Abstract

The paper studies the notion of class in D H Lawrence’s last novel Lady Chatterley’s Lover. It argues that Lawrence offers his vision of social and cultural reform in the aftermath of the Great War. The paper sheds a rehabilitative look at the novel and establishes a theoretical framework where the issues of sex and class are reconciled. Lawrence transgresses class boundaries through the Connie/Mellors liaison. The narrative is organized in two stages. The first stage of the narrative exposes the emptiness of the pre-war social values, with the purpose of destroying the reader’s sense of class. In this stage, Lawrence attacks the old class system and draws a bleak image of the upper class, as represented in the Character of Sir Clifford Chatterley. Once the destructive stage is over, the writer introduces his new class markers, and thus initiates the reader into a fresh class consciousness.

Key words: class consciousness, transgression, sensuality, constructive, upper class, social reform.
Lady Chatterley’s Lover, henceforth LCL, was met by fierce opposition from the media and the public when it was first published. Lawrence is said to have begun the novel in 1926, while he was sojourning at the Villa Mirenda not far from Florence. The first unexpurgated edition of the novel appeared in July 1928 from Florence aided by Giuseppe Orioli, who ran a bookshop of international fame in that city. There was high demand for the novel—from the beginning—due to the fact that Lawrence was an established writer by then. Because of its ‘offensive content’, the novel had to be secretly distributed in Britain and America, but it was not long before the customs authorities in both countries started confiscating copies on account of its obscenity. The novel provoked public anger as it undermined the readers’ tolerance in their notions on how to conduct themselves in their most intimate moments. The book was labelled “obscene” and “transgressive” and suffered severe censorship.

The novel was harshly criticised for undermining the reader’s sense of order, class system and morality. Up to the 1960s, critical responses to the novel set to expose the destructive nature of novel with no recognition of its literary merit. In accordance with The Obscene Publications Act of 1959, a jury was assembled at the Old Bailey in October 1960 for the notorious trial of the Penguin Books for its publication of the novel. The trial is now commonly known as Trial of Lady Chatterley’s Lover. The twelve-day trial ended with the acquittal of the Penguin Books. Following the trial, criticism of the novel started to consider its literary merit. The initial rejection of the novel was largely fuelled by the Victorian concern over morality and the role of literature in promoting it. Most of the critical response to LCL prior to the trial focused on its apparent obscenity and its use of swear words. While there have been many attempts at studying the explicit sex scenes and swear words in the novel, their role as new class markers has been overlooked. Lawrence was keen to question the stultifying Victorian conventions of class and gender and their danger to the self development. This paper seeks to demonstrate that the novel—in response to the cultural disillusionment that followed the Great war—advances an agenda of social reform based on a re-evaluation of the class system in England.

Lawrence exposes the futility of the pre-war class consciousness and replaces it with a more vivid consciousness based on his own class markers. We argue in this paper that the transgression of class boundaries is socially and literally productive. Lawrence employs a binary narrative process to introduce his vision of social reform. The first stage of this process attacks the pre-war class system in England, with emphasis on the subsequent social malaise; while the second stage hails a new class consciousness that acknowledges the need to transgress the long-held taboos about sex and the body. The methodology we use to establish the constructive function of the novel imitates the narrative constitution. This is to say that the reader should not take the sex scenes and other disturbing passages in isolation. They are better grasped when considered as part of a constructive scheme that seeks to help in the construction of the British society in the wake of WWI. The transgression of class boundaries in the novel was one of the things that caused it to be castigated. In the pre-war period, the different classes of society were kept apart and this was considered as a normal characteristic in the order of things. Power, money and education maintained the supremacy of one social class over the other, which accounts for Clifford’s efforts to re-establish the status quo ante bellum.

The novel raises a few questions as to its meaning, the narrative modes and its conception of the post war English society. D. H. Lawrence was mainly criticised for encouraging
pornography and blurring the boundaries between social classes through the Mellors/Chatterley bond. Much of the debate around the novel centres on the liaison between the Aristocratic lady and the gamekeeper. Our modest proposal aims at establishing a wider scope for the interpretation of the novel and to see it as part of a socio-cultural dynamism that is meant to reconstruct a sense of national integrity within a collapsed world. The setting of the novel is reminiscent of Peter Sloterdijk’s argument about the disillusionment with the city in the 1920s formulated in his book *Critique of Cynical Reason*. The impact of industrialization and what he calls the ‘death industry is the creation of a cultural and intellectual abyss and a state of utter chaos’ (25). This chaotic world gainsays any utopian vision of the city as the place for self-assertion. Materialism, industrialization and modernism have all strengthened the alienation of the ego from the world. The ego is unhoused, and it has to strive to create its own idiosyncratic mode of life. In the absence of a strong social and cultural agenda, the individual relation to any form of conventions loosens. The protagonists in *LCL* are thrust in a state of distortion and have to experiment with a new and unrestricted sexual freedom to reconstruct their shattered identity.

