

ISSN 1751-8229

Volume Twelve, Number Three

# The Sublime Subject of Literary Analysis: A Žižekian Reading of D. H. Lawrence

Vicky Panossian, Lebanese American University, Lebanon

## Abstract

This article aims to present a Žižekian reading of the British author David Herbert Lawrence. The contemporary continental philosopher has tackled each of the British author's reoccurring themes individually and thus may be used as a keystone for a valid literary interpretation. The paper begins by shedding light on the representation of Western ideology, moves further into the comprehension of the impacts of modern cultural capital and the limitations of industrialization. While at the same time the dissertation targets another component of the romantic poet's many writings, which is the regeneration of the subject's carnal presence as a defense mechanism against the prevalent culture of de-humanization. The argument at hand is that the reconstruction of the bodily image rendered through Lawrence's erotic literature is not one that portrays promiscuity, but rather demonstrates a transgression of the Lacanian symbolic and the attainment of a partial rendition of a Hegelian totality. Lawrence's six novels and set of poems are thoroughly analyzed from a strictly Žižekian perspective to demonstrate that the two authors share thematic representations, a common worldview and propose a manifestation of how literary analyses may be conveyed using Žižek as a philosophical lens for literary interpretation.

## Keywords

Slavoj Žižek, D.H. Lawrence, poetry, Literary analysis, capitalism, Hegel, Lacan, Psychoanalysis, Eroticism, Totality

## Exordium: A Briefing

Slavoj Žižek and David Herbert Lawrence are known for their bluntness, their love of truth and their extensive interest in continental ideology. Both Žižek and Lawrence are entitled “dangerous”, each in their own scope of work, yet their writings often overlap and merge into one another as the two psychoanalysts reach very similar conclusions. This paper aims to analyze David Herbert Lawrence’s prose and poetry from a Žižekian lens, zooming in on thematic manifestations to offer a schema for future interpretations. D. H. Lawrence is said to be the man who had enough courage to jet down the woes of his war-struck people, he fought against rapid industrialization and de-humanization using romanticism. Žižek does another rendition of a very similar occurrence as he entitles contemporary reality a “trashcan of ideology” and tries to conjure up a “cure” for capitalism “the modern-man’s plahue”. Žižek’s insights on Lacanian psychoanalysis and Hegelian philosophy are widely used throughout the paper to demonstrate a few very important thematic transition in Lawrence’s literature. Žižek often speaks of a certain degree of reality in fiction, and hence, Lawrence’s writings are to be read as the delegates of the reality of the 20<sup>th</sup> century’s British society. The predominant way of thought is thoroughly analyzed and criticized in all of Lawrence’s works following a specific pattern of representation. This paper aims to demonstrate that Lawrence is indeed a “oracle” for his readers instead of an author “acknowledging promiscuity”. It serves to advocate that Slavoj Žižek may be read in the light of literary works and that the interpretation of literature itself is a gateway to the comprehension of the prevalent way of thought of a specific society. A very similar literary experiment done by Sbriglia (2017) explains that though Žižek is often more closely associated with Cinema rather than literature, his comprehensive take on continental philosophy offers a brilliant mechanism for literary analysis.

This paper strives to attain a sneak peek of the comprehensive study of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century’s western mentality. Lacanian psychoanalysis is used to decode and unravel the workings of a man entitled of a “prophetic dimension” (Spender 1973).

Lawrence has employed a series of strategies throughout his works, his initial chapters often express a vivid outburst of the misery of a protagonist’s reality, a brief overview of the cataclysm of the first world war, followed by an extensive review of the mockeries of capitalism that have de-humanized his people and an eventual climax. During this crescendo, Lawrence begins to speak of eroticism, a return to primitivism and

barbarism, followed by the worship of the human body and the re-evaluation of reality as a function of humanity, rather than it being a mere superimposed ideology. Each of the prior mentioned visualizations is targeted individually and analyzed using a strictly Žižekian theoretical approach. The dissertation is broken down into two major parts, the initial one serving to conceptualize cultural capital and its subsets, while the second is based on a Žižekian take of Lawrence's anarchic eroticism and a critical interpretation of the protagonists' submission to a natural state of being.

