

Spring 2014

How D.H. Lawrence Amends Dostoevsky's Reality

Amanda R. Brown

Providence College, abrown21@friars.providence.edu

Follow this and additional works at: http://digitalcommons.providence.edu/dostoevsky_2014



Part of the [English Language and Literature Commons](#), and the [History Commons](#)

Brown, Amanda R., "How D.H. Lawrence Amends Dostoevsky's Reality" (2014). *Spring 2014, Dostoevsky*. Paper 2.
http://digitalcommons.providence.edu/dostoevsky_2014/2

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Liberal Arts Honors Program at DigitalCommons@Providence. It has been accepted for inclusion in Spring 2014, Dostoevsky by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@Providence. For more information, please contact mcaprio1@providence.edu.

Amanda Brown

Dr. Hogan

HON 481: Dostoevsky Colloquium

ENG 363: 20th Century British Novels

April 28, 2014

How D.H. Lawrence Amends Dostoevsky's Reality

Juxtaposing the dreary image of St. Petersburg with the Victorian image of Britain, it is difficult to imagine there are any similarities between Russia and England. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries however, the two cultures intertwined in a unique way in the realm of literature. Critics have observed both common trends and conscious deviations resulting from cultural cross-sharing during this time. D.H. Lawrence is one central British modernist writer who encountered the works of the Russian novelist Fyodor Dostoevsky. His reaction to Dostoevsky is complex; he was both inspired and disgusted by the Russian writer. As Lucia Aiello summarizes the situation, "to define Dostoevskii as a modernist...is perhaps excessive, but to claim for Dostoevskii a central position in the shaping of the thematics and the narrative structures of the modernist novel is entirely justified" (Aiello, 677). Within the context of the rich historical bridges created between English writers and Dostoevsky, I want to explore the extent to which Lawrence's reality in his novel *Women in Love* goes beyond Dostoevsky's world in his novel *Crime and Punishment*; I will examine both authors' worldview on religion, moral guilt, rationality, and sense of self.

Though Dostoevsky adopted much of his style from a pre-modernist generation of English writers, the British modernists received his work controversially. Literary scholar David

Gervais suggests this may partially be because British modernists, including D.H. Lawrence, were reading Dostoevsky in translation. Until 1931, when reviews of Leonid Grossman's *Collected Works* appeared in the *Times Literary Supplement*, British literary critics were unaware of Russian literary critic's attempts to explain Dostoevsky's innovative style of poetics (Aiello, 672).

Given much was lost in translation, D.H. Lawrence was still strongly impacted by what he understood to be Dostoevsky's meaning. It is well known that D.H. Lawrence responded to Dostoevsky with his writings, Lawrence himself acknowledged as much. Though some modernists felt Dostoevsky challenged traditional novel forms, Lawrence did not feel Dostoevsky was revolutionary enough as a writer. Nonetheless, "critics have historically labelled *Women in Love* a 'Dostoevskyan' work" (Sanders, 99). *Women in Love* may have some similarities to Dostoevsky's work, however, D.H. Lawrence radically wrote against Dostoevsky in an effort to correct his world-vision; most vehemently, he rejected the religious dimension of Dostoevsky's characters (Gervais, 64). It is therefore imperative to examine where *Women in Love* diverges from *Crime and Punishment*. I want to argue that Lawrence's *Women in Love*, written during 1916-1917, redefines reality more drastically than Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment*, published in 1866. Lawrence corrected Dostoevsky by going beyond his vision of religion, guilt, rationality, and the self.

Religion plays a key role in the realities that Dostoevsky and Lawrence create. The importance of Christianity in the characters of Sonya and Raskolnikov is indispensable. Though more subtly, Lawrence also portrays spirituality. He wants "to go beyond tragedy to a vision...nearer to the religious – a 'supreme art' that remained to be 'fully done'" (Gervais, 62).

Marmeladov, Sonya, and Raskolnikov in *Crime and Punishment* and Rupert Birkin in *Women in Love* all convey this sense of waiting for spiritual fulfillment.

Dostoevsky's spirituality, however, is less radical than Lawrence's. Before looking at Lawrence's version of religion, I will examine moments that showcase Dostoevsky's Christianity, and a number of important instances when, from different angles, it may seem Dostoevsky is criticizing Christianity. When Marmeladov drunkenly tells his life's story to Raskolnikov, he is searching for compassion. He says, "I drink because I wish to multiple my sufferings" (Dostoevsky, 13). Marmeladov is a creature of great suffering. Such pains as his are an ancient religious topic of conversation and are often connected to the suffering of Christ on the cross. Marmeladov's state of poverty also echoes Christianity. When speaking of Ivan Afanasyevich, a man who continued to help Marmeladov even after Marmeladov had failed to repay him, Marmeladov calls him a saint. This calls to mind the Christian virtue of charity and the notion repeated in the Bible that God will reward those who help the poor, one example being John, 3:17-3:18. Dostoevsky challenges the traditional novel, but not by re-envisioning religion.