*LCL* follows a two-stage process of construction. This binary, dialectical construction of the story is mirrored in the duality of the narrative voices. Each phase of the construction process is assigned a suitable narrative voice. The first phase of the story consists in deconstructing and destroying the existing class system. It questions and undermines the foundations of the British class system, with an emphasis on the emptiness of its values. The second phase starts when the reader’s sense of class and order is shaken, to propose a new class consciousness. This phase converts the reader to a new social experience based on sensuality. Lawrence transgresses the class boundaries in a way that liberates all the social classes from the prerogatives of class and gender. His destruction of the pre-war class system is done by eliminating the conventional class dividers, namely power and money. In the second part of the story, Lawrence coins new class dividers to propose his vision of social and cultural reform. In his attempt to bring about social reform, Lawrence reshuffles the existing social classes and creates new class demarcations.

The narrative voice in the novel seems to abide by the two-stage process. The first phase consists in exposing to the reader the emptiness of the pre-war values of social order, class system and class boundaries. This expository phase kills the reader’s sense of class codes and leads them away from these notions. The second phase of transgressing the social boundaries initiates the reader into a fresh class consciousness that bears within it the seeds of cultural reform. The stepping out of the conventional class values is announced by a shift in the narrative voice. The ability of a narrative to transform readers is hit upon by the narrator in Chapter 9 when he says:

> And here lies the vast importance of the novel, properly handled. It can inform and lead into new places the flow of our sympathetic consciousness and it lead our sympathy away in recoil from things gone dead. Therefore, the novel, properly handled can reveal the most secret places of life: for it is in the *passional* secret places of life, above all, that the tide of sensitive awareness needs to ebb and flow, cleansing and freshening (109)

Class demarcations in *LCL* are expressed via the juxtaposition of two opposing social classes: the upper class of which Clifford is a fervent representative and the lower working class in the character of Mellors. In the novel, the subtlety in class boundaries lies less in the dividers
than in the equivocation that Lawrence attributes to the upper class. Money, education and industry are clear class dividers in the novel. However, instead of giving privilege to the upper class members in the novel, they hamper the individual growth. Materialistic class dividers are only introduced to be ridiculed. The exposition of these class demarcations in a rather bleak way serves the authorial project of social reform. The cross class affair between Connie and her lover materializes the possibility of repositioning oneself in the cosmos and to aspire to a more authentic mode of existence.

The effacement of class boundaries is inevitable for the survival of the individual in the post-war era. Lawrence’s transgression of class boundaries is not done for the sake of transgressing them. What is at stake in the novel is a reaction to the soulless society of the late 1920s. Lawrence is in fact cynical towards the effects of modernity on society and how it has brought about a type of cultural lethargy. It is important to note here, that the transgression of class boundaries in the novel takes place at two different levels. The first level is the level of Sir Clifford Chatterley whose resentment of the social institutions is articulated in clear terms. The second level of transgression is represented in the Mellors/Connie affair. In both cases, Lawrence is keen to show that the transgression of such class boundaries is indeed productive especially in so far as self-realisation is concerned. Looking into Lawrence’s cynical stance endows the novel with the mission of settling the odds of post-war Britain, and—oddly enough—anchors it in the Victorian tradition of writing. The Mellors/Connie liaison, however obscene and transgressive it might otherwise be considered, does in fact maintain the Victorian notions of family and marriage. Lady Chatterley is only looking for a more satisfying marriage than her current one. However, the type of marriage she strives for is conventional at heart. This can be easily justified by the leading role Mellors enjoys in the various encounters they have together. Lawrence is cynical towards the limits that the class system puts on the individual, but he does seem conservative in the way he proposes for the emancipation of Connie for both her sterile marriage and her class.

The reader’s sense of an ordered society is challenged from the beginning of the novel. The narrator introduces us to a destabilized society that sways under the calamities of the Great War. He insists on the vulnerability and the destitution of the British society. The sweeping effect of WWI and the need to survive are expressed in the very beginning of the novel. The novel starts with a description of the situation of the social scene, which advocates Lawrence’s project of social reform. The war has revealed the emptiness of all the social institutions and moral conventions. Society has created in its citizens a ‘false sense of purpose’ (Sloterdijk, 5) and has long worked to keep them under its control through the adherence to a set of conventions that promise meaningfulness. These conventions turned out, after the war, to be void of meaning. Society, by consequence, is no more than a group of individuals with no collective sense of belonging or mutual understanding; hence the necessity to go beyond these conventions and to experiment with new forms of ‘unrestrained’ arts that might get as far as hitting the truth.

The novel opens with the following paragraph:

Ours is essentially a tragic age, so we refuse to take it tragically. The cataclysm has happened, we are among the ruins, we start to build up new little habitats, to have new little hopes. It is rather hard work: there is now no smooth road into the
The opening paragraph sets the socio-cultural context of the novel. It captures a theme which was common for most modernist writers; the impact of WWI on Europe. It argues that the Great War destroyed the socio-political foundations of western civilisation and undermined the meaningfulness of life. It has thrown humanity - so to speak - in a state of chaos and absolute nothingness. The tragedy of the war is over, and we’ve got to live anyway. The dilemma of survival herein mentioned raises the existential concern of the novel. The ensuing chapters have more to them than publicizing Lady Chatterley’s private life. The writer takes a defensive stance from the outset when he recommends that the reader find the socio-cultural and even intellectual context of the novel.