### **Cultural Capitalism & The Troubles in Industrial Paradise**

Slavoj Žižek, in his book entitled *Violence* gives the example of Pablo Picasso and his famous chaotic paintings; when Picasso was asked by the German officer if the paintings were of his making, he replies "no, you did this" (2008: 10). D. H. Lawrence is yet another Picasso, he is the chiseled poet who sings the woes of his people and tries to offer a remedy, which is why many have entitled Lawrence the "soothsayer" offering salvation to his readers (Spender 1973). Lawrence uses prose and poetry to shed light on the many symptoms of his suffering people, as Žižek explains in *Less than Nothing* (2012), symptoms are not just signals of societal dissociation, but notions that target a "rotten" core at the very heart of ideology, which is where this paper is expected to reach. Lawrence depicts the misery of his people both implicitly and explicitly through his many protagonists, for instance Sir Clifford Chatterley is forever crippled because of the war. While, Tom Brangwen in *The Rainbow* is described as carrying "a deep misery which he wore with the same ease and pleasantness as he wore his close-sitting clothes" (1993: 225). Lawrence demonstrates the very essence of the cataclysm that has effected his people by transforming his many characters into archetypes. According to Žižek (2018), culture is the pinnacle horizon of empirical historicism so whilst reading the *Reality of Peace* and projecting unto the poem Žižek's thoughts on violence, the last stanza seems to indicate the actuality of the British society as a whole, rather than the mere rendition of it in Lawrence's thoughts, as it reads:

What is it internecine that is locked  
By very fierceness into a quiescence  
Within the rage? We shall not know till it burst  
Out of corrosion into a new florescence. (1971: 160)

In Lawrence's days, men had grown out of the *War Baby* (Lawrence 1971) states and transformed into "tin people", "industrial corpses" instead of being those of the "new florescence"; they had forsaken the life of the body for that of the riches of capitalism. Yet, according to Žižek (2015), one might dare and say that this entailing of cultural ambiguity is the only way to maintain the cultural identity in the rapidly globalizing world, which is amalgamating one's individuality. Perhaps this would clarify why Lawrence decided to bespeak of men like Clifford and later on confess that they are the representatives of his contemporary England (Lawrence 2006). This extensive form of capitalism may be read as an attempt from the British society of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century to regain their unique sense of reason by imposing upon them the ruthlessness of self discipline through economy, yet, within the process of maintaining one's cultural identity the animal within man was to be slaughtered.

Žižek, in his book entitled *In Defense of Lost Causes* (2008) elaborately explains how it is that the concept of one's true freedom of choice is only put forth when one has trespassed the boundaries that protect the subject from harm; true freedom is deciding what to do when one's own existence is at stake. Lawrence and Žižek echo the same notion of freedom when they demonstrate what it is to be "free" in a world where every soul is entailed to submit to the very same capitalist ideology. They illustrate how one ought to go beyond and above the boundaries that society has set for them. For instance, one may take the example of *Virgin and the Gypsy* (1990) and their forbidden love, or Lady Chatterley and her lover, during both of which Lawrence advocates a return to lust in order to trespass the limits of capitalism. When he speaks of *The Snake* (Lawrence 1971) and dares not to kill it, but instead to find sympathy for it; or when he bespeaks of the thrills of *Virgin Youth* (Lawrence 1971) Lawrence embodies Žižek's conceptualization of the practice of freedom when one's reputation and social status are on the line.

Similarly, Žižek (2009) explains how it is that the horse-shoe above the Bohr's house door is said to delegate his cultural understandings, which though are not to be taken seriously, offer a certain degree of belonging and a display of cultural gratification. Even if Lawrence's protagonists are against the many corruptive tendencies of their contemporary reality and the prevailing ideology, they serve to maintain bits of it by keeping the metaphorical horse shoe above their doors. For instance, "the virgin" does not end up "touching" the gypsy, while Lady Chatterley, embodied as Lady Jane, does end up

marrying Sir Thomas. Culture is not fully being forgotten or kept in the dark, but merely being transformed into what Žižek (1989) might call a “secondary element”, but without which the primary would have no significant value. People’s need to belong to a specific ideology, the concept of a system of perception, is that which transforms Lawrence into a Žižekian. Yet, the alter egos of the prior mentioned protagonists take the persistence of cultural ideology as the very reason of their existence and thus end up reconstructing their individuality into mere carnal machinery.

Another disturbing aspect of many of Lawrence’s poems is the dedication to the culture of industrialization. While Žižek (2018) points out that the ordinary person’s concern with material aspects is quite normal and anticipated, Lawrence represents the many ways in which capitalism has taken over humanness. For instance, In *The Collier’s Wife* (1971) Lawrence illustrates how it is that a wife has gotten used to her husband’s constant exploitation, taken for granted his suffering and has reduced her desires to a mere right to live as a wife rather than as a widow. Another demonstration of the latter is in Lawrence’s famous *Going Back* (1971), in which he explains how it is that the voices of men are lost within the “sound of artillery, aeroplanes” and the only “pure relief” is death itself, for cultural capitalism has no cure. Žižek, being a post-modern continental philosopher has a lot to say about the dispersion of capitalism within the psychological processes of the modern-industrialized man, but Lawrence does not seem to be advocating the complete abolishment of the system, yet merely its reformation.