One instance of spirituality that is not distinctly Christian is Raskolnikov's superstitions surrounding his act of murder. There is an overtone of religiosity in his taking overheard conversations as signs. These "signs" lead him to believe there is "something fateful and foreordained" (63) about the murder he wishes to commit. His use of "fateful" and "foreordained" make his outlook sound like a spiritual one. Raskolnikov calls into question the Christian idea of love as suffering; he asks himself, and the reader, "will it really bring [the sacrificer] such great benefits?" (41). Rather than accepting suffering, as, for instance, Dunya

does for him when she goes to work for Svidrigailov, Raskolnikov's solution to experiencing the injustice of suffering is inflicting the same pain on others. Dunya's situation is not fantastic -- Svidrigailov makes her extremely uncomfortable with romantic advances and she is shamed for a time -- yet it is better than the outcome of Raskolnikov's theories. At least some good comes from Dunya's suffering: Raskolnikov is provided for monetarily. Dunya's sacrifice and suffering, her acceptance of her role as a loving sister, therefore emerges as superior to Raskolnikov's system of "signs" that lead to murder and his decline in health. This suggests creating religious-like notions of one's own is dangerous; the Christian ideal of love still triumphs.

Dostoevsky is known for his "tragic vitality," using tragic situations to propel his characters to affirm life (Gervais). In Marmeladov's final moments, one might think Dostoevsky's tragic characterization of love as sacrifice to be negative. Katerina Ivanovna, Marmeladov's wife, is angry when the priest tells her she must forgive her husband. At first she speaks as if she is turning her back on religion. She gives a litany of sacrifices she has made for her useless husband. In conclusion, however, she says that she has forgiven him. Her forgiveness was evident the whole time in her sacrificial acts. Dostoevsky here portrays sacrificial love as tragic, but does so with his poetry of events; it thus seems somehow beautiful. Ultimately, he idealizes more than challenges Christian love.

One scene in *Crime in Punishment* deeply disturbs Dostoevsky's fairly airtight defense of Christianity -- Raskolnikov's conversation with Svidrigailov about the afterlife. When Raskolnikov tells Svidrigailov that he does not believe in afterlife, and Svidrigailov replies that perhaps the afterlife is a rundown, spider-infested country bathhouse, Christianity is threatened for a moment. Even after Raskolnikov cries out that such a fate would be unjust, Svidrigailov

continues, claiming that maybe humans have no way of knowing the meaning of justice. This is absolutely a strike against Christianity; in this incident, an uneasiness envelops religion as God's goodness and omnipotence are scrutinized.

John Cowper Powys, a Dostoevsky scholar, articulates the uneasiness of this meeting when he writes "I have seen, now and again, a look in the eyes of this 'love' that gives me a very queasy feeling. Nietzsche and D. H. Lawrence are undoubtedly right. There *is* something 'funny' about this Christian 'love'...Dostoevsky who understood it to its fathomless depths was himself doubtful about it" (Powys, 376). Though Dostoevsky confronts doubts about Christian love, this is a fleeting moment buried in his 500-600 page novel. On the whole, *Crime and Punishment* hails Christianity. Even in small moments of doubt, like Raskolnikov and Svidrigailov's afterlife conversation, Christianity is never outrightly rejected.

According to Gervais, Lawrence did not think the religious devotion of many of Dostoevsky's characters was realistic. Lawrence himself said "People are not fallen angels, they are merely people. But Dostoevsky used them all as theological or religious units" (Gervais, 64). In Lawrence's work, Christianity is overhauled from the start and a new religious vision is created by Rupert Birkin. While Dostoevsky has moments when Christianity seems to be challenged, Lawrence blatantly challenges traditional religious theories throughout all of *Women in Love*. Lawrence's version of religious reality is thus far more avant-garde than Dostoevsky's.

Rupert Birkin develops a three-part apocalyptic spirituality that he feels should replace the old world rooted in Christian Tradition. While arguing with Ursula, he attacks Dostoevsky's religion. Birkin claims "People who repeat every minute that love is the greatest, and charity is the greatest...[are] dirty liars and cowards" (129). His words here concretely decry that the old

world associated with Christian love and charity must be abolished to make way for a new kind of love, which Birkin struggles throughout the novel to define.