The void and chaos left by the Great War was heavily felt in European countries. In his article “The Double Image” Allan Bullock articulates the impact of the Great War on Europe in a contradiction between the apparent cultural security of the turn of the century period and the simultaneous ferments in thought and art. He starts his article as follows:

The Great war which tore Europe apart between 1914 and 1918 was so shattering in its impact, so far reaching in its consequences, that it is profoundly difficult to recapture what preceded it - difficult to avoid exaggerating the sense of conflict in the pre-war years, difficult not to see them building up into a general crisis of European society in which a crash, a resolution by force was inevitable and felt to be inevitable. Yet, whatever the intimations, whatever the elements of disturbance and the feelings of change, the elements of stability and tranquillity are quite apparent as the elements of schism. (16)

The cultural and social settings that this paragraph sets legitimize, as it were, any type of transgression contained in the novel. The situation is such that any attempt at finding one’s place in the world becomes possible regardless of the means therein used. The Great War dashed all the values that the English society used to maintain. The individual is lost and appalled by the atrocities of the war and gets ensnared in a state of disillusionment. They have to find “new habitats” designed to answer their most intimate and individual needs of freedom. The post war scene, with all its chaos and distortion, condemns the individual to a state of inauthenticity, but at the same time it opens up an infinite set of opportunities to live one’s potentialities. The word ‘tragedy’ the narrator uses in the opening paragraph is all-including. The calamities of WWI touched the social, cultural and the intellectual sides of Western Civilisation. The opening of the novel points to the intellectual barrenness of post war England. This intellectual barrenness is manifest in the character of Sir Clifford Chatterley. He stands for aristocratic intelligentsia and his condition speaks for impotence at the individual and the communal levels alike. Sir Clifford came home from war “more or less in bits.” (1) He is declared impotent and has to face the sad truth that he will not produce an heir to Wragby Hall. Clifford Chatterley’s situation should be read in allegorical terms, where his impotence to reproduce himself becomes a note of criticism of the social scenes. Lawrence seems to be conveying the message that, without a strict agenda of social order and personal relation, England will not be able to ‘perpetuate’ itself. This is a
defensive tactic on the part of Lawrence, whereby the narrator seeks to win the reader’s sympathy with the unfolding story of adultery and cross-caste union.

Once the calamities of WWI and their effects on the British society are exposed to the reader, the narrator moves on with his destruction of the reader’s class consciousness. His next target is Clifford Chatterley. He is a central character in the novel insofar as he represents the upper class. The conflict between Clifford and his wife falls into the context of the antagonism between the working and the ruling classes of post-war England. This and other instances from Lawrence’s letters allow us to suggest that he might have been influenced by the Marxist view of history as a continuous struggle between the social classes. The Marxist theory –centred on the Hegelian master-slave idea and the concept of class struggle- is illuminating for our reading of Clifford. Lawrence’s aversion to capitalist economy can be traced in many of his letters. For instance, on February 15 1929, he wrote to P. R. Stephenson expressing his hate of capitalism:

The bourgeois, the machine civilization, and the worker’ (as such) all want to destroy real humanness. If Bolshevism is going to classify me as a worker or a non-worker, I am against it. I hate our civilization, our ideals, our money, our machines, our intellectuals, our upper classes. But I hate them because I’ve tried them and given them a long chance- and they are rotten. If a man has not ‘risen in the world’ he’ll be forced to admit there is something ‘above him’. (Letters, vol.7, 179)

Lawrence makes no secret of his opposition to those systems that-according to him-‘destroy real humanness’. The capitalist bourgeois system encourages the exploitation of the working classes and aims at maintaining the status quo to the disadvantage of the subordinated sections of society. He writes to P. R. Stephenson that “many ladies nowadays, very many, have love affairs with their chauffeurs- the chauffeur is the favourite fucker’ but ‘the chauffeur stays where he is – and is a machine à plaisir- and the lady stays where she is- and nothing is altered in the least.’ Therefore, ‘If Mellors had never found out the upper classes, by being one of them, Connie would just have had him and put him down again – ‘elle m’a planté là.” (Letters, vol.7, 179)

Lawrence’s affinities with the Marxist reading of history does not imply –in any way- that he is a Marxist socialist who seeks to overthrow the bourgeois society through revolution. This is reflected in a letter he wrote to Gordon Campbell in March 1925:

It is not a political revolution I want, but a shifting of the racial system of values from the old morality and personal salvation through a Mediator to the larger morality and salvation through the knowledge that one’s neighbour is oneself. This means instant social revolution, from indignation with what is. (Letters, vol.2, 301)

The character of Clifford serves Lawrence’s project of exposing the odds of the upper class, and his characterization is a perplexing one. His demeanour and attitude of bourgeois things are quite consistent in the novel. However, there are instances when his take on class and money becomes equivocal. The narrator of the novel displays some sympathy towards Clifford in the beginning of the story, when he introduces him as someone suffering from ‘the bruise of the false inhuman war.’ (9) This sympathy fades away soon as Lawrence uses his physical impotence as a
symbol for his class. The narrator’s aversion to Clifford stems not only from his inability to sleep with his wife, but also from something inside him. The narrator reasonably asks ‘And yet was not he in part to blame? This lack of warmth, this lack of the simple, warm physical contact, was he not to blame for that?’ (47)

Lawrence can’t resist heaping humiliation on the character of Clifford. When he turns to writing he allows him to write nothing substantial. Clifford is incapable of satisfying his young wife, and he becomes more of a burden to her. Another significant humiliation is heaped on him in his infantilization at the hands of Mrs. Bolton. More importantly, the novel yields absolutely no hint of Clifford’s war record. The serious damage he suffers from during the war does imply that he was really in action, but Lawrence keeps silent on this and thus denies him the dignity of bravery. This is mainly because Clifford- as designed by Lawrence –stands for the decadence of the upper class.