Throughout six of Lawrence’s novels, the popular theme of labor exploitation is ever present. It starts off with Lawrence’s famous poems such as *Town in 1917* in which he explains how London has “broken her spell” while in *Rondeau of a Conscientious Objector* (1971) the English people, the “industrial corpses” of his generation are described as having “compressed souls” living in “Waste lands”. This form of entanglement of one’s identity with both their economic and social status is also present in Lawrence’s many novels, be it with the ideological representation of impotent Clifford in *Lady Chatterley’s Lover* (2006) or within the *Women in love* (1943) and the description of the many men merely by their “economic functions”. It’s widely known that these men are representative of England itself and hence the moral of the conundrum is rooted deeper than within the mere surface of society. Lawrence seems to be foreshadowing what Žižek says about love and relationships “Like love, ideology is blind, even if people caught up in it are not” (2009: 37). Hence, this “precarious work” is perceived “as a new form of freedom” for one is no

longer a mere cog in a complex machine but a fully functioning subject to the entrepreneur-of-the-self (Žižek 2018: 37).

As Žižek (2012) speaks of “democratic illusions” being the very basis of our contemporary misery, Lawrence shares a very similar concern. In *Virgin and the Gypsy* Lawrence uses his protagonists to protest against the prevailing ideology when he says “why are we all only like mortal pieces of furniture? Why is nothing important?”(1990: 40) as in *Lady Chatterley’s Lover* (2006) the very same dialogue is repeated between Oliver and Connie. Žižek’s echoes may also be traced within the poem entitled *A Man Who Died* (1971) where there’s a certain gap of understanding, a lack of humanness as the latter is partnered with a poem of a dying mother neglected by her children who are running after the industry and the money it has to offer. *A Monologue of a Mother* (1971) demonstrates Žižek’s thesis at its finest for it bespeaks the tale of contemporary cultural capital hindering man’s capability for empathy. In *Women in Love* (1943) Rupert “threatened by the oppressively intellectual atmosphere of his mistress's country estate, seeks and finds relief among the trees [...] he approaches the land almost as a physical lover” (Janik 1983: 362) much like Connie in *Lady Chatterley’s Lover* (2006) who goes to search for a sanctuary within the nature. “But mankind is a dead tree, covered with fine brilliant galls of people.[...] Why, why are people all balls of bitter dust? Because they won't fall off the tree when they're ripe. They hang on to their old positions when the position is over-past” (1943: 168) Žižek uses the very same imagery to speak of the contemporary man’s physical state, he describes the latter using a Persian proverb “war nam nihadan” which means “to murder somebody, bury his body, then grow flowers over the body to conceal it” (2012). Even if the breathing corpse is beautified and money is deified, the very basis of the society is corrupt just as much as Lawrence considers it to be, there is no need for a hyperbole. When in *Women in Love* (1943) Lawrence speaks of Possessions taking the best of man and leaving nothing of him behind, Žižek’s trashcan of ideology comes to mind. When Žižek(2009) writes of one’s “authentic existential choice” of voting by paying, there rings a bell that reminds the reader of Clifford Chatterley and the *Weeknight Service* which kills the very notion of nation, subjecting it to industrialization, as it says:

The wise old trees  
Drop their leaves with a faint, sharp hiss of contempt  
A car at the end of the street goes by with a laugh (1971: 54)

The engine, the representative of industrialization, is laughing at the disdain of the romanticized nature who is individualized, exploited and trapped in the culture of capitalism.

On another note, “Their words were only accidents in the mutual silence” wrote Lawrence (1993: 180) as he had transformed his protagonists into authors and playwrights and later on devalued them for what they were. Žižek (2001) claims that reducing a thing to a mere signifier is equivalent to murdering its essence and Lawrence portrays the very same view, yet paradoxically, he does so through words. Žižek, in *Enjoy Your Symptom* (2001) goes on to explain and clarify how it is that the notion of identification with the thing itself does not amplify its significance but rather, trims back its value which is what the words exchanged in between many of Lawrence’s couples was doing to their silence. Thus, as Žižek (2016) demonstrates the Symbolic event or “ the quasi-magic effect of finding the right word” may be read as an act of the Master-signifier, a point-de-capitan, the action through which the signifier falls into another and produced a new “harmonious” order of being providing a new structuring principle for reality to function within. Clifford and Connie Chatterley demonstrate another rendition of the Žižekian conundrum, as Clifford, being Connie’s husband is shrunk down into a mere poet of his people, he becomes a corpse because he follows the world of words and so does the Great Britain which Clifford is said to be delegating. When in reality, there’s the need to resurrect the corpse from the grief of war, rather than spill further ink on the blood that has already been aimlessly shed. Yet perhaps, delving deeper into Žižek might justify as to why Lawrence’s representation of England is quite comprehensible. Žižek (2008) explains how Stalin would withdraw into an isolated place in Switzerland and learned and read for days, which is what the people of England had chosen to do in times of trouble. Instead of exercising the body and neglecting the mind, they had gone so far within the mental life that they had been transformed into intellectual corpses. But if there is no Lacanian “meta-language” in a relationship than the language itself begins to be of no necessity, for there would no longer be a relationship; Žižek (2006) explains this by the analogy of the Marxist’s understanding of the relationship between the Economy and Politics saying that one may not exist without the requisite of the other.