His new sense of “love” is comprised of attuning oneself to nature, entering into ultimate marriage, and, for men, having an intimate relationship with another man. Wounded from Hermione’s blow after she hits him with a paper weight, Birkin retreats to nature. The leaves and the trees come “Into [his] blood and [are] added on to him” (108). Here nature as blood is taking the place of the Christian symbol of wine as blood. Birkin wants to “overlook the old grief,...put away the old ethic...[and] be free in his new state” (109). The “old grief” echoes the suffering of Marmeladov, Dunya, and Katerina. Birkin is done with this ethic of suffering for love. He wants to move toward a new existence that praises nature over humanity (109). Humans have thought themselves the center of existence since the time of the first great astronomers, so Lawrence, in contrast to Dostoevsky, is proposing a highly experimental new spirituality.

The second part of Birkin’s creed is ultimate marriage, which he defines mostly through a series of arguments with Ursula. While talking with Ursula by the water, Birkin denounces her type of love, which involves wholly submitting oneself to another. She pushes him to explain what he believes; he finally manages to call his new love “freedom together.” When they meet again, he better articulates his theory as two people in an impersonal realm beyond responsibility who encounter one another, commit irrevocably to one another, and take what they need “according to the primal desire” (150). Whereas the characters in *Crime and Punishment* feel obligated to sacrifice themselves for love, Birkin does not think love should be attached to responsibility -- it must be “a maintaining of the self in mystic balance” (156) with the other. Birkin’s abstract vision rooted in independence and “primal desire” is radical in comparison to

Dostoevsky's traditional Christianity. Birkin's vision is harsher because it is more lonely and, to a degree, removes the civilization of humanity by focusing on primal wants.

The last piece of Birkin's "new love" puzzle is the love appropriate between two men. He visits Gerald after the drowning of Gerald's sister and finally admits to himself that "The eternal conjunction between two men...had been a necessity inside himself all his life -- to love a man purely and fully" (213). In expanding upon this, Birkin is able to classify this love as similar to the love he imagines between man and woman. Love between two men is also impersonal and irrevocable according to Birkin.

Especially considering Gay Rights only seriously started attracting attention in Britain in the past half-century, Lawrence, by writing about love and physical interaction between men, was far ahead of his time (Imperial College London). Though Dostoevsky's idealization of Sonya, a prostitute, may also seem futuristic, he does not attempt to use Sonya in a crude manner, but instead links her to religion. Despite Sonya's prostitution status, the reader only sees her being holy; she even chastises herself for her sinful acts, which are kept out of the reader's sight. Lawrence emerges from this comparison as the more revolutionary writer.

Rupert Birkin offers the most extensive spiritual belief system, however also interesting regarding Lawrence's portrayal of religion is his creation of a new Hell. Hell for Dostoevsky is Raskolnikov's mental prison before he seeks redemption for his immoral acts. Lawrence, on the other hand, offers a much more modern version of Hell in the collier mines. For him, being worked to death by society is Hell, as he shows with imagery of "Thousands of vigorous, underworld, half-automatised colliers" (117). Being used as a means to an end is Lawrence's Hell. This conclusion is particularly interesting if one considers the Christian idea of being a

servant of God. Lawrence depicts Gerald, the eventual owner of the mines, as God (230). This could imply that, as servants of God, believers are reducing themselves to mere instruments. With this interpretation, Lawrence's idea of religion highly disrupts convention by suggesting God robs humans of free will. The religious dimension of *Women in Love* shows how Lawrence corrected Dostoevsky, and how, in so doing, his reality is more radical than Dostoevsky's.

Closely tied to the religion present in *Crime and Punishment* and *Women in Love* is the portrayal of moral guilt. In *Crime and Punishment*, one might think Dostoevsky dares to create a character who does not feel guilty for committing murder. Throughout the beginning of the novel, it seems that Raskolnikov does not actually feel guilt. Instead he simply wants to escape responsibility; he wants "a way out" (164). However, the novel closes with him on his way to feeling real guilt. By examining Raskolnikov's progressive acceptance of his moral responsibility, I want to argue Dostoevsky is not as audacious as Lawrence.

That Raskolnikov feels a tinge of guilt is starkly evident in his exchange with Polechka, Marmeladov's daughter, after Marmeladov's death. He asks her to always pray for him. Though he then begins thinking he can still live a full life and forget about the murder, "'But I asked for 'thy servant Rodion' to be remembered in their prayers,' flashe[s] through his mind" (182). Waving the thought away, he claims he did so "just in case" (182). He is not asking them to pray he does not get caught. The sentiment in his request regards the moral state of his soul. His "just in case" could be more fully stated as "just in case God condemns me to Hell." Raskolnikov is, at this point, undoubtedly starting to feel guilty.