Sir Clifford’s state points to the bankruptcy of the upper class ideals and their inability to fulfil the individual sense of the self. His love for fame and success has alienated him from the sensual part of life. This alienation is heightened by his physical impotence. As he clings to the material side of life for survival and domination, Sir Clifford grows alienated from his wife, and the emotional gap between them increases day after day. He incarnates the social ills that the novel abhors. He exhibits a good deal of hatred towards the middle and lower classes, and he does not seem to accommodate to their level of existence. That Clifford stands for the upper class is explicitly mentioned in the opening chapter:

Clifford was more upper class than Connie. Connie was well-to-do intelligentsia, but he was aristocracy. Not the big sort, but still it. His father was a baronet, and his mother had been a viscount’s daughter. But Clifford, while he was better bred than Connie, and more ‘society’ was in his own way more provincial and more timid. He was at his ease in the narrow ”great world,” that is, landed aristocracy, but he was shy and nervous of that entire big world which consists of the vast hordes of the middle and lower classes and foreigners. If the truth must be told, he was just a little bit frightened of middle and lower class humanity, and of foreigners not of his own class. He was, in some paralyzing way, conscious of his own defencelessness, though he had all the defence of privilege. Which is curious, but a phenomenon of our day. (pp 6-7)

Connie and Sir Clifford are portrayed in a way that makes their union gradually impossible and to legitimize Connie’s elopement with the gamekeeper later in the novel. Clifford’s inability to mix with people of lower social orders, along with his lack of sensuality illustrates the cultural and intellectual bankruptcy of the upper class. He is arrogant and his demeanour testifies to the upper class drive to rule the others, despite the emptiness of their ideals. This arrogance is casually resented by Mrs. Bolton. The portrayal of Sir Clifford bears the rudiments of Lawrence’s cynicism. At the opening of the novel, the narrator undermines the reader’s sense of class. This is done through the distortion of the Upper class ideals and the destruction of the alleged supremacy of this kind of life. The overall purpose of this destructive process is to reveal the hypocrisy and the emptiness inherent in the stratification of society. The upper class, with all its money and prestige, fails to fulfil the individual sense of being. Clifford’s impotence works deeper than the physical level. It implies his failure as a nobleman.
We have argued earlier in this paper that Clifford’s take on class becomes sometimes equivocal. This is evident from the beginning of the novel when the narrator alludes to the hidden rebel inside Clifford:

Nevertheless, he too was a rebel: rebelling even against his class. Or perhaps rebel is too strong a word; far too strong. He was only caught in the general, popular recoil of the young against convention and against any sort of real authority. Fathers were ridiculous: his own obstinate one supremely so. And governments were ridiculous: our own wait-and-see sort especially so. And armies were ridiculous and old duffers of generals altogether, the red-faced Kitchener supremely. Even the war was ridiculous, though it did kill rather a lot of people. (7)

This passage is illustrative of the disappointment that characterized post-war society. Such a disappointment manifests itself as an all-engulfing movement that touched on all aspects of life, be it social or political. This is reminiscent of Sloterdijk’s ‘cultural discontent’ and his ‘diffuse cynicism.’ (5) It is evident from this passage that Sir Clifford Chatterley is immersed in the material side of life, and is bound by class conventions. The ‘popular recoil’ that the narrator evokes helps to contextualize his discontent with all kinds of order and conventions. Clifford is resentful of the emptiness and bankruptcy of the upper class, but is unable to articulate his rejection. His physical handicap mirrors his moral confinement to a preset system of values. This system of values does not meet his most intimate needs. Clifford exemplifies the victimization of the individual by more powerful ideologies, as well as his inability to resist them.

The opening chapter offers considerable insight into the disparity between Sir Clifford and Constance. Such a comparison does establish him as a fervent believer in the bourgeois values and -at the same time- it tries to gain the reader’s sympathy with Connie. We learn that “she was much more mistress of herself in that outer world of chaos than he was master of himself.” (7) Clifford’s lack of accommodation and his shyness confine him to the emptiness of the aristocracy. Both Clifford and Connie struggle for a more authentic and idiosyncratic form of existence. Their approaches to self assertion are different. Clifford embraces a life of literature and art in an attempt at achieving social recognition. He starts writing books, and invites young intellectuals at Wragby Hall. In the beginning, this intellectual life seems to be fulfilling for Connie as she joins their discussions of literature and ideas. It was her father’s warning to her against being a ‘demi vierge’ (15) that has awakened her to the futility of the intellectual life of Wragby. Connie’s disappointment with her sterile and soulless marriages becomes more and more felt, as the imperative of a more fulfilling and more sensual form of life grows inside her. She realizes that she has filled her life with empty words, with virtually no personal attachments. It is upon this realisation that she sets to look for more satisfying forms of being.