A prominent Žižekian theme noticed throughout Lawrence’s essays is the ability to bespeak of woe and forcefully forget it. There’s the constant appearance of class struggle, the gap in between one social stratum and another embodied by Mellors and Paul Morrel

and the Gypsy. Žižek (2008) might read the latter and proclaim that this is the earliest vestiges of a thematic representation of contemporary Europe, which is infested with a social gap enforced by “mechanical rules” and boundaries that hinder the passage from one state of being to another, though there are certain degrees of peaceful coexistence, such as that of *The Virgin and the Gypsy* (1990) or that of Clifford and his gamekeeper, when these paths do cross, the plot of Lawrence’s novels seems to reach its ultimate climax, but “Sometimes, alienation is not a problem but a solution” for entailing it otherwise would harass the peace in society and bring forth a revolution, which is what Lawrence as well as Žižek are implicitly preaching. The overlapping philosophy of disdain from contemporary time’s prevalent ideology goes far beyond the mere proclamation of alienation and reaches to the fact that industrialization becomes deeply rooted within the protagonists, as in *Sons and Lovers* (1984) the industrial civilization becomes a scene that Paul Morrel begins to fall in love with, while Sir Clifford battles his harnessed impotency and his emasculation through his many coal mines (Janik 1983: 361). While, Connie and Gertrude rely on forgetting the past and its wounds in order to move forward, Žižek explains the latter by claiming that the gesture is equivalent to a fetishist disavowal, as he says “I know it, but I don’t want to know that I know, so I don’t know.” I know it, but I refuse to fully assume the consequences of this knowledge, so that I can continue acting as if I don’t know it.”(2008: 53).

A very similar subject matter posed by both Lawrence and Žižek as a subset of industrialization is the fact that men become “prostitutes to the success”(Lawrence 2006: 51) in which he claims that the latter are so grounded in their work that they end up forgetting both ethics and morality. Žižek explains this conundrum using Berlusconi’s interesting example in *First as Ideology Then as Farce* (2009), which comes in tandem with Lawrence’s representation of Sir Clifford. Žižek (2005) may also read the latter as a form of a Lacanian primordial father of unbridled *jouissance* due to the relationship toward the unattainable fantasmic Thing which is “capitalist success”. Žižek, in *Courage of Hopelessness* (2018) returns to the very same idea and explains as to how the only way to escape capitalism and not give into it is through “freedom” which brings man back to point-zero, where both the local culture and its social ties are abolished. Lawrence’s protagonist, Oliver, fears the latter when he confesses his love to Connie and says that he knows not what to do with it, for rationalizing the situation is equivalent to killing the passion, which is the same case for all social boundaries in Lawrence’s novels that come to the Žižekian (2018) conclusion that the only way to attain actual freedom is to break all relations with



one's roots, yet the very basis of the structure of capitalism relies on the traditional cultural roots of its ideology; thus cultivating a gap in society, a tension that will eventually give rise to anarchism.

Lawrence chants the horrific epic of his people and comes to an ultimate conclusion. When in *Sons and Lovers* (1984) they decide to reach out for the lost stars and hold another in their embrace in order to combat the isolation in the darkness, there's a spark of hope. Žižek (2008) claims this mortification is within the symbolization of the thing in itself, he gives the example of gold and demonstrates how it is that we extract its nuance from itself by entitling it so. We limit a thing's reality by enforcing a label onto it, which is why Lawrence often manages to call his many protagonists by different names in each chapter. We get re-occurring events of people's surnames and nicknames as well as a manifold of abbreviation as though to draw a gap in between what a man can be in the eyes of society and what he ought to be. There's an over-reliance on the empathetic humanity of our nature which adds a romanticized hue to Lawrence's writings. Lawrence demonstrates the issue and offers a remedy, the way to out-pass the many dark clouds that industrialism has created upon the Englishman's heads, and find a bright star that will guide his people out of the disaster "we've got to live, no matter how many skies have fallen" (2006: 5). In *Women in Love* Lawrence says the following:

There we are two stark, unknown beings, two utterly strange creatures, I would want to approach you, and you me. And there could be no obligation, because there is no standard for action there, because no understanding has been reaped from that plane. It is quite inhuman-so there can be no calling to book, in any form whatsoever-because one is outside the pale of all that is accepted, and nothing known applies. One can only follow the impulse, taking that which lies in front, and responsible for nothing, asked for nothing, giving nothing, only each taking according to the primal desire. (1943:163)

"Primal desire" thus sheds light on the typographical state of being within the two polarities that both Lawrence and Žižek speak of, of contemporary ideology and human nature. There's the ongoing tragedy of capitalism, battled by the gratification of the pleasures of the body, the return to nature through primitivism and the eventual synthesis to solve the dichotomy of the mind and body and portray a medium of pure harmony. Yet the Žižekian (2016) understanding of a Hegelian definition of such a conceptualization of "totality" or

“harmony” does not include the peace of the whole in itself, but the considerable dissociations of the total sum of the subject. Thus a congregation which assesses Lawrence’s idea of a harmony is said to be an extremely Hegelian one in that there’s room for human error and symptoms of chaos, which makes the writing all the more realistic and utopian, as some of Lawrence’s critics have deemed it.