When Raskolnikov first confesses his crime to Sonya, he does not seem to want redemption, but upon closer examination, the reader sees he is in the early stages of actively

seeking redemption. Raskolnikov wants to talk to another human about what he's done without risk of being judged or punished, but he says to Sonya that he does not yet want to go to prison.

She is awestruck that he does not feel enough moral guilt to confess to the authorities.

Throughout his meeting with Sonya, he admits he is wicked and evil. This is similar to the first step in God absolving sins. Raskolnikov does not yet fully accept that he must take responsibility for his crime, but he at least begins to acknowledge that his actions were bad. There are undertones of him searching for salvation -- he asks aloud "Why, why did I come" (397). His unconscious search for redemption is why he goes to Sonya. As they converse, Sonya realizes that the idea of ordinary versus extraordinary men has become Raskolnikov's creed. Unlike Birkin in *Women in Love*, Raskolnikov admits he was looking for fulfillment in his theory and failed to find it. Rather than his theory being presented as a forward-thinking, hopeful ideal, he himself proclaims it a failure. The end of the chapter leaves Raskolnikov ultimately closer to salvation -- Sonya offers him a cross. He is not ready for the cross, but agrees to take it when he can accept his suffering and feel appropriate guilt. In his meeting with Sonya, Raskolnikov reveals himself as more than a cold-hearted murderer, making him easier to believe as a character.

Later in the novel, Raskolnikov speaks with Porfiry, who gives a speech of great impact, which is summarized well by the line "Find your faith, and you will live" (441). His words do not immediately effect Raskolnikov, who sternly reminds Porfiry he has confessed nothing. Soon after their meeting, Raskolnikov realizes he must choose Sonya's way or his own (444). While he still cannot fully see his actions as a crime in Chapter VII of Book VI, at the beginning of Chapter VIII he goes to Sonya to retrieve the cross she previously offered him. This symbolizes

his readiness to embrace guilt, as he does in his broken but definitive confession at the close of the novel (511). In the epilogue, Raskolnikov contemplates his crime and his theories in prison in Siberia. The narrator recounts how Raskolnikov was “unable to realize that perhaps even while he stood by the river he already felt in his heart that there was something profoundly false in himself and his beliefs” (521). Dostoevsky makes this strong statement in the epilogue to confirm Raskolnikov feels guilty and recognizes the hollowness of his contrived moral code.

Dostoevsky’s vision of guilt presents a disturbing reality -- taking immediate moral responsibility is not realistic; accepting one’s transgression as wrong and asking for forgiveness is a long process that Raskolnikov begins but does not fully complete. In *Women in Love*, Lawrence offers an even more disturbing reality; he creates characters immune to guilt. Though there are instances when it may appear Lawrence’s characters feel guilty, what they really feel is existential meaninglessness. Lawrence’s worldview is more daring than Dostoevsky’s because he proposes a world without strong moral boundaries.

After Hermione hits Birkin with a paperweight nearly knocking him unconscious, she does not feel guilty. The narrator tells the reader “She knew that, spiritually, she was right. In her own infallible purity, she had done what must be done. She was right, she was pure” (107). Unlike Raskolnikov, who experiences flashes of guilt despite his insistence that he committed no crime, after Hermione decides she is morally in the right, she never again considers the rightness or wrongness of her action. Lawrence is capable of creating characters that do not feel guilt. The thought that people can coldly disregard morality and avoid punishment goes beyond Dostoevsky’s more conservative reality.

It appears that Gerald feels guilty when he is unable to save his sister from drowning at the Water Party. He will not go home with Birkin; instead he waits until the lake is fully drained and the bodies found. A later meeting between Birkin and Gerald reveals that Gerald does not feel guilty for the accident, as his waiting for the lake to drain may have implied. When Birkin asks if the drowning upsets Gerald, Gerald responds indifferently saying "I don't feel it very much, really. I don't feel any different...I can't feel any *grief*, you know" (210). That Gerald cannot feel "grief" is shocking given he has let his sister die. It would be equally striking if Raskolnikov ultimately was portrayed as an "extraordinary" man -- however, Dostoevsky does not make this leap as Lawrence does. This is one instance where Lawrence corrects Dostoevsky by creating a drastic character.

