability to hold herself back as well. Another chapter that reveals the significance of Gudrun's character--her sense of separateness--is "Death and Love". She, perhaps, realizes for the first time here her future conflict with Gerald.

⁵D. H. Lawrence, Women in Love (Penguin Books, 1960), p. 126. Further references will be to this edition.

Having succeeded in mechanizing the mine, Gerald has nothing to do. "The whole system was now so perfect that Gerald was hardly necessary any more." He perceives the emptiness of his life from now on. "He would go on living, but the meaning would have collapsed out of him....a strange pressure was upon him, as if the very middle of him were a vacuum, and outside were an awful tension" (pp. 261-62). He is living now face to face with death in the family (his sister, Diana, has recently died and his father is dying) and with death or void in his own soul. He feels he is in an unbearable position:

He knew that all his life he had been wrenching at the frame of life to break it apart. And now, with something of the terror of a destructive child, he saw himself on the point of inheriting his own destruction. And during the last months, under the influence of death, and of Birkin's talk, and of Gudrun's penetrating being, he had lost entirely that mechanical certainty that had been his triumph (pp. 248-49).

Gerald's strong will, however, can be useful only with his work. He cares neither about money nor social position:

What he wanted was the pure fulfilment of his own will in the struggle with the natural conditions....he perceived that the only way to fulfil perfectly the will of man was to establish the perfect, inhuman machine (pp. 251-52).

His will cannot help him deal with his "inner pressure of death". His balance of life is lost. "For now he felt like a pair of scales, the half of which tips down and down into an indefinite void." He knows he has to find something to fill his hollowness inside. "Otherwise he would collapse inwards upon the great dark void which circled at the centre of his soul" (p. 363).

Then his stability and strength are regained after spending the first night with Gudrun.

He found in her an infinite relief. Into her he poured all his pent-up darkness and corrosive death, and he was whole again....He felt his limbs growing fuller and flexible with life, his body gained an unknown strength. He was a man again... (pp. 388-89)

Gerald cannot live by himself. He must cling to Gudrun because of his being unable to face the inner state of 'nothingness'. To exist at all, he needs her as

the determining influence of his very being, though she treated him with contempt, repeated rebuffs and denials, still he would never be gone, since in being near her, even, he felt the quickening, the going forth in him, the release ... (p. 502)

And Gudrun knows all this. She hates him, trying to go away from him:

Ha! He needed putting to sleep himself--poor Gerald....Perhaps this was the secret of his passion, his for ever unquenched desire for her--that he needed her to put him to sleep, to give him repose....She despised him (p. 524).

Another reason for his need for Gudrun is that he is not self-sufficient enough to be free of her. This is the first time in his life that "there is a flaw in his will": he cannot be 'self-complete' without passion like Gudrun.

It seemed to him that Gudrun was sufficient unto herself... however much he might mentally will to be immune and self-complete, the desire for this state was lacking, and he could not create it....It may have been her will was stronger (pp. 501-2).

Whereas Gerald has his mindless sleep on this occasion, Gudrun's consciousness is left in 'violent wakefulness'. Her female separateness is portrayed. "They(Gerald and Gudrun)would never be together. Ah, this awful, inhuman distance which would always be interposed between her and the other being" (p. 390). Besides her detachment from her man, Gudrun isolates herself from the world altogether. She is absolutely lonely and restless.

Oh, why wasn't somebody kind to her...who would take her in their arms, and hold her to their breast, and give her rest, pure, deep...safe and perfect for sleep. She wanted it so much this perfect enfolded sleep. She lay always so un-sheathed in sleep...unrelieved, unsaved. Oh, how could she bear it, this endless unrelief... (p. 524)

Gudrun's thinking throughout her 'exhausting superconsciousness' as Gerald sleeps mindlessly is notably similar to that of Elizabeth Bates of "Odour of Chrysanthemums". Elizabeth's summing up of the relationship with her husband after his death, is revealed at the end of the story.