### **Enjoying The Symptoms of a Žižekian Revolt**

In *Living in The End Times* (2010), Žižek explains how it is that our carnal presence, our biological body needs constant re-programming in order to maintain its full potential. There’s the advocacy of a certain degree of intimacy between one entity and another that is bound to be responsible for this regeneration. Žižek (2016) looks at this process from a very Freudian perspective in that he considers the notion of “real event” as a trauma or rather something unthinkable which nonetheless takes place and becomes impossible to symbolize and is not integrated within our horizon of comprehension; the transference of this cosmic catastrophe gives way to a new beginning. Lawrence sheds light on this very same thought in a poem entitled *Dog Tired* (1971) in which he claims that though the absurdity of reality may be tiring him physically and hindering his mental peace, there’s only one place for true salvation which is in another’s embrace.

This genealogy of a performative dimension is a function of the Symbolic, explains Žižek (2001/2016), the insertion of an imaginary *objet petit a* that binds the Real to the Symbolic and brings forth a third dimension. The latter also serves as a “mask” wearing which is said to transform the bearer into whom he pretends to be and thus one can generate another rendition of reality, which takes over the present one. This idea of a mask and its consistent function in society is absurdly highlighted in many of Lawrence’s works, for instance, in *Women in Love* (1943) the very act of the forbidden lover’s coming together is said to function as a way to battle the contemporary traditional views of what a relationship ought to be. The act of rediscover oneself is yet another function of rediscovering the body of another.

One may even read Lawrence’s anarchism as a form of revolt. Žižek widely explains how being “active” is sometimes equivalent to doing nothing, but doing so against the norms of society that enforce upon us the responsibility to be “active” and serve as social agents. “The treat today is not passivity,” says Žižek, “but pseudo-activity, the urge to participate”(2008: 72) Lawrence advocates that which Žižek has entitled “the truly difficult thing to do” which is to run up the stream of the collective social consciousness

and against the current of the prevailing ideology. Žižek also explains the function of a dialogue in any social relations demonstrating that a dialogue indicates the social strata's presence. Engaging in a conversation of any social or political importance is said to be equivalent to "ensur[ing] that our ominous passivity is broken"(2008: 73), yet in the persistence of Lawrence's anarchism the many characters often lack the dialogue and its key factors. For instance, Oliver Mellors, though being capable of speaking fluent English, chooses to rely on his thick vernaculars to convey his message of contra-conformity. The lack of dialogue is also widely observed within the *Virgin and the Gypsy* (1990) and throughout most of Lawrence's poetry, which demonstrate a monologue, an assertion of an idea, rather than its passive acceptance. From a Lacanian perspective, this lack of dialogue may also be themed as a transgression of the Symbolic, Žižek (2001) illustrates the latter using the example of Edmund Munch's *Scream*, the absence voice of whom serves as a statement that goes beyond the mere image.

Thus, as Connie Chatterley is said to be "awakened" by the touch of Mellors, she changes the very means by which one accords the concept of radical social change (Nazareth 1962). She induces a new form of standards that invoke a distinct alteration in the criteria of that which results from it (Žižek 2012).

On the other end of this anarchism are the people who merely rely on the life of the body, the carnal being and the strive for the gratification of many of its unreachable desires. For instance, in Lawrence's essays Anna and Will Brangwen's relationship develops into a mere physical one. Žižek may lead the latter through a very Kantian perspective, claiming that what the subject is doing is striving to go "beyond the pleasure principle" which merely corrupts the homeostatic balance, for bodily desires are not to be gratified, living in merely one function of our being results in frustration. While the Lacanian approach may lead the reader to conclude that the description of desire is a mere function of the subject's realization of a "traumatic superego injunction" (Žižek 2008). Thus, Žižek offers two overlapping readings of the same phenomenon through a very philosophical lens. The parallax view at hand is ultimate reading of Lawrence's philosophy for both interpretations strive to do its justice.

The very core of the elation of eroticism, resides the notion of guilt for not conforming to the predisposed notions of ones social world. When Lawrence speaks of *The Prussian Officer* (1961) who is said to be "in throes of nameless passion, [struggling] to retain his tarnished dignity", there we see what Žižek (2012) might entitle the act of the judging consciousness that trespasses the factual function of the judging of itself and

ignores the true evils of the neutral gaze". Žižek continuously targets this issue of societal guilt in many of his books, for instance in *Puppet and The Dwarf* he tackles the very notion of sex serving as a means to enjoyment only whilst accepted by society, and whence the absence of guilt is recognized, one reaches the assertion of social anxiety which replaces the guilt. "In short" concludes Žižek, "the ultimate source of evil is compassion itself" (2003: 23). Žižek (2005) explains his own enactment of enjoyment and pleasure using the Lacanian *jouissance* and its definition as he claims that it's natural for enjoyment of compassion to manifest itself accompanied by agony, disgust and even horror.

