

Influence Of Nietzsche's Philosophy Manifested In D.H Lawrence's Women In Love

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Abstract

This paper explores Nietzsche's philosophy in D. H. Lawrence's novel Women in Love. The novel's characters are created by the use of four key philosophical concepts of Nietzsche. Four key concepts from Nietzsche's philosophy are scrutinized: Revaluation of all values, the Overman, the Will to Power and the Last Man – the Blond Beast. D. H. Lawrence uses philosophical concepts to make his characters stand against each other and look vibrant. By analyzing the novel and manifesting Nietzsche's philosophy in the background of the novel this paper paves way for further research into classic novel and analysis of novels through philosophy.

Keywords: Nietzsche, D. H. Lawrence, Will to Power, Overman, Last Man, Blond Beast.

Introduction:

Friedrich Nietzsche the German philosopher exerted his influence in many fields. It is said that in England his influence was mainly on the Novelists and poets. It is true and a proof of it is D.H. Lawrence's novel Women in Love in which Nietzsche's ideology is reflected. Lawrence used four Nietzschean concepts in his novel. They are the Revaluation of all values, the Overman, the Will to Power and the Last Man – the Blond Beast. This research paper aims at showing how Lawrence having been influenced by Nietzsche's philosophy used four key aspects of Nietzsche's philosophy throughout his novel and portrayed his characters in the light of Nietzsche's philosophy.

To achieve this goal I have organized my paper into three sections. The first section deals with the Revaluation of all values and the Overman. The second section is about the Will to Power and the third section will be about the Last Man – the Blond Beast. This way I will explain separately how four philosophical concepts of Nietzsche are dealt with in the novel by D. H Lawrence. I have used three sources for this purpose. My primary source is

the novel itself and other two sources are two journal articles that helped me understand the philosophy of Nietzsche and how it is used in *Women in Love*.

Research Questions:

1. To find out how *Women in Love* as a novel manifests Nietzsche's key philosophical concepts.
2. To find out how Nietzsche's philosophical concepts can be used in novels through characters.
3. To find out how Nietzsche as a philosopher influenced famous literary figures like D. H. Lawrence.

Significance of the Study:

The main aim of this paper is to show how Nietzsche's philosophy is used in the novel *Women in Love*. This helps in knowing how key philosophical concepts of Nietzsche could be hidden in a novel's text or characters. Readers can learn how a specific philosophy can be behind the choices and attitudes of a novel's characters. This paper will pave way for further research into looking at classic novels through the lens of Nietzsche's philosophy.

Literature Review and Analysis

Chapter 1: Revaluation of all values and the Overman

In German the word that Nietzsche used was *Übermensch* for Overman which meant his concept "man is something that must be overcome" (Bianco 2). *Übermensch* for Lawrence was a "self-surpassing man" (Bianco 2). Overman goes through the process of self-surpassing. The Overman is an artist because he creates himself. He creates his values that make up his character. And the force by which he created himself is his will to power. They are all connected (Bianco 3). Nietzsche's *Übermensch* is a person that wants mastery in his passions and he is successful in doing so. His goal is to get to self-perfection's uppermost state (Bianco 11). The Overman does not compromise with the definition of others about Human. He is always at work with surpassing himself (Bianco 12).

In the novel Birkin is represented as this Overman. He is the character that is not satisfied with himself and with his surroundings and changes occur in him. From good he becomes better. He questions and reflects about himself and about his surroundings. Birkin surpasses himself, he improves and is never satisfied. Throughout the novel it is shown. Lawrence painted the character of Birkin in view with Nietzsche's *Übermensch* the Overman.

Birkin and Gerald meet at the railway station. Gerald was reading a newspaper. He comes across a cant and lets Birkin know about it (Bianco 42). "there must arise a man who will give new values to things, give us new truths, a new attitude to life, or else we shall be a crumbling nothingness in a few years, a country in ruin" (Lawrence 59). Later Gerald asked him whether a new gospel was necessary and whether there was a need to destroy the

present life to which Birkin replies that it is necessary to bust life totally. Birkin is proposing the revaluation of all values and it does not mean creating new values but rather destroying the old ones. He tells Gerald that he does not want any reforms of the society. He tells that it will be of no use establishing new values unless people destroy the old ones (Bianco 42).

Later Birkin shows his disgust for the society. He states that lies are what humanity lives by and it struggles for small material things. When Gerald says that it is good for the working class to attain material things because this way they have something higher, Birkin is disgusted and tells that desire for material things makes one to do what others are saying. One begins to live by other people's opinions. One gets false value system to live by (Bianco 43). "According to Nietzsche, men who uncover the hypocrisy and excessive comfort of their age are the most admirable types because their revaluation involves the courage to become conscious" (Bianco 43). Birkin as he was looking at the countryside wished for the humanity to disappear because it was not capable to create something worthy.

Birkin's role is not so prominent due to his job but as an individual. It's a very different characterization as compared with Gerald Crich whose identity is due to his work. Birkin does not have strong bonds with his society. He does not have fixed dwellings. He is in line with Nietzsche's Overman (Bianco 45).