The wife felt the utter isolation of the human soul....yet they had come together exchanging their nakedness repeatedly. Each time he had taken her, they had been two isolated beings, far apart as now....her mind cold and detached....this naked man, this other being....She felt that in the next world he would be a stranger to her....The horror of the distance between them was almost too much for her--it was so infinite a gap...

Despite the writer's condemnation of women as cold and detached during or after their fight with their men, throughout Women in Love, Lawrence repeatedly shows what seems to be two characters

unconsciously keeping their distance: each tries to get not too close to the other. One example can be seen in this conversation between Ursula and Birkin: "'Oh, are you?' she said, ignoring all his implication of admitted intimacy. He adjusted himself at once, became normally distant" (p. 147). This idea of distance may reflect Lawrence's thought about human beings in general--each is afraid of the other which makes human relationships impossible. For he writes in Phoenix:

I think, if we came to analyze to the last what men feel about one another today, we should find that every man feels every other man as a menace....We live in the age of individuality....the treasures of treasures to man and woman today is his own, or her own ego.

From "Death and Love" to the end of the book, what is chiefly dealt with is the violent conflict and the failure of the relationship between Gudrun and Gerald. Apart from Gudrun's coldness and detachment, she is, in a sense, like Gerald in that both never let themselves go, or 'fly away' from themselves. They are always 'self-contained'. Gudrun is contemptuous of Ursula's going away from herself. In the mare scene, on seeing the mare bleed, Ursula cries "at the top of her voice, completely outside herself. And Gudrun hated her bitterly for being outside herself". Gudrun dislikes anyone who does not keep their private selves to themselves: to her, "one must be cautious. One must preserve oneself" (p. 393). She, at the same time envies her sister's and Birkin's liveliness which she herself lacks. "'How good and simple they look together', Gudrun thought jealously. She envies them some spontaneity, a childish sufficiency to which she herself could never approach" (p. 453).

Unlike Gudrun, Birkin and Ursula can sometimes be self-abnegating. They enjoy life fully. Gudrun is displeased, too, with Birkin's revealing himself in his letters to Halliday, a bohemian. "'Dogs! They (Halliday and his group) are dogs! Why is Rupert such a fool as to write such letters to them? Why does he give himself away to such canaille?'" (p. 435). Likewise, Gerald, in Birkin's eyes, can never "fly away from himself in real indifferent gaiety". And Lawrence describes Gerald as the one who "always kept such a keen attentiveness, concentrated and unyielding in himself....He had been so insistent, so guarded, all his life" (p. 199). To the writer, Gerald never lets himself go and lives life fully to be at 'one' with the universe. Thus people like Gudrun and Gerald are locked up in self-consciousness. They never have a real relationship with anybody. "Strip us of our human contacts and of our contact with the living earth and the sun, and we are almost bladders of emptiness" ("We Need One Another").

Neither Gerald nor Gudrun believe in marriage, love, and human relationships as Birkin and Ursula do. Gudrun is always thoroughly cynical about everything, even about her own thinking. She hates life and separates herself from the meaningless outside world. Perhaps she gains no new experience at all from life. Life is a great boredom to her. "'Don't you find yourself getting bored?' She (Gudrun) asked her sister. 'Don't you find, that things fail to materialize? Nothing materializes! Everything withers in the bud.'" The world does not progress now, it is dead for her as she says to Ursula again: "'what will happen when you find yourself in space....After all, the great

ideas of the world are the same there'....there were no new worlds...The world was finished for her". All this points to the reason why she chooses Loerke instead of Gerald. When she is through with life and the world altogether, "there were no more men, there were only creatures, little, ultimate creatures like Loerke" (p. 508). Loerke lives through the roots or the underworld of life. He has had a miserable living and no formal education. Everything about him is in sharp contrast with Gerald. He is a 'free individual' and 'absolute' in himself, devoid of all social values which are detestable to Gudrun. She would be

among people who don't own things and who haven't got a home and a domestic servant in the background, who haven't got a standing and a status and a degree and a circle of friends of the same (p. 522).