In *The Rainbow* (1993) Lawrence betokens the many teachings of Žižek, especially when he claims that we go on "unliving" if we lose touch with our sense of touch. In *Living in the End times* (2012) Žižek philosophizes over the very same conundrum, taking into account the contemporary western ideology and the transformative identity traits it entails. Žižek (2012) speaks of a "royal path to spiritual awakening" which is said to come from "saying yes to all bodily needs". The very preaching of the gratification of both the physical and the mental needs of oneself comes to demonstrate the harmony in many of Lawrence's novels that most critics had not noticed. Within the heart of the eroticism, lies the notion of gratification and not the negation of the mental life. Lawrence is illustrating that value of the human body, or as Žižek might say "the body is not something to be cultivated or crafted into an expression of spiritual truths, rather it is immediately the temple for expressing divinity" (2010: 7), thus the symptoms of one's carnal existence translated into desires, are not to be ignore but pursued in order to reach to a certain degree of harmony. Though Kahambing (2018) says otherwise whilst discussing how it is that sex is pointless in the contemporary post-human era, but this counter argument remains invalid in the age of Modernism that Lawrence is demonstrating and thus the return to the regeneration of the mind-body dichotomy is to be understood in the terms of eroticism and sexual encounters rather than their utter abolishment.

The hedonistic transgressions for which Lawrence is often condemned of advocating may be read from a completely Žižekian (2010) perspective and said to be murals that portray the anarchism needed to identify the grayness of the social reality. When the major in *Virgin and the Gypsy* (1990) considers desire the "most wonderful thing in life" and envies all those who know how to value it, there's the notion of a Lacanian *objet a*, for what is desire but the strive for a certain unattainable state of being. The same thematic representation of the unprepossessing desire is also prevalent within *The Rainbow* (1993) in which, though gratification does find its eventual way, but the

contratextual yearning for this desires satisfaction serves to demonstrate a Žižekian *objet a*. For one can not see themselves as an impression of an ontological fact, and thus fails to observe themselves as objective entities but merely functions of an observing other (Žižek 2012), hence when in *Virgin Youth* (1971) Lawrence apologizes for not being able to control his body by repressing his desires, one may come to the conclusion that he is not only apologizing to society via his reader, but also to himself, for he himself is both a object and a subject.

In *The Rainbow* (1993) as well as *Lady Chatterley's Lover* (2006), Lawrence uses the same key terms to undermine the impotence of capitalism and industrialization by rendering further thought to nature and its many elements (Nazareth 1962). The sexual imagery and the eroticism may be read as an attempt to resurrect the value of the human body. Žižek may read the following expulsion of thrill as a totem for the reduction in the gap in between the Inside and the Outside. In *Less Than Nothing* (2012), the author sheds light on the necessity of a “primordial ego” which ought to serve as an agent of this “bodily intrusion”. The manifold of Lawrence’s sensualist imagery is not to be taken as a casual act of petting a cat or a mere conversation, but as a radicalist attempt to render unto the prevailing social norms a new understanding of one’s individuality. Lawrence’s metaphors serve to be interpreted as what Žižek would call an “enigmatic signifier”, since his thesis envisages the vestiges of an “intrusion” for his people.

*Snake* (1971) being one of Lawrence’s most famous poems, bespeaks the story of a reconciliation with nature, advocates a certain degree of intimacy with which man has entitled beastly. In *Snake*, Lawrence celebrates the natural life (Haegert 1990), he describes the difficulty with which Lawrence and his contemporaries presupposed the “non-human” subject. Lawrence portrays humanity’s loss of faith in nature as in *Lady Chatterley's Lover* (2006) he asks “what has man done to man?”. Žižek’s take on Gandhi’s philosophy comes to mind whilst thoroughly reading Lawrence’s pity on the state of humanity, Žižek (2016) explained that rather than being the change one wishes to see in the world, we ought to comprehend that we are indeed the horrors we fear in the world; “the true trauma is the subject itself” or as Hegel would otherwise call it “the Night of the World”. Yet, from a Žižekian (2010) point of view, the latter may not be themed as a return to barbarism, but its utter capitulation.