Nietzsche's superman . . . consciously turn away from a desire for a humane, gentle, and just epoch, because they perceive in such a desire the expression of a profound debility and failing strength. These homeless ones, if they rightly understand their task, must not only feel themselves to be rich and free spirits, but conquerors also. For only they whose desire is for "the strengthening and exaltation of the type man" have a right to regard themselves as homeless ones, and no longer as inhabitants of the humanitarian world. (45)

This is how Birkin is shown in the novel. He is rich and free in spirit and not bound by anything. His inner strength does not fail. He is a conqueror as he surpasses himself and becomes better. He is described the way Nietzsche described *Übermensch*. Birkin is an indefinite being, a godly being which is shown throughout the novel by the use of language.

His nature was clever and separate, he did not fit at all in the conventional occasion. Yet he subordinated himself to the common idea, travestied himself. He affected to be quite ordinary, perfectly and marvelously commonplace. And he did it so well, taking the tone of his surroundings, adjusting himself quickly to his interlocutor and his circumstance, he achieved a verisimilitude of ordinary commonplaceness that usually propitiated his onlookers for the moment, disarm them from attacking his singleness. (Lawrence 23)

Every description that is done of him is important. He is also described as pale and sickly looking. His sickliness is also emphasized at another place in the novel. His strength is inner strength not physical. He does not have the physical strength as such. How can he then fit into Nietzsche's *Übermensch*. For Nietzsche *Übermensch* is not a realized ideal. It is actually a goal towards which one moves. For Nietzsche health was not the sickness being absent but instead health was the skill to overcome illness (Bianco 46).

Birkin's name is not arbitrarily chosen. It is chosen to suit his character. Birkin's name means a messenger who is incarnated. He is from the God of light that has come to humans. Throughout the novel Birkin is described this way. Three times he is described as an entity from elsewhere. The first time it happens when he meets Ursula at school (47).

She heard, but did not notice the click of the door. Suddenly she started. She saw, in the shaft of ruddy, copper-coloured light near her, the face of a man. It was gleaming like fire, watching her, waiting for her to be aware. It startled her terribly. She thought she was going to faint. All her suppressed, subconscious fear sprang into being, with anguish. (Lawrence 39)

Other instances of such descriptions are when Birkin was at Halliday's London house. He is shown as an evanescent. The author also tells in the same chapter that Birkin looked ghostly and unlimited. At another instance when he goes to see Ursula at her house here too he is described as an indefinite entity (Bianco 49). In the novel it is written that "the children, in a sudden angelic mood, retired without a word. Billy seemed angelic like a cherub boy, or like an acolyte, Birkin was a tall, grave angel looking down to him" (Lawrence 194, 195).

This way he is described throughout the novel. Such descriptions from the novel show how Lawrence created Birkin in the light of *Übermensch* of Nietzsche. Birkin has the traits that make him *Overman*.

We are also told that when he had felt sick after the attack from Hermione he withdrew from the people. He had gone to France without informing anyone. After this we witness that his self-awareness has increased and he has done some progress in self-surpassing process. Birkin goes away from human contact and in Solitude he has his growth. This is what Nietzsche talks about (Bianco 60).

The pattern of withdrawal (isolating oneself from fellow men) returns (re-establishing human contacts) is commonly seen in the lives of creative men, for solitude and contemplation are contingent upon withdrawal-psychologically and/ or physically – and effective action is contingent upon return. We may therefore expect to find this pattern in Nietzsche's image of the self-surpassing man (60).

The Overman withdraws from the humans and goes into isolation and this helps him to come back and reestablish his contacts. Only creative men go through this process of contemplation. This is the image of Nietzsche's Overman, a person that goes beyond, that surpasses himself.

Chapter 2: The Will to Power manifested in the novel

Having discussed the 'revaluation of values' and the 'Overman' which are Nietzsche's concepts used in the novel now I move to the next section of the paper in which I am going to discuss the Will to Power which is another of Nietzsche's Philosophical concepts manifested in the novel *Women in Love*.

Nietzsche says, "Living things want to discharge its strength – life itself is the Will to Power – self-preservation is only one of the indirect and most frequent consequences of this" (Ahmed 426). We want to exert power. We want to influence others. According to Nietzsche even self-preservation is done for this purpose.

Hermione is one of the characters of the novel who exerts her power over others. She wants to influence all those around her. Once when Gudrun was painting a picture which was half done, Hermione forced her to show her the picture. At other instances in the novel too she is forcing others to tell her what he wants to know. Her attack on Birkin was also a manifestation of her will to power.

Birkin goes to the school where Ursula teaches. An argument occurs between Birkin and Hermione. Through talking and knowledge Hermione was trying to influence Birkin asking him questions like whether children should be given knowledge or not. In response Birkin humiliates her. This instance and at another instance too she gets humiliated. Since she was not able to exert her power over Birkin through arguments that is why she attacked him on the head while he was sitting on a chair in a room where she was present.