Those words also reveals Gudrun's 'restless' nature. Thus love, marriage, and human relationships have no meaning to a character like Gudrun. Most important of all, Loerke has a great understanding of the depths of her soul whereas Gerald does not:

Gerald had penetrated all the outer places of Gudrun's soul....Of the last series of subtleties, Gerald was not capable. He could not penetrate, the fine, insinuating blade of Loerke's insect-like comprehension could (p. 509).

She knows that Loerke's soul is detached from everything while Gerald's has its limitation as in it there "still lingered some attachment to the rest, to the whole", to the world in general. Loerke says he would be Gudrun's 'companion in intelligence' and she tells him "it is the understanding that matter". He does not approach her violently, but "carried on by a sure instinct

in the complete darkness of his soul, he corresponded mystically with her, imperceptible, but palpably" (p. 509). Loerke is so certain of his inner attraction as well as his supreme power over Gudrun.

Life, for Gerald, as he admits to Birkin, "doesn't centre at all. It is artificially held together by the social mechanism". Like Gudrun, he does not believe in love, marriage, and human relationships. He never really loves anybody. Marriage is like "a doom to him and he would not make any pure relationship with any other soul" (p. 398). Gerald's faith is suspended in a chain of 'physical' life: "as far as the world went, he believed in the conventions. He took it as a matter of course" (p. 380). His strong will and power can only conquer the material world. "Gerald, with his force of will and his power for comprehending the actual world, should set to solve the problem of the day, the problem of industrialism in the modern world" (p. 469). In spite of admitting that he believes absolutely in nothing, Birkin sees one meaning in life--the 'mystical conjunction' of man and woman. He exclaims that life does not centre: "The old ideals are dead as nails---nothing there. It seems to me there remains only this perfect union with a woman..." (p. 64) Birkin leads his life in the way he believes and the connection between him and Ursula is a successful one.

The two men, Gerald and Birkin, show a kind of contrast.... between the man who has the right kind of human naturalnessand the man who lets 'willpower', 'personality', and 'ideals' in the strongly derogatory sense Lawrence gives to such words, interfere with his proper relation to other men and women and the universe, and who thus lacks the emo-

tional depth and the capacity for sincere relationship and tenderness which for Lawrence were the evidence of a connexion with some power above and beyond the individual.⁶

Gerald's life is, throughout, associated with the idea of death or destruction. Birkin himself feels there is in his friend a strange 'sense of fatality' and Gudrun feels the same through her relation to Gerald.

Although Gerald and Gudrun are, in part, alike, Gudrun seems to possess such a strong will and self-sufficiency that she can affirm to herself near the end of the book that she can be totally free from Gerald's power. Some time before this, the crucial point about the failure of their relationship is shown: each is afraid of the other's power. They, however, take turns to win and lose. It is a battle between two wills: one's existence means death to the other. As they get more used to each other, they begin to assert control over one another, without either submitting.

Sometimes it was he who seemed strongest, whilst she was almost gone...sometimes it was the reverse. But always it was this eternal see-saw, one destroyed that the other might exist, one ratified because the other is nulled (p. 500).

In the last two chapters of the novel, the conflict between them is at its height. Gudrun wins because of her hardened will, her inner independence, together with her having proved that she could be free from Gerald's power and live without him.

⁶W. W. Robson, "D. H. Lawrence and Women in Love", The Modern Age, p. 295.

And she wanted to be confident in herself...she would be unafraid, uncowed by him. He could never cow her, nor dominate her, nor have any right over her; this she would maintain until she had proved it. Once it was proved, she was free of him for ever (p. 520).

Such a relationship as this, leads only to 'interdestruction' and 'death' in Lawrence's view. Throughout his books of essays (Fantasia, Psychoanalysis, Phoenix) and Women in Love, what is frequently emphasized is man's dangerous use of his will and power. One of the best representatives of this idea is Gerald--his life, work, and personality.

D. H. Lawrence's main concern is identity and the fragmented self...Each one of his novels, no matter what its avowed subject, is fundamentally an attempt to create through the medium of fiction an image of the self adequate to the demand reality will make on it. Lawrence's study of the self is extensive and systematic enough to be properly considered an ego psychology. In this, as in so much else he anticipates the present day....His notion of personality serve to organize his art.⁷

To Lawrence, Gerald's willpower which is seen through his work and relation with girls, is condemned. Its direction is towards destruction. For the writer, the true power comes to us unconsciously and mysteriously, from 'beyond'. Man must use it only to live in oneness with the universe--'human and non-human'.