When in *Sons and Lovers* (1984) Lawrence describes the roses as “holy”, there begins a certain degree of worship to nature which goes on into the *Dreams of Old and Nascent* when Lawrence writes:

Oh, men with the axe and the pick-axe, break the walls of the filthy dream  
And release us, poor ones and rich ones, let us breathe and touch  
One another in wonder and wakening, let us wake to the gleam  
Of real daylight upon us, released from the foul dream's hutch. (1971: 112)

*In Living in The End Times* (2010) Žižek speaks of the importance of this choice, by going the example of British Amish communities and Muslim women wearing their veils or refusing to do so. He highlights that in an ideal medium, there should be no meta-choice and all should arise from the need to define one's own individuality. Yet, this disavowal of one's roots and traditions comes from the comprehension that man serves to be designated as a function of a specific group, a society, a family. Lawrence sheds light on the depth of the very same issue throughout many of his novels. As the intensity of eroticism and "forbidden love" comes forth to emancipate one from the tragedy of the cataclysm of industrialization, there exists a return to nature accompanied with this strange quarrel with history and traditionalism. Žižek (2002) postulates that perhaps man considers himself free simply because one lacks the symbolic means to articulate their un-freedom, a very similar philosophical argument set forth by Sam Harris and his famous puppet of ideology who "can only be free if he chooses to fall in love with his strings" (2012: 44). The notion of "freedom" is bound to two extremes, either by the complete immersion within the past or through its paradoxical opposite which is the ultimate revolution against the prevailing social norms. In *Sons and Lovers*, Lawrence demonstrates his own rendition of the definition of immortality, that is coupled with the ultimate Žižekian meta-choice bound "freedom", as he says "to be rid of our individuality, which is our will, which is our effort- to live effortless, a kind of conscious sleep- that is very beautiful, I think- that is our after life- our immortality." (1984: 332). The theme is not that of conformity as the many teachings of Sir Clifford Chatterley but it is that of revolution.

*In Virgin and the Gypsy* Lawrence advocates a return to nature, a comprehension of sensuality as a mere sensation bound to that of reality, "be braver in your body, or your luck will leave you" he says, offering a sanctuary for his people endowed with the catastrophe of modernisation, as he continues "listen for the voice of water" (1990: 63). A similar recurrence of a confession is observed within *The Prussian Officer* (1961) in which "the ordeal of self-hood is inseparably linked to the idea of otherness" (Haegert 1990: 3). At the very root of this shift in perspective one may notice a displacement in the meaning of the Lacanian Big Other; the subject bound to it is not altered but the subjectivity is

immensely modified. In *Less Than Nothing* (2012) Žižek explains how the Big Other is only relevant when the subject is “believing” in its function, only then does it play a role of “reality”, yet when the latter is reduced to a mere aspect of the Symbolic field, which is the case in Lawrence’s *Kisses in The Train* (1971), the very factorial presence of the Big Other is altered or perhaps even dismissed. In *Women in Love* (1943) Gudrun mentions that she wishes to lose herself completely in the eye of society and be born again rendered “different”. Similarly, In the priorly mentioned poem, Lawrence describes what many of his critics have entitled a “prophetic epiphany” (Parker 1973), yet the fatidic representation may only be read as a transfusion from one state of being to another, as the function of the newly altered Other. The poem reads as follows:

And the world all whirling  
Round in joy  
Like the dance of a dervish  
Did destroy  
My sense- and my reason  
Spun like a toy. (1971: 105)

### **Conclusive Epilogue**

Both Žižek and Lawrence converge and overlap in many of their themes and factual representations of society. The Žižekian reading of Lawrence, his prose and poetry, bring men to the ultimate conclusion that the dichotomy of one’s mind and body, even that of eros and thanatos depicted by the cataclysm of the war, give birth to the outbursts of capitalism which may only be treated through eroticism. Lawrence advises his people to acknowledge the value of the human body by reaching a comprehensive Žižekian conclusion that nature is indeed in itself chaotic. Lawrence and Žižek are not thinkers who postulate the design of a utopia, but rather offer their reader a chance to objectively observe the situation they’re in. Žižek’s brilliance is in tandem with that of Lawrence, since they both proclaim a romantic approach to reality as a cure for de-humanization. In *The Rainbow* (1993) the Brangwens choose to link earth and society (Nazareth 1962), the soldier represented in the poem entitled *Two Wives* (1971) does the same thing, for he recognizes that war is inevitable and harmony is the ultimate desire that may not be totally fulfilled, yet love is there to mend the wound. The soldier marries both his gun and his mistress, coming to the Žižekian conclusion that love and war are portions of nature and

not extracted representations of it and thus they ought to be approached as subsets of our existence instead of hindrances in the way of capitalism's reproach. The balance of the spirit and the flesh is also evident in *Sons and Lovers* as Miriam describes herself in terms of Paul through architecture (Janik 1983). Lawrence's romanticized reading of himself and the projection of the chaos of his times allows us to reach a conclusion that "love is a direction which excludes all directions, it is freedom altogether" (1943: 120).