Her journey will take her first to a short-lived affair with Michaelis, a young British playwright. We learn later that Connie’s attachment to him was out of sympathy, as she is touched with the bad treatment he receives from the aristocracy. It was his aloofness that has attracted Connie to Michaelis. This short affair with the British playwright is seminal as it initiates Connie into the world of sensuality. The second stop in her quest for authenticity is her more satisfying involvement with Oliver Mellors, her husband’s game keeper. It is during the many sexual intercourses that she has with Mellors that Connie comes to terms with her sense of
the self. Clifford, on the other hand, remains entrapped in his intellectual life. His love for money and fame is typical of the aristocracy. Through his character, Lawrence channels his critique of the figure of the aristocratic who claims his right to dominate the lower classes even if he is inadequate.

It has already been argued that Clifford’s sense of class and his physical impotence point to the narrator’s resentful look at the upper class. The intellectual life at Wragby Hall is barren. Connie’s quest for a more idiosyncratic level of existence is heightened by Sir Clifford’s mistreatment of his mine workers. He treats them, more or less like objects. We read in chapter 2 that:

> She could not help feeling how little connection he really had with people. The miners were, in a sense, his own men; but he saw them as objects rather than men, parts of the pit rather than parts of life, crude raw phenomena rather than human beings along with him. He was in some way afraid of them; he could not bear to have them look at him now he was lame. And their queer, crude life seemed as unnatural as that of hedgehogs. (13)

Such a sensual experience is not made available to Sir Clifford, whose love of power and domination prevents him from transgressing the social norms. This is despite the fact that Clifford himself resents the emptiness of the upper class. Textual evidence of his malaise with everything that surrounds him has been given earlier in this paper, when the narrator labels him as ‘rebel.’ The authorial voice admits in the same above-quoted passage from the novel that he is too weak to be a rebel. He is, the narrator informs us, ‘only caught in the general, popular recoil of the young against conventions and against any sort of real authority’ (7) Sir Clifford is physically and emotionally confined to the restrictions of his class. He lacks the courage and the readiness to break these conventions. As it has been argued earlier, Sir Clifford is part of a collective consciousness where the value of the individual is measured by his ability to maintain his integrity in his socio-political environment. He is a mass figure who remains benign and impotent to face the forces that cripple him.

The rigidity of the pre-war social order is articulated in the way Clifford relates to those who work for him. He is sensitive of class and struggles to maintain his control and supremacy over the miners, Mellors and even Mrs. Bolton-on whom he depends heavily. This materializes Lawrence’s hate of industrialization and its dehumanization of the workers. Clifford represents the master as he owns the means of production, and the miners are his possession. We learn in the novel that “The miners were, in a sense, his own men: but he saw them as objects rather than men, parts of the pits rather than parts of life, and crude raw phenomena rather than human beings along with him” (15-16)

According to Clifford’s understanding of class, the upper and the working class are incompatible and un congenial. He believes that each class should stick to its respective function. Clifford explicitly expresses his belief in what he takes to be a natural division of roles between classes when he says “when it comes to expressive or executive functioning, I believe there is a gulf and an obscure one, between the ruling and the serving classes. The two functions are opposed. And the function determines the individual.” (183) Isn’t this conviction that ‘the
function determines the individual’ reminiscent of Marx’s view of society? He clarifies this link in the Communist Manifesto of 1848 as follows:

The mode of production of material life conditions the general process of social, political and intellectual life. It is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but their social existence that determines their consciousness.

(Qtd in Koh 191)

Being a member of the serving/working class brings the person down to the level of a machine or an animal. This machine falls in the hands of the master who uses it to maximize his profit. Clifford is explicit in his treatment of the miners as animals when he confides to Connie that ‘the miners are not men, but animals you don’t understand and never could. Nero’s slaves were extremely little different from our colliers or the Ford motor car workers’ (182).

Industry in the novel is seen in the coal mines of Sir Clifford. The negativity with which this industry is presented in the novel serves the authorial attempt at driving the reader away from the sad reality of post-war Britain in order to usher them in a new class and self-consciousness. Sir Clifford is the epitome of post-war England with its inhuman treatment of the individual and its determinism to uphold a special bond between the industrialists and their workers. Workers become just instruments in the machine of the productive system. They yield both their bodies and souls to the whims of the capitalists. Sir Clifford articulates the need for these capitalists to own the industry in religious terms as he argues in chapter 13, when Connie asked him if he really has to own the industry:

I don’t. But to the extent I do own it, yes, most decidedly. The ownership of property has now become a religious question: as it has been since Jesus and St. Francis. The point is not take all thou hast and give to the poor, but use all thou hast to encourage the industry and give work to the poor. It’s the only way to feed all the mouths and clothe all the bodies. Giving away all we have to the poor spells starvation for the poor just as much as for us. And universal starvation is no high aim. Even general poverty is no lovely thing. Poverty is ugly. (198)