Will is no more than an attribute of the ego....A man may have a strong will, an iron will, as we say, and yet be a stupid mechanical instrument, useful simply as an instru-

⁷Marguerite Beed Howe, The Art of Self in D. H. Lawrence (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1977), p. 1.



ment, without any power at all....The real power comes in to us from beyond....True power, as distinct from the spurious power, which is merely the force of certain human vices directed and intensified by the human will: True power never belongs to us....For power is much more obvious in its destructive than in its constructive activity... ("Blessed Are the Powerful")

The writer comes to feel "the deadness of modern industrial civilization, with the mechanizing of personality, the corruption of the will and the dominance of sterile intellect over the authentic inward passions of men".⁸ Men like Gerald are always accused by Lawrence of being 'social individuals', incapable of love and relationships. That is why he is associated with the idea of death, decay, and disintegration.

As soon as Gerald entered the firm, the convulsion of death ran through the old system. He had all his life been tortured by a furious and destructive demon, which possessed him sometimes like insanity (p. 257).

(in Gudrun's bed) Into her he poured all his pent-up darkness and corrosive death....The terrible frictional violence of death filled her... (p. 388)

In Lawrence's opinion what is essentially destroyed in a man like Gerald is his 'spontaneous' or 'creative' psyche. He must drop his willpower and self-insistence, to live wholly, peacefully, and freely in accord with the wonder of life:

The wholeness of my soul I must achieve...What we suffer from today is the lack of a sense of our own wholeness, or completeness which is peace....And by peace I don't mean in-

⁸ Daiches, The Novel and the Modern World, p. 141.

ertia, but the full flow of life....It is the long unending fight, the fight for the soul's own freedom of spontaneous being, against...mechanism and materialism... (Phoenix)

There are various kinds of phrases Lawrence uses to express 'life' together with its mystery. They are for example 'the beyond', 'the unknown', and 'the great Source'. Knowledge or education is, in the writer's view, the great cause of our fall from 'true' individuality which is for the most part a "living continuum with all the universe".

Lawrence's pessimistic world view about humanity and the relationships between man and woman is presented through Gerald's life together with his clash with Gudrun. The writer's personal solution is, to some extent, seen in Birkin's way of thinking and in his relation to Ursula.

In the chapter "Mino", Birkin first reveals to Ursula the way he wants their relationship to be. According to Bunnell and Clay: "this is a central chapter in the thought of the novel. Lawrence through Birkin develops his metaphysic of love and relationship between man and woman".⁹ To Birkin, love is "one of the emotions like all others...I can't see how it becomes absolute. It is just part of human relationships, no more....it is an emotion you feel or you don't feel, according to circumstance" (p. 143). He wants a strange 'impersonal conjunction' with Ursula in which each absolutely denies the other's 'common self'. It must be a "pure balance of two single beings", beyond

⁹W. S. Bunnell, Richard Clay, Women in Love (Suffolk: The Chaucer Press Ltd, 1980), p. 24.

love.

It isn't love I want....At the very last, one is alone... there is a real impersonal me...beyond any emotional relationship. So it is with you...The root is beyond love, a naked kind of isolation...that does not meet and mingle and never can....there is a final me...So there is a final youThere we are two stark unknown beings...I would want to approach you, and you me....we will both cast off ourselves even, and cease to be, so that which is perfectly ourselves can take place in us... (pp. 161-63)

The result of the union is not that each is selfless, but a meeting between two 'spontaneous beings'. Each remains his and her own self, balancing one another like "two separate stars". The idea, too, suggests freedom, "each one free from any contamination of the other". Yet to Ursula, everything above is just Birkin's illustration of 'male superiority', represented by his cat, the Mino, asserting himself over a female cat. "Oh, it makes me cross, the assumption of male superiority! And it is such a lie...It is like Gerald Crich with his horse—a lust for bully—a real Wille zur Macht—so base, so petty" (p. 167). Birkin says he disagrees too with the idea of the exercising of man's willpower. But what the Mino does, is in accord with his own concept of the male-female relationship. "But with the Mino, it is the desire to bring the female cat into pure stable equilibrium, a transcendent and abiding rapport with the single male" (p. 167).