Males and females are shown exerting power over each other. In the Chapter titled *Mino* we can see how Will to Power is manifested. There was a male cat that attacked a female cat twice and this made Ursula angry. *Mino* is a symbol for all males. Ursula tries to stop the male cat (Ahmed 431). "Mino . . . I don't like you. You are a bully" (Lawrence 149). When Birkin tries to justify it she says that the male cat wants things in his own way. This is how Birkin had earlier described Hermione's Will to Power in the chapter with the title *Classroom*. Hermione as a female and *Mino* as a male can both be symbols of Will to Power (Ahmed 431). According to Nietzsche "All living things possess a Will to Power, although many do not have minds" (Ahmed 432). *Mino* uses physical strength to attack the female cat and Hermione also uses physical strength to attack a male (432).

Social status in the novel is also shown as the manifestation of the Will to Power. Gerald being the boss of the coal mines can now use force against others. Whomever he wishes he keeps and whoever he does not like he sacks them. He saw "so many wagons, bearing his initials that are running all over the country. He met with them when he entered

London in a train. He saw them at Dover. So far, his power ramified” (Lawrence 222). Owing the coal mine is something that has given him power which he practices over others. He is called “the God of the machines” (Lawrence 223). This shows how the industry owners had power over workers. Gerald not only wants to control his workers but also his lover Gudrun. In the novel it is stated.

Under the bridge, they came to a standstill, and he lifted her upon his breast. His body vibrated taut and powerful as he closed upon her and crushed her, breathless and dazed and destroyed . . . Under the bridge, the collier pressed their lovers to their breast. And now, under the bridge, the master of them all pressed her to himself! And how much more powerful and terrible was his embrace, was how much more concentrated and supreme his love was. (Lawrence 330)

All of this brings one’s attention to what Nietzsche said,

The fundamental drive of all living things is the will to power, the impulse to dominate one’s environment and extend one’s influence. In humans, the Will to Power sometimes manifests itself as brute force, but more frequently requires creativity, boldness, and innovation. (Ahmed 434)

Gudrun also manifests the Will to Power in a negative way like Gerald. She sacrifices her lover when it comes to sacrificing her Will to Power and influence. She likes to do things in her own way. When Ursula had refused Birkin his marriage proposal the two sister had come closer. At that time Gudrun gave her definite views about Birkin but Ursula realized that she was boxing Birkin and was wrong. Another time Ursula says towards the end of the novel when she and Birkin were leaving the cold place that it is the words that make her speechless. Gudrun had the power of words over her sister. She tries to exert power over Gerald. She uses the Will to Power negatively. Lawrence is against it. Nietzsche was not in favour of this either. That is why throughout the novel Birkin is suggesting equality and telling Ursula that they should be like an equilibrium balancing each other. He neither wanted Ursula to exert her power over him nor did he want to use power against her. That is what Nietzsche and Lawrence advocated.

Chapter 3: The Last Man and The Blond Beast in the novel

Now I move to the last section of the paper. In this section I am going to talk about the Last man or the Blond Beast which is Nietzsche’s concept used in the novel. The Blond Beast is the opposite of the Overman. This helped Lawrence to create the character of Gerald in opposition to Birkin.

We see that Birkin moves away from social roles so that he finds himself. He grows. Gerald on the other hand finds his identity in social roles. Gerald moves away from himself whereas Birkin by moving away from the society moves toward himself (Bianco 83). The image is given to us of Gerald when he has begun running the mines.

But now he had succeeded – he finally succeeded. And once or twice lately, when he was alone in the evening and had nothing to do, he had suddenly stood up in terror, not knowing what he was. And he went to the mirror and looked long and closely at his own face, at his own eyes, seeking for something. He was afraid, in mortal dry fear, but he knew not what of. He looked at his own face. There it was, shapely and healthy and the same as ever, yet somehow, it was not real, it was a mask. (Bianco 83)

They are in opposition to each other. While going to London Rupert Birkin was disgusted by London and by its decadence. Gerald on the other hand becomes very happy and aroused (84). “Birkin looked at Gerald, and saw how his blue eyes were lit up with a little flame of curious desire” (Lawrence 54).

Gerald in London gets attracted to Puum. “He is overwhelmed by a sense of power derived from the knowledge of his capacity to destroy her” (Bianco 84). “His sun browned, rather sinister hands that were animal and yet very shapely and attractive, paused forward her” (85). We also see that the friendship Birkin offer he does not accept.

The anger and violence Gerald manifests is also an attribute of the Blond Beast. The Blond Beast according to Nietzsche’s Genealogy of Morals has the natural ability to command and a capacity for violence. In the first few chapters of the novel we are told that Gerald had the natural ability to command respect. He had some sort of control over his brothers and sisters. His violent nature is also manifested in the episode of the horse when in order to make a horse get used to the sound of the loco motive he forces the horse and the horse bleeds. He is the Last Man, the Blond Beast as explained by Nietzsche.

Conclusion:

D. H Lawrence was a genius who could breathe into his characters the philosophy of Nietzsche . He made the philosophy of Nietzsche alive. Nietzsche had his ideology but it was Lawrence who by using that ideology created a work of art that is so rich. The purpose of the paper was to show the influence of Nietzsche over Lawrence’s work Women in Love and we have seen how Lawrence has created characters and situations using the ideology of the German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche and has enriched English Literature.

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