Although the passage appears a bit too late in the novel, it does help to sustain the ugliness of industrialisation and its effects on the characters of the novel, including Clifford himself. In fact, Lawrence’s conception of industrialism in the novel is both complex and equivocal. Such remarks and others on the notion of class in relation to both money and power are instances of the unwholesome civilized consciousness that inhibits the soul and restrains its potentialities. Clifford’s insistence on the necessity of social differences and the benevolent nature of the industrialization process implies that the workers have to be subjugated and trained within the productive apparatus of industrialization. Connie, in response to her husband’s insistence to strengthen the organization of industry and to turn workers into instruments of the industrial machine, points to the brutality of industrialization in robbing people of their natural life. She replies:

Everything is to be sold and paid for now; and all the things you mention now, Wragby and Shipley sells them to the people, at a good profit. Everything is sold. You don’t give one heartbeat of real sympathy. And besides, who has taken
away from the people their natural life and manhood, and given them this industrial horror? Who has done that? (199)

Industrialization robs the workers of their natural lives and turns them into machines. The effects of industry on the serving class are heavily resented by Connie and her lover who-speaking for the working class- attacks the industrial system. He notes:

It’s a shame, what’s been done to people these last hundred years: men turned into nothing but labour-insects, and all their manhood taken away, and all their real life. [...] I would wipe the machines off the face of earth again, and end the industrial epoch absolutely, like a black mistake. (220)

A significant piece of evidence of the antagonism between the social classes is to be found in the relationship between Mellors and Clifford. Their relationship is characterized by hostility all through the novel. This hostility reaches its peak in the incident of the chair. One day, Clifford decides to go for a walk in the wood with Connie when suddenly the engine breaks down and has to call Mellors for help. The incident of the chair best exemplifies the class conflict when Mellors physically and figuratively is under the master to repair his chair. This is an interpretation that can be supported by the narrator’s comment that the incident brings together ‘the ruling class and the serving class’ (189). The tension between the two men will become apparent again as the narrator informs us that “the two males were as hostile as fire and water and that they mutually exterminated one another” (192)

Connie spares no occasion to remind Clifford of his abuse of power that derives from his class consciousness. In one instance she reminds him that ‘you have only got more than your share of the money, and make people work for you for two pounds a week, or threaten them with starvation [...] you only bully with your money, like any Jew or any Schieber’ (193-94). She warns him that he makes more money from the work of the miners than what they receive. The capitalist system, in the light of Marx’s view of history, widens the gap between the ruling and the serving classes of society. Ball notes that the poorer the proletarian is, the richer the capitalist will be (135). He maintains that ‘the struggle of one class against the other, resulting from the master-slave relationship between people, lies at the core of the Marxist view of history, and the only solution, according to Marx is to overthrow the ruling bourgeoisie.’ (136)

The aloofness that characterizes class relations in the novel is best seen in Clifford as the narrator informs us that “he was at his ease in the narrow ‘great world’-that is, landed aristocracy society- but he was shy and nervous of all that other world which consists of the vast hordes of lower and middle class humanity, and of foreigners not of his own class’ (10) Clifford’s shyness and aloofness of the working class hides a deep sense of hate of these people. He expresses his love for his class and his hate of the serving class many a time in the novel- either in his discussions with Connie or Mrs. Bolton- but it is when he learns about Connie’s pregnancy from his gamekeeper that he articulates his utmost contempt for the lower classes. He falls into a rage as he takes their affair as a humiliation for a man of his class. Such a rage is driven equally by his sexual impotence and his belief in the discrepancy between the social classes of the two lovers. Clifford comments- upon learning about the pregnancy- ‘that scum! That bumptious lout! That miserable cad!’ And then addresses Connie to wonder if there is ‘any end to the beastly lowness of women’ (296). Clifford’s rage is mostly targeted to the working class as he finds it
difficult to understand why “such beings were ever allowed to be born” (296). The narrator tells us then that-in regard to Mellors- Clifford “couldn’t even accept the fact of the existence of Mellors, in any connection with his own life because of his sheer, unspeakable, impotent hate” (296) Clifford justifies his position as master of the pits by arguing that the industrial system is more crucial for the working class than the aristocracy. The latter has the right not only to control the workers, but also to make a profit at the expense of the masses. This is because the workers have equally benefited from the bourgeois productive system. Clifford’s class consciousness makes him see only the economic and social achievements of the English upper class. He makes no mention of the wretchedness of the workers, the exploitation of children within the industrial system and the poor remuneration of the workers. He elicits the many benefits that the working class members obtain from the pits when he says:

Who has given the colliers all they have that is worth having: all their political liberty, and their education, such as it is, their sanitation, their health conditions, their books, their music, their everything? […] It is all the Wragbys and Shipleys in England who have given their part, and must go on giving.” (181)

Clifford’s class consciousness represents the basis for his relation with those who work for him, including Mrs. Bolton. The master-slave theory is implied in the way he deals with Mrs. Bolton, his caretaker. Mrs. Bolton gives Clifford the possibility of exercising his upper class power. He teaches her games such as chess and bezique as if to remind himself that he is still a member of the upper class. He likes to teach her because this gives him a sense of power. The bond that links Clifford to his caretaker is characterized by mutual dependence on one another. The narrator informs us that ‘Mrs. Bolton for her part was thrilled because she was coming bit by bit into possession of all that the gentry knew, all that made them upper class: apart from money. […] She was making him want to have her there with him and this was a subtle deep flattery to him, her genuine thrill.’ (100) Mrs. Bolton, through her connection to Clifford, is looking for recognition. She longs to be recognized as a person, and this is possible only when Clifford-her superior- recognizes her efforts. Sir Clifford’s dependence on her fills her in with sense of joy. He needs her both as a caretaker and in order to relish his position as her master.