The conflict between Ursula and Birkin is heightened in the chapter "Moony". Birkin's act of throwing stones at the reflection of the moon in the pond symbolizes his craving to break

open the female ego which always separates itself. The significance of the scene, to Colin Clarke, is as an attack on that deathly supremacy of the ego that makes for mere separateness and indifference: "for all that, the theme of female tyranny is strictly subordinate to the theme of female isolation....for in the last analysis the episode is concerned with human isolation"¹⁰ In Lawrence's opinion, female separateness only brings death or conflict to the relationship between man and woman. In Fantasia, the moon is directly called by Lawrence, "a planet of women". It holds us our own cosmic individuality as a world individual in space: "She(the moon)is the fierce centre of retraction, of frictional withdrawal into separateness. She it is who sullenly stands with her back to us, and refuses to meet and mingle." Moreover women are attacked by Birkin for sticking to "a lust for possession, a greed of self-importance in love, she wanted to have, to own, to be dominant" (p. 224). They do not let their men be free and the result is the destruction of men's 'vital' selves. 'True communion', for Birkin, must be in this way:

each free from any contamination of the other. In each, the individual is primal...Each has a single, separate being, with its own laws. The man has his pure freedom, the woman hers...Each admits the different nature in the other ... (p. 225)

Birkin and Ursula accuse one another, in "Mino" and

¹⁰ Colin Clarke, "'Living Disintegration'", Twentieth Century Interpretations of Women in Love (New Jersey: Prentice--Hall, Inc., Englewood Cliffs, 1969), p. 225.

"Moony", of self-assertation, of each wanting only his or her own self. Birkin decides it is altogether no use trying to convince Ursula to let the 'common' self go for the sake of their union in the world of 'proud indifference'. At the end of "Moony", he speculates about "the universal destructive knowledge":

We(men)fall from connexion with life and hope, we lapse from pure integral being, from creation and liberty....Is our day of creative life finished? Does there remain to us only the strange, awful afterwards of the knowledge in dissolution..? (p. 286)

In Lawrence's view, the world and man's life progress towards disintegration and corruption because of our intellect and will:

Knowledge is not even in direct proportion to being....The supreme lesson of human consciousness is to learn not to know...That is, how to live dynamically, from the great Source, and not statically like machines. (Fantasia)

Unless we submit our will to the flooding of life, there is no life in us. (Phoenix)

For Birkin or Lawrence, there can be no longer 'creative spirit' of 'free spontaneous beings' who live at oneness with the world. Moreover Lawrence believes (as shown in "Individual V. Social Consciousness") that "as soon as the conception 'me' or 'you', 'me' or 'it' enters the human consciousness, then the individual consciousness is supplanted by the social consciousness". That when a 'true' individual is conscious of the 'otherness', he falls from his living 'continuum' with the universe into being a 'social' individual. Freedom and peace are the supreme reality for the 'true' individual as Birkin perceives:

There was another way, the way of freedom. There was the paradisaal entry into pure, single being....In the new, superfine bliss, a peace superceding knowledge, there was no I and you. I have ceased to be and you have ceased to be: we are both caught up and transcend into a new oneness.

And Birkin concludes to himself the idea which would be incomprehensible to Gerald: to preserve his state of pure, free, and single being, he, however, must accept "the obligation of the permanent connexion with other or the other, submitting to the yoke and leash of love" (p. 287). After having thought that, Birkin goes to Ursula asking her to marry him.