When Gerald is more directly the culprit of atrocities, he still does not feel guilty. Lawrence depicts Gerald's father as a devout Christian who feels "That in Christ he was one with his workmen. Nay, he...felt inferior to them, as if they through poverty and labour were nearer to God than he" (222). Mr. Crich aligns with Dostoevsky's vision of reality. However, in the character of Gerald, Lawrence acknowledges that the world has moved into a different reality where the colliers are Gerald's "instruments" and "the sufferings and feelings of individuals [do] not matter in the least" (230). For Gerald, man has replaced God, and thus man feels no moral guilt (231). When Gerald succeeds in crafting a machine that is flawlessly efficient and organized, he stands back in terror realizing he will become obsolete (240). Even in this moment, Gerald only fears a meaningless existence, he does not regret his harsh treatment of his workmen. Lawrence's man-made-god vision radically departs from Dostoevsky's traditional piety. Reality for Lawrence is bleak -- he gives an ugly picture of life and offers no traditional

redemption; on the other hand, Dostoevsky presents tragedy but softens it with the promise of redemption.

Throughout the chapter “Snowed Up,” Gerald has a growing desire to murder Gudrun, similar to Raskolnikov’s growing desire to kill the pawnbroker. Unlike Raskolnikov, who waffles until the moment he commits murder, Gerald builds momentum until he strangles Gudrun. The life-force of his maleness against her femininity grows stronger and more violent until it is released when he grabs her throat. Before he strangles Gudrun, Gerald does not feel guilty for thinking he must kill her. He is a more haunting, more extreme character than Raskolnikov.

After Gerald frees Gudrun, he may appear guilty, especially considering soon thereafter he commits suicide. He thinks he is letting himself sink to an unworthy depth; this thought promises moral grieving. However, Gerald soon clarifies his meaning as he muses that he does not care “about her enough to kill her, to have her life on his hands” (490). It is clear that he does not feel guilt, but a deep meaninglessness. A sense of purposeless existence is what stops him and what drives him to death. His *angst* is captured in his final words: “I want to go to sleep. I’ve had enough” (490). For Gerald, it does not matter whether or not he strangles Gudrun to death, it does not matter whether he lives or dies. Instead of acknowledging his sins and seeking a life of redemption, he acknowledges his insignificance and seeks nonexistence. The difference between Dostoevsky and Lawrence is the difference between saying “I need God’s help, but He will help me” and saying “I must bear the existential crisis of my life alone and perish alone.” Lawrence puts more responsibility in the hands of individuals, thus his reality is more challenging to accept than Dostoevsky’s comforting model of faith.

The picture of Dostoevsky's religious and moral realities is less radical than Lawrence's; Lawrence also goes beyond Dostoevsky with his vision of rationality. In *Women in Love*, raw physicality is more real than rational contemplation. However, rationality permeates *Crime and Punishment*. Dostoevsky is revolutionary in that he presents rationality as a warped mode of living, but, in contrast to Lawrence, he is uncomfortable entirely abandoning a logic-based reality.

Raskolnikov cannot kill the pawn broker as an act of pure physical violence; he must handle his crime rationally. Before acting, he thoroughly analyzes why criminals get caught. Reasoning that what he is doing is "no crime," Raskolnikov does not think he will feel guilt and thus be discovered. He decides he will use an axe and makes a loop to hold the axe so it will not be noticeable. To distract the pawn broker, he makes a fake package with a complicated knot that will take time to untie. He articulates his plan to himself thinking, "Kill her, take her money, on condition that you dedicate yourself with its help to the service of humanity and the common good" (62). Raskolnikov then argues that one transgression can be forgiven if it leads to thousands of good deeds; he compares his logic to arithmetic. Even though his rationality is characterized as "hideous and absurd," (66) he is nonetheless portrayed as a rational character. Raskolnikov exhibits skewed rationale, but does not offer an alternative to thinking logically.

The most physical act of the novel is Raskolnikov murdering Alena Ivanovna and Lizaveta, yet as the axe swings down on Ivanovna's head, Raskolnikov is "hardly conscious" of his action. Unlike the physicality in *Women in Love*, physical acts in *Crime and Punishment* are not presented as modes of conscious living. Dostoevsky does not deal with the physical as openly as Lawrence; instead, he focuses on an obsession with rationalizing. Perhaps Dostoevsky

criticizes rationalism, yet he does not take the next step, as Lawrence does, of portraying another option. In this way Lawrence attempts to correct Dostoevsky's world.

Most of this novel is driven by solving a crime case; the very fabric of *Crime and Punishment* is drenched in "A leads to B, therefore C." From Porfiry's perspective, catching a criminal is depicted in logical steps. To catch the guilty man, Porfiry must leave the suspected alone. This time alone will lead to paranoia. This paranoia will lead the criminal to come to Porfiry out of a mad curiosity. Because the criminal is guilty, surely he will blunder, thus providing "mathematical proof, like two and two make four," (326) that he is a murderer. The act of the crime is briefly described, yet Raskolnikov's repeated meetings with Porfiry fill a substantial amount of pages, for example, they meet again during all of Chapter II in Book VI. The focus of *Crime and Punishment* is the logic surrounding the misdeed and criminal reparation. If this were Lawrence's novel, the emphasis would likely be placed more gruesomely on the physicality of the crime.