Only when he was alone with Mrs. Bolton did he really feel a lord and master, and his voice ran on with her almost as easily and garrulously as her own could run. And he let her shave him or sponge all his body as if he were a child, really as if he were a child. (109)

Clifford’s attachment to Mrs. Bolton in a mother-son type of relationship is important in two ways. First, it is a sample of the mother-son relationship that Clifford seems to hold to so that he feels secure in the world. Second, the proponents of a Freudian reading of the novel would use this mother-son bond to conclude that Clifford’s relation to his mother is an unresolved one. Accordingly, the ultimate separation of Connie and her husband is not fuelled solely by his sexual impotence but also by “Clifford’s unresolved dependency on his mother”. (Gerald 377) Mrs. Bolton’s presence in the life of Clifford is a necessary one as it gives him the possibility to live out his full potential as master.

The need to subjugate the body and souls of the workers can be better understood if read in the light of Foucault’s theory of the subjugation of the body by social forces, forwarded in his work *Discipline and Punish*. Foucault demonstrates how disciplinary techniques and institutions
establish a firm socio-individual control over the individual’s body. Foucault argues that the human body is both the subject and the target of social forces and power. The control that these forces can exercise over the body goes further than mere subjugation and manipulation. They claim an unprecedented right to shape, train and improve the human body according to their own interests. In the process, the body is explored, broken and re-organized to meet the need of these alien forces.

The image of the body as machine is manifest in the *LCL*. In the passages quoted earlier in this part, and in many other occasions in chapter 13, Sir Clifford articulates his theory of the inevitability of the industry to maintain not only the industrialists, but also the miners themselves. The novel illustrates the polymorphous results of Chatterley’s industry on the miners. The image is reminiscent of Foucault’s theory of the subjugation of the body by social forces. (*Discipline and Punish* 16) Sir Clifford takes advantage of the miners’ situation to make their bodies and spirits docile to his productive machine. His endeavour aims at maximizing his profit but also maximizing his efficiency in the exploitation of the natural and human world. Clifford’s insistence to perfect the organization of the industry and to dominate the workers can be seen as a way of compensating for his physical injury.

Clifford’s sense of class differences is unshakable. He exposes a fierce determination to maintain and defend the pre-war class divisions as a vital element of the order of things. He retorts to Connie’s defence of the working class with his claim that the disparity between social classes is a matter of unalterable fate where the masses (the miners in the case of the novel) are doomed to be controlled and subjugated. He says: “that is fate. Why is the star Jupiter bigger than the star Neptune? You can’t start altering the make-up of things.” (198) The coal mining industry of Sir Clifford crystallizes the pre-war class system with one ruling class and one ruled. Clifford’s relation to his miners could be read in allegorical terms, where the miners stand for the masses and the industrial system represents Clifford’s unshakable sense of the superiority of his class. The effect of industrialization on people is crippling at the physical and the psychic levels alike. It represses them and disfigures their natural instincts. Lawrence’s cynical stance in regard to class system can be seen in his account of the effects of industrialization on the masses that render them instrumental and operational on the physical level, while at the psychic level they are denied the right to live humanly. The novel contains textual evidence of Clifford’s wish to impose discipline, as it were, on nature so as “to capture the bitch-goddess by brute means of industrial production.” (107) This statement reveals a material interest in nature, where it has to be subdued for the use of man. One should be efficient in the power exercised on nature to extract from it what human beings need.

Here, again, Foucault’s theory of *disciplinary power* seems useful to understand Clifford’s treatment of his miners and his insistence on the superiority of the ruling class. The aim of disciplinary power is to make the body useful and docile. Foucault argues that this new type of power has been developed by the bourgeois society of the 18th century as the successor to the preceding form of sovereign judicial power. Jae Kyung Koh develops Clifford’s use of disciplinary power in a seminal article entitled *D.H Lawrence’s Vision of Cultural Regeneration in Lady Chatterley’s Lover* when he writes:

For Chatterley, his coal-mining enterprise requires a collaborative strategy, harnessing the most powerful technologies available and, as far as possible
eliminating human friction from the process through turning the workforce into an entirely obedient group of people capable of conforming to mechanical rhythms and pace. Such a process is made possible by gaining control over the bodies of the miners with the aim of reducing them to mere functions and instruments of the mechanical process. The working lives of these individual are becoming increasingly instrumental while their creative, human forces atrophy.