In Conclusion, Žižek (2008) speaks of children's classics, zooming in on *Emperor's New Clothes*, *Gulliver's Travel* and many more, he explains how it is that literature comes to represent a critical analysis of the people it is trying to reach. He sheds light on the necessity of learning about Gulliver for us to comprehend that we too are mere puppets, enslaved to another rendition of the horses in Gulliver's fairy tale. Žižek comes to clarify that the moral of a story is not within the lines, but beyond them, it is in the effect of the lines on the society referring to them. The thesis of this dissertation is an attempt to decode the nature of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, to comprehend the predominant British Weltanschauung of that era by psychoanalyzing the specific thematic subsets of the writings of their representative, David Herbert Lawrence, using Slavoj Žižek's philosophical approaches to both social community and man's carnal state of being.

This paper offers a mere model that demonstrates how literary interpretations may be conveyed using Slavoj Žižek's conceptualization of ideology and philosophy in tandem with literary theory. It focuses on individualized themes in Lawrence's writings and proposes a Žižekian reading of each. A manifestation of Žižek into a comprehensive mode of theoretical analysis needs a longer and more thoroughly communicated research. A Žižekian reading of David Herbert Lawrence's novels offers one glimpse at the gateway of new literary interpretation methods that may be attained if Žižek is utilized as a keystone for analysis. For any literary work or cerebral poetic manifestation may be the sublime subject of classical literary analysis when it comes to the diversified Žižekian interpretations of continental philosophy and theoretical psychology.



## References:

- Haegert, J. (1990). "D. H. Lawrence and the Aesthetics of Transgression." *Modern Philology*, 88(1).
- Harris, S. (2012). *Free will*. Simon and Schuster.
- Janik, D. (1983). "D.H. Lawrence and Environmental Consciousness." *Environmental History Review*, 7(4).
- Kahambing, J. (2018). "Without Sex: An Appraisal of Žižek's Posthumanism," *International Journal of Žižek Studies*, 12(2).
- Lawrence, D.H. (1943). *Women in love*, Heinemann, London.
- Lawrence, D.H. (1961). *The complete short stories [of] D. H. Lawrence*, Viking Press, New York, N.Y.
- Lawrence, D.H. (1971). *The complete poems of D. H. Lawrence*, Viking Press, New York, N.Y.
- Lawrence, D.H. (1984). *Sons and lovers*, Signet Classic, New York.
- Lawrence, D.H. (1990). *The virgin and the gypsy*. London [etc.]: Penguin Books.
- Lawrence, D.H. (1993). *The rainbow*, David Campbell, London.
- Lawrence, D.H. & Squires, M. (2006). *Lady Chatterley's lover: a propos of "Lady Chatterley's Lover"*, Penguin Books, London.
- Nazareth, P. (1962). "D. H. Lawrence and Sex," *Transition*, (6/7).
- Parker, I. (2004). *Slavoj Žižek: a critical introduction*, Pluto Press, London.
- Sbriglia, R. (2017). *Everything you always wanted to know about literature but were afraid to ask Žižek*. Duke University Press.
- Spender, S. (1973). *D. H. Lawrence: novelist, poet, prophet*, 1st U.S. edn, Harper & Row Publishers, New York, N.Y.
- Žižek, S. (1989). *The sublime object of ideology*, Verso, London.
- Žižek, S. (2001). *Enjoy your symptom: Jacques Lacan in Hollywood and out*, Rev. edn, Routledge, New York.

- Žižek, S. (2002). *Welcome to the desert of the real: five essays on september 11 and related dates*, Verso, London.
- Žižek, S. (2003). *The puppet and the dwarf: the perverse core of Christianity*, MIT Press, Cambridge, Mass.
- Žižek, S. (2005). *The metastases of enjoyment*. London: Verso.
- Žižek, S. (2006;2014). *The parallax view*, MIT Press, Cambridge, Mass.
- Žižek, S. (2008). *For they know not what they do: enjoyment as a political factor*, 2nd edn, Verso, London.
- Žižek, S. (2008). *In defense of lost causes*, Verso, London.
- Žižek, S. (2008). *Violence: six sideways reflections*, Picador, New York.
- Žižek, S. (2009). *First as tragedy, then as farce*, Verso, London.
- Žižek, S. (2010). *Living in the end times*, Verso, London.
- Žižek, S. (2012). *The year of dreaming dangerously*, Verso, London.
- Žižek, S. (2012) *Less than nothing: Hegel and the shadow of dialectical materialism*, Verso, London.
- Žižek, S. (2015). *Trouble in paradise: from the end of history to the end of capitalism*, Melville House, Brooklyn.
- Žižek, S. (2016). Events Through Imaginary, Symbolic & Real. In *Sex and Nothing: Bridges from Psychoanalysis to Philosophy*. Karnac Books, pp. 37–56.
- Žižek, S. (2018). *The courage of hopelessness: a year of acting dangerously*, First American edn, Melville House Publishing, Brooklyn, NY.
- Žižek, S. and Milbank, J. (2011). *The Monstrosity of Christ: Paradox or Dialectic?*. MIT press.