One of, if not the most, striking challenge to rationality in *Crime and Punishment* is Razumikhin's concept of "the living soul" (246). As he talks of "the living soul," Razumikhin passionately declares that "The living process is not yet fulfilled...You cannot divert the course of nature by logic alone" (246). Razumikhin's words are promising -- he seems to offer an alternative, or perhaps a complement to logic. However, his remarks are quickly brushed aside by Porfiry, who laughs at him and changes the subject to Raskolnikov's article about ordinary and extraordinary classes of men. This becomes their topic of conversation for the rest of the chapter. As Raskolnikov's theory unfolds, it becomes obvious that he committed his crime as a thought experiment: to see if his rationale dividing society into "ordinary" and "extraordinary"

men is sound, and, furthermore, to confirm that he himself is an extraordinary man (248 - 256). Here rationality, though again horrifyingly employed, overshadows the notion of finding something beyond logic, for instance “the living soul.”

On the final page of *Crime and Punishment*, Dostoevsky vaguely offers an alternative to rationality with the statement: “Life had taken the place of logic and something quite different must be worked out in his mind” (527). Though this alternative is presented, it is left to be “worked out in [Raskolnikov’s] mind,” whereas Lawrence attempts to flesh out his alternative to the current state of the world throughout *Women in Love*.

For Lawrence, physical consciousness offers an alternative mode of being to rationality. Towards the beginning of the novel, Hermione, Gerald, and Birkin argue rationally. They try to establish when a nation is justified in taking from another nation, and when a robbed nation must fight back out of pride. This argument follows logical lines, but leads to no definitive conclusion. Towards the end of the argument, Gerald says he understands Birkin’s point, summarizing it as Birkin having to choose “whether his hat or his peace of mind is more important” (27). Birkin corrects him; it is not peace of mind he is worried about, it is “Peace of body” (27). By offering a short, unfruitful argument overpowered by Birkin’s bold correction, Lawrence stresses the physical body over the rational mind.

When Hermione and Birkin meet in Ursula’s classroom, Birkin, who previously stressed body over mind, pushes Hermione to embrace knowledge over spontaneity and animalistic sensation. Yet Birkin is not defending traditional rationality; he calls the rationality of the current world ““A limited, false set of concepts”” (38). Upon further reading, the reader discovers the knowledge Birkin desires. Hermione asks him if sensuality is what he wants. Birkin replies with

an overwhelming yes, stating that true sensuality, not her warped form of it, is ““The great dark knowledge you can’t have in your head -- the dark involuntary being”” (40). Here there is no need for rationality in the logical sense that Dostoevsky depicts. There is only a thirst for deep consciousness of sensation. Lawrence’s rejection of logic entirely is a more radical step than simply suggesting it has flaws, as Dostoevsky does with Raskolnikov’s twisted logic.

Some of Lawrence’s most drastic positive portrayals of a lack of rationality are physical moments, instead of conversations like the ones previously outlined. One such moment occurs on the island during the Water Party when Gudrun dances with Ursula, then with cattle. Rather than showing Gudrun’s mental thoughts when Ursula starts singing, Lawrence uses a slew of verbs to capture Gudrun’s movements: she dances, pulses, flutters, spreads her arms, raises them, flings them, lifts her face, her feet beat and run, and Gudrun’s form drifts and shudders. Gudrun then approaches cattle, a completely irrational action because she risks the herd charging at her. She craves a “frenzy of unconscious sensation” (172) in her stretching, heaving, falling, reaching, shaking, ebbing, and shivering. Lawrence uses Gudrun’s dance ritual to suggest pure sensual expression offers a fuller life experience than rationality. As in, rationality is not always necessary -- just being present and feeling rhythm and atmosphere is sometimes enough. With the cattle, he may go so far as to imply that sometimes it is thrilling to release oneself in semi-dangerous situations, blatantly contrary to rational impulse. Intensely engaging sensual experiences are not present in Dostoevsky’s work; he clings to rationality, even when it is flawed. Lawrence’s sensuality is bold because it is easily misinterpreted as collapsing human existence down to physical pleasure, and may suggest physicality that defies rationality can be fulfilling, even if it is potentially perilous.