At the end of the chapter "Excuse", Birkin and Ursula are revealed equally satisfied with their love-making. "She had her desire fulfilled. He had his desire fulfilled. For she was to him what he was to her, the immemorial magnificence of mystic palpable, real otherness." This description may be seen as a great contrast to that in "Death and Love" which is the chapter following "Excuse". After love-making, Gerald feels his own 'wholeness' come over him again as if he is given a new life and he has a mindless sleep whereas Gudrun is left anxiously wide awake with her 'superconsciousness'. The feelings of each couple, perhaps, reflect, in advance the failure or success of their relationships.

Ursula, for Birkin, always has an 'inner light'. It probably represents her own 'sensuality' which Hermione lacks, as she is accused by Birkin:

It's your bullying will. You want to clutch things and have them in your power...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...

'Sensuality', he explains to Hermione, is "the dark knowledge you can't have in your head--the dark involuntary being" (pp. 46-7). To Birkin, neither self-consciousness nor will-power is shown in this 'sensuality'. Ursula is the person who acts things in her own natural and unconscious way: she can easily be 'flown away' from herself. We have already seen some differences between Gudrun and Ursula. Ursula can cry at the top of her voice, completely 'outside' herself, telling Gerald not to torture his mare. And because of all these qualities of Ursula, Gudrun hates her. Contrary to Gudrun, who is very restless and lonely, Ursula enjoys life wholeheartedly and it is full of hope for her:

Ursula seemed so peaceful and sufficient unto herself, sitting there unconsciously crooning her song, strong and unquestioned at the centre of her own universe. And Gudrun felt herself outside. Always this desolating, agonized feeling, that she was outside of life, an onlooker, whilst Ursula was a partaker... (p. 185)

For Ursula, 'art' is life: "the world of art is only the truth about the real world". While for artists like Loerke and Gudrun, 'art' has its own reality, having no relation to the everyday world. Ursula's liveliness makes Birkin feel born again:

She had the perfect candour of creation....he, who was so nearly dead, who was so near to being gone with the rest of his race down the slope of mechanical death, could never be understood by her...This marriage with her was his resurrec-

tion and his life... (pp. 416-17)

Moreover Ursula believes in an 'absolute surrender' to love and she is sure that Gudrun would never know love. Most important of all, Ursula has gained a keen understanding that makes the relationship between man and woman possible. She acknowledges that sometimes one must submit to love. For Lawrence himself writes in his essay, "Democracy": "...in submitting, which is love, the soul learns and fulfils itself". Ursula is also aware that the feelings of lovers sometimes can never be identical at the same moment:

She abandoned herself to him(Birkin)...And she enjoyed him fully. But they were never quite together, at the same moment, one was always a little left out. Nevertheless she was glad in hope, glorious and free, full of life (pp. 416-17).

Such a thought and liveliness like this would never be found in Gudrun.

Understanding is, to Lawrence, our most precious thing in life: "The timeless quality of being is understanding" ("The Reality of Peace"). Of the four main characters, Birkin and Ursula show their ability to understand things well. Gerald and Gudrun merely need other people to understand them but never come near to understanding others. As Gerald tells Gudrun after facing the emptiness of life: "I only want sympathy, do you see: I want somebody I can talk to sympathetically. That eases the strain. And there is nobody to talk to sympathetically". And Gudrun chooses Loerke because of his having understanding of her. An artist like Gudrun tries to suppress all desires:

Was it sheer blind force of passion that would satisfy her now? Not this, but the subtle thrills of extreme sensation in reduction....the mystic frictional activities of diabolic reducing down, disintegrating the vital organic body of life (p. 508).

That is why she asks Gerald to want her less and love her more. He does not understand because whenever he comes near her, he always trembles "with too much desire". Gudrun is the kind of person, according to Lawrence, who lives in the 'mind' or 'spirit', denying the life of senses, while Gerald's life sticks only to desires or senses and the material world. Birkin sees its limitation: "This strange sense of fatality in Gerald, as if he were limited to one form of existence, one knowledge, one activity, a sort of fatal halfness, which to himself seemed wholeness". Thus neither Gerald nor Gudrun lead life in the Lawrentian sense as a whole as Ursula and Birkin do. Birkin and Ursula accept both lives of spirit and senses which are respectively, to Lawrence, life or creation, and death or dissolution. Lawrence writes in "The Reality of Peace" that 'light' and 'virtue' belong to the creative life of spirit or mind whereas 'corruption' and 'death' belong to that of senses or body. Life as a whole for him must consist of both:

Understanding, however, does not belong to every man...But it is vital that some men understand....We are not only creatures of light and virtue. We are also alive in corruption and death....From our bodies come the issue of corruption as well as the issue of creation. We must have our being in both....There is in me the desire of creation and the desire of dissolution....If there is no autumn and winter of corruption, there is no spring and summer. In our whole understanding, when sense and spirit and mind are con-

summated into pure unison, then we are free in a world of the absolute....And desire is twofold, desire of life and desire of death. All the time we are active in these two great powers which are forever contrary and complementaryLife feeds death, death feeds life ("The Reality of Peace").

After having seen some change in Birkin near the end of the novel, Ursula comes to accept a shameful, 'bestial' side of life --life of the senses:

Wasn't it rather horrible, a man who could be so soulful and spiritual, now to be so bestial...they two!—so degraded ...But after all why not...be bestial, and go the whole round of experience? She exulted in it....Yet she was unabashed, she was herself...She was free, when she knew everything...(p. 464)

Lawrence writes in his essay "Love" that when love between man and woman is perfect, it must be 'dual' or 'two in one'.

It is the melting into pure communion, and it is the friction of sheer sensuality....both together in one love. And then we are like a rose...We are two who have a pure connexion. We are two, isolated like gems in our unthinkable otherness.

He says further in the essay that the love that melts into 'pure communion' is called 'sacred love' whereas in the other—'profane love': each is driven from "matrix into sheer separate distinction", seeking only each own self. Either of these is a 'half love' not perfect, because perfect or 'whole love', for Lawrence, must consist of the two kinds of love together: the 'profane' and the 'sacred'. 'Whole love' is thus 'dual' or

'two in one'. This is also Birkin's ideal of a 'star-equilibrium' relationship with Ursula. The 'profane' or the self-seeking love tends to fit the see-saw relationship: "one destroyed that the other might exist, one ratified because the other is nulled". The relationships between Gerald and Gudrun, and Elizabeth Bates and her husband are examples of the 'profane love':

It is a destructive fire, the profane love....intense, frictional, and sensual gratification of being burnt down, burnt apart into separate clarity of being, unthinkable otherness and separateness....the beautiful but deadly counterposing of male against female...This is the profane love, that ends in flamboyant and lacerating tragedy when the two which are so singled out are torn finally apart by death... ("Love")

Lawrence believes strongly in the destructiveness of our sense of separateness.

(There is a)theme which runs throughout all of Lawrence's characteristic work of the middle and later years. It is the anguish of...man's ontological solitude, the discrete particularly of man as individual separated from other finite individuals by the qualitative, ontological gulf that separates finite creatures from one another...¹¹

He sees the universal truth as many writers do that human beings never have real understanding of one another. Even marriage cannot bring man and woman closer. Their conflict, as the world progresses, gets worse. Lawrence writes in "We Need One

¹¹Nathan A. Scott, Jr., "D. H. Lawrence: Chartist of the Via Mystica", Rehearsals of Discomposure: Alienation and Reconciliation in Modern Literature (King's Crown Press, 1952), pp. 132-33.

Another":

I am so tired of being told that I want mankind to go back to the condition of savage. As if modern city people weren't about the crudest, rawest, most crassly savage monkeys that ever existed. All I see in our vaunted civilization is men and women smashing each other emotionally and psychically to bits...

Lawrence's ideal of 'star-equilibrium' relationship reveals his own quest for freedom and peace through the man-woman relationship in which each individuality must not be destroyed by the 'superimposing' of one's control over the other: "Pull down the veils and understand everything, each man in his own self-responsible soul. Then we are free" ("The Reality of Peace"). The writer's romanticism and pessimism about 'the universal dissolution', 'the spontaneous being', and 'living continuum', perhaps stem from an escapist's severe view of the evil of an overcivilized world.

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