From 1912 when Frieda (1879-1956) left the security of her British middle-class life until 1933 when Lawrence’s estate was settled and she returned to her mountain ranch seventeen miles north of Taos, New Mexico, she had no permanent home, but she never mourned the loss of a bourgeois lifestyle.

When it became clear that she, a German aristocrat (née von Richthofen), was going to stick with Lawrence, a coal miner’s son, and would not return to her three young children and husband (Lawrence’s former French professor at University College Nottingham), her father, a former Prussian officer, wrote, “You travel about the world like a barmaid,” she remembered.

It was a grief to him who loved me, that I was so poor, and socially impossible. I only felt wonderfully free, “vogelfrei” indeed. To Lawrence fell the brunt of the fight, and he protected me. “You don’t know how I stand between you and the world,” he said, later on. If I supported him with all my might, the wings of his sure spirit made a shelter for me always. (Not I 40-41)

After his death, his sister Ada Clark said, “the way she stuck to him was wonderful. He would drag her off on one of his sudden journeys
without hardly giving her time to pack, perhaps when they had only just settled somewhere and got fairly comfortable, but on she would go” (qtd. in Crotch 12). Frieda explained, “As Lawrence and I were adventurers by nature, we explored” (Not I vii). They sought rural environments, and from reading James Fenimore Cooper’s romantic novels of the American Indian, especially The Last of the Mohicans, longed for “Beautiful wild America!” as Frieda recalled (Frieda Lawrence 122).

From Taormina, Sicily, Lawrence declared on October 8, 1921, “I wish I could find a ship that would carry me round the world and land me somewhere in the West—New Mexico or California—and I could have a little house and two goats, somewhere away by myself in the Rocky Mountains. I may manage that” (L IV 93). A few weeks later, he received a letter from Mabel Dodge Sterne (later Luhan), a wealthy American art patroness, inviting him to Taos (L IV 110-11) where she felt she had found a more authentic life through the Indians of Taos Pueblo, particularly the lover (later husband) she found there, Tony Luhan.

Mabel had known writer Gertrude Stein and her brother, Leo Stein the modern art collector and critic, when she lived in Florence (1905-1912) and had been at the center of the Modernist art and social movements when she lived in New York (1912-1917). Leo had stayed with the Sternes in Taos in 1918 (Luhan 2007 11-12). In 1919, Lawrence had met Leo near Florence and seen his photographs of Taos. The summer of 1921 Lawrence heard of Mabel’s husband, Maurice Sterne, who lived for long periods in Anticoli Corrado, a small artists’ village near Rome (L IV 5, 111). It was likely through The Dial, the New York-based modernist literary magazine where Mabel read an excerpt from Lawrence’s travel book Sea and Sardinia (Bachrach 9), that she contacted him. She thought only he could capture Taos and the indians (Luhan 2007 3-4). Lawrence, like other moderns, sought direction by looking to native cultures: “one must somehow bring together the two ends of humanity, our own thin end, and the last dark strand from the previous pre-white era,” he replied to Mabel (L IV 110-11).

After going to Ceylon and Australia, the Lawrences arrived in Taos on September 11, 1922, Lawrence’s thirty-seventh birthday. “I think New Mexico was the greatest experience from the outside world that I have ever