Chapter 13 is supportive of this socio-industrial reading of the novel that positions it against the General Strike of 1926. We read in the novel: “Oh, good!” said Connie. ‘If only there aren’t more strikes!’ ‘What would be the use of their striking again? Merely ruin the industry, what’s left of it: and surely the owls are beginning to see it.” (197) Lawrence considered the General Strike as the starting point for a revolution that questions the social foundations of the British society. The novel chronicles what Lawrence had seen in the mining midlands in 1926 during what he called his “everlasting and unspeakable strike.” The strike brought forth an unprecedented ‘class-hatred’ that was considered as bearing the roots for social reform. The General Strike had a twofold scope. For, one the one hand it created an all engulfing despair and anger at the disparity between the social classes, and on the other hand, it provided the remedy for what it created. It is from this prism, that the novel could be said to offer an optimistic outlook.

The portrayal of Sir Clifford as the epitome of class system allows the narrator to kill the reader’s sense of class. The destructive part of the novel leaves no room for suspicion as to the emptiness and the brutality of the pre-war values of the British society. Lawrence challenges the institutions of power that depend upon traditional ideas of class and money for their legitimacy and acceptance. The narrator’s project of offering a new class consciousness opposes power in a constructive way whereby the repressed gains a voice in society. The negativity with which the Sir Clifford is presented reveals the narrator’s aversion to the discourse of power.

The social reform that Lawrence advances in the novel creeps into the reader’s consciousness as the novel unfolds. The cross-caste affair of Mellors and Connie bears the seeds of a more fulfilling society that acknowledges the value of the individual. The Connie-Mellors liaison is the alternative to what Lawrence rejects. Once the old class markers are debunked the narrator exposes new ones that answer the needs of the individual. Clifford’s connection to money and power is levelled against Mellors’ sensuality and his emancipation from the pre-war prerogatives. The transgression of class boundaries in the novel is maintained via a passage from a restrained sense of being to an authentic mode of existence through sensuality. It could be assumed that Lawrence places education (not necessarily schooled education) and sensuality at the centre of his new class consciousness.

LCL offers an idiosyncratic approach to history based on cycles. For Lawrence, there is always a dominating and a repressed class of society. The formation of a new social class takes place when the repressed section of society revolts against the dominating one, overthrows it and takes over. The cyclical view of history finds expression in LCL. The rising of the repressed announces the coming of a new era of human history. The Connie-Mellors affair marks the rising of the repressed against the ruling class. Connie awakens to a new way of self-knowledge that is got through a sensual experience. It is the Connie-Mellors liaison that makes the breaking of the
class boundaries worthwhile. It is not the breaking of these boundaries that matters for Lawrence, but the fact that this transgression is literally and culturally productive.

In *LCL* society moves from one stage to another when the upper class is infiltrated and later displaced by a lower class, and when the social foundations that uphold the old relations are shaken. This takes place when the repressed natural instincts of both the upper and the lower classes are liberated. We attempt to back our analysis with some post-industrial class theories. Carolyn Howe, in her book *Political Ideology and Class Formation: a Study of the Middle Class* announces the decline of the Marxist theory of the economic foundations of class fractions:

A number of post-industrial theories gainsay the Marxist theory that the working class will one day become the vanguard in capitalist societies. This working class has given way to a new stratum of wage-earners whose money comes from their performance of mental (rather than manual) tasks. They embody the anti-capitalist awareness of the centrality of knowledge as a means of production. Knowledge controllers enjoy the pivotal positions once assigned to manual workers. (30)

The first class marker that Lawrence offers is education. The term is not used to refer to formal education and schooling. It is a construct that builds on the individual’s upbringing and psychological makeup. Lawrence acknowledges the cyclical movement of history and the role of knowledge to gain power and to claim legitimacy in society. The knowledge Lawrence poses is but a form of a new class consciousness where the movement from one class to another is done through the unleashing of sensuality. He, therefore, creates a new class distinct from both Connie’s upper class and Mellors’ working class: it is a stratum that partakes of two or more class locations that are contradictory. It derives its essence from the old philosophical question of *know thyself*. Self-knowledge or consciousness, as advocated in the novel, rests on education. This can be seen in relation to the two opposite characters of Clifford and Mellors where the education of the first literally cripples him and prevents his coming to terms with his age. This is all the more so when contrasted to Mellors whose very psychological makeup ensures his emancipation from class boundaries.

The significance of the coming of Mellors resides in his being in sharp contrast to the industrial system, and to Clifford in particular. He provides Connie with a well-needed break from the soulless world of Wragby and the coal-mining village of Tevershall. He is a working class figure and yet manages to break loose from the boundaries of his own class. It could be argued here, that it is thanks to his education and his personal qualities- rather than in spite of them- that he becomes fully independent. The role of education in relation to both Mellors and Clifford should not be overlooked. It is a determining factor in the overall demeanour of each of them. Clifford’s education hampers his growth and affects his relationship to his miners. When he first suggests to Connie to have a child from another man, Clifford openly bids her to mingle with men from the upper class as he explains to her: “Why, Connie, I should trust your natural instinct of decency and selection. You just wouldn’t let the wrong sort of fellow touch you.” (46) It is noteworthy, however, that he contradicts himself in this regard as he argues-on the same subject-when