Thus far Lawrence's radical realities of religion, morality, and rationality have thoroughly been juxtaposed with Dostoevsky's revolutionary, yet overall more traditional, versions of these concepts. Finally it is useful to consider how Lawrence redresses Dostoevsky's idea of "self." According to Michele Frucht Levy, expressing oneself is "The opposition between real and ideal, embodied in Dostoevsky by the epithet, *zhivaja zhizn'* —real, living life—and *igra* —play, sport, game, performance" (282). In *Notes from Underground*, she argues, Underground Man wants a life "beyond the Ideal in the Real" (Levy, 283). However, upon drawing connections between *Crime and Punishment* and *Women in Love*, it is difficult to contend that Dostoevsky's characters are truly able to move past *igra*. They certainly cannot move past the state of "performance" to the same degree that Lawrence's characters can. In Dostoevsky, at best there are real characters who struggle to expose their true selves. Ultimately, Dostoevsky paradoxically insists that real society is filled with performers playing fake versions of themselves. Characters will conceal their true thoughts for the sake of not causing trouble; Lawrence's characters are, in contrast, unbridled.

Raskolnikov hides that he is the murderer -- even to his family -- for most of the novel. When his mother shows great faith in him and assures him his actions all must be right, he responds with a twisted smile and a "Don't be too sure" (218). He realizes they are afraid of him, and sinisterly asks them to confirm his realization. Dunya responds frankly that they are afraid. In her there is hope for a model of the real self. However, her remark is overshadowed when their mother quickly jumps into the conversation chastising her for being so harsh. The glimpse of genuine interaction in this scene is ultimately trumped by characters pretending in order to maintain peace.

Raskolnikov feigns composure when he first meets with Porfiry, enquiring about possessions he had pawned. He tries to look Porfiry in the eyes, he speaks angrily but then internally reflects he must pretend he is not irritated. In this scene, Zametov testifies that when he met with Raskolnikov, he seemed sane -- which is clearly a lie if one recalls their meeting on pages 158 and 159. At the peak of his anger, Raskolnikov thinks to himself “What if it is a delusion...that makes me lose my temper and fail to keep up this wretched role I am playing” (244). Here Raskolnikov questions whether his true feelings are part of a delusion. He suggests it is a bad thing to fail to play one’s role. In *Women in Love*, often characters are aware of the roles they are supposed to play and intentionally defy those roles, without questioning whether or not they are acting rightly.

In Sonya, the reader sees a real person, yet she does not readily expose her true self fully. Raskolnikov suspects her faith is inauthentic and rooted in religious mania (311). When he asks her to read to him, she hesitates because he presumably does not believe in God. Beyond his non-belief status, he understands “How difficult it [is] for her to expose and betray all that [is] *her own*” (313). She manages to read the passage to him and reveals her religious ecstasy, yet after she shows herself in this way, the narrator notes that she is embarrassed (315). This scene of Sonya reading the story of Lazarus to Raskolnikov is an example of Dostoevsky portraying a character as her true self. While Dostoevsky’s portrayal is weighed down by hesitancy and embarrassment, Lawrence’s characters are much more forward, even obstinate, about expressing themselves authentically.

When Luzhin frames Sonya, accusing her of stealing a hundred rouble-note, the “real” Andrey Semenovich delivers a heartfelt speech in her defense. This genuine expression of the

self is undermined by the fact that Semenovich “Was not very skillful at expressing himself in Russian (although he knew no other language), so that he seemed suddenly quite exhausted, even wasted away, after this feat of advocacy” (384). Similar to Sonya’s difficulty when reading to Raskolnikov, it is hard for Semenovich to show his true character to others. Moreover, in Semenovich’s case, perhaps it is not even possible for him to completely reveal his real self because of his lack of communication skills. At best, Dostoevsky’s characters struggle to show their “real” selves; it is more natural and true to their reality to expose contrived versions of themselves.

Lawrence’s characters are polar opposites of those in Dostoevsky’s reality; it is rare for any of the main characters in *Women in Love* to hold back their opinion. Birkin openly criticizes society for endorsing insincerity. While talking to Gerald on the train, Birkin expresses the horrible state of the world. He says “We are such dreary liars...We have an ideal of a perfect world, clean and straight and sufficient. So we cover the earth with foulness; life is a blotch of labour, like insects scurrying in filth, so that your collier can have a pianoforte in his parlour, and you can have a butler and a motorcar in your up-to-date house” (52). Lawrence does not hesitate to use Birkin as a vehicle for criticizing society’s, and Dostoevsky’s, obsession with fake appearances. Furthermore, Lawrence continues this scene by having Birkin model what it is like to be one’s true self, instead of a phony reflection. It is not generally socially appropriate to express strong hatred for a close acquaintance, yet Birkin brazenly tells Gerald he hates him (53). The two men go on to dialogue openly about the meaning of life and love. In *Crime and Punishment*, it has already been noted that characters can seldom relate to one another this candidly. Lawrence’s reality is open dialogue about difficult topics, not self-conscious role-

playing saturated with formalities. Such openness and vulnerability comes with great risk; it is a more daring reality than Dostoevsky's.

Birkin's openness with Gerald, despite his brutal honesty, leads to a strengthened friendship, but Lawrence also wants to show that being one's true self does not always yield positive consequences. Birkin decides he must marry Ursula. When he goes to her house to find her, he instead finds her father, Will Brangwen, whom he instantly dislikes. In this situation, one might expect Birkin to act cordially to Mr. Brangwen and humbly ask him for his daughter's hand in marriage, despite his distaste for the man. Alternatively, when asked if he wants to speak with Ursula, Birkin casually replies "As a matter of fact,...I wanted to ask her to marry me" (265). Birkin's casual and abrupt request irritates Mr. Brangwen, but Birkin attempts to make no amends. Some of his thoughts he keeps silent, but that does not prevent him from expressing their caustic sentiment. Mr. Brangwen informs Birkin he does not want Ursula to throw away her upbringing. Birkin retorts with a provocative "Why?" rather than a flood of assurances that he will further cultivate her social manners. While Dostoevsky's characters play-act to keep an outward peace, no matter how violent their inner thoughts may be, Lawrence's characters are not afraid to say what they feel. Lawrence is radical in championing honest conduct that often leads to social turmoil.

Hermione is the one character who may thwart the claim that Lawrence focuses on the "real" self. She is clearly fake. For instance, on pages 37 and 38, she tells Birkin how she abhors knowledge. On page 86, she stresses to Gudrun that "The pleasure of knowing is *so* great, so *wonderful*." The italics imply Lawrence is mocking her as a character. Only 40 pages apart she gives contradictory opinions, and nowhere in between does she stop to honestly consider Birkin's

defense of knowledge. Hermione is not one of the four major characters; her largest influence in the novel is arguably that she is a foil for their genuine search for meaning and freedom. In other words, Lawrence uses Hermione as an example of how not to act. Thus, Hermione's actions can be reconciled with Lawrence's emphasis on authenticity.

If David Gervais' claim is true that "Dostoevsky was a consummation of the Christian past rather than a herald of the future," (65) then D.H. Lawrence is certainly the "herald of the future" that Dostoevsky fails to be. Dostoevsky pushes the bounds of what reality looks like in *Crime and Punishment* by examining a criminal's mental reality, but fails to fully redefine the realms of religion, moral guilt, rationality, and the self. In contrast, Lawrence drastically re-imagines all of these concepts in *Women in Love*. Birkin's apocalyptic religion is more experimental than Dostoevsky's traditional Christianity. Though Raskolnikov cannot readily accept moral suffering, he eventually does, unlike Hermione and Gerald. Rationality in *Crime and Punishment* is warped. Undermining logic is daring, however it is not quite as bold as Lawrence's sensuality paired with the absence of self-aware rational thought. Finally, Dostoevsky traps his characters in roles, never letting them clearly and unashamedly express themselves. Dostoevsky's constricted version of reality is overthrown by almost uninhibited expression of self in *Women in Love*. After thoroughly examining *Crime and Punishment* and *Women in Love*, it can be concluded that Lawrence, who wrote in reaction to Dostoevsky, successfully exaggerated and changed Dostoevsky's picture of reality to create an even more radical portrait of living in this world.

Works Cited

"A History of LGBT Rights in the UK." *A History of LGBT Rights*. Imperial College London, n.d. Web. 18 Apr. 2014.

Aiello, Lucia. *Fedor Dostoevskii in Britain: The Tale of an Untalented Genius*. Modern Humanities Research Association. *The Modern Language Review*, Vol. 98, No. 3 (Jul., 2003), pp. 659-677. <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/3738291>>.

Gervais, David. "Dostoevsky and the English Novel: Dickens, John Cowper Powys and D.H. Lawrence." *Cambridge Quarterly*. 35.1 (2006): 49-71. *Project Muse*.

Levy, Michele Frucht. "D. H. Lawrence and Dostoevsky: The Thirst for Risk and the Thirst for Life." *MFS Modern Fiction Studies* 3.2 (1987): 281-288. *Project MUSE*. Web. 25 Mar. 2014. <<http://0-muse.jhu.edu.helin.uri.edu/>>.

New International Version. [Colorado Springs]: Biblica, 2011. *BibleGateway.com*. Web. 10 April 2014.

Powys, John Cowper. *Autobiography*, preface by J. B. Priestley (London 1982).

Sanders, Scott. *D. H. Lawrence: The World of The Five Major Novels*. New York: Viking, 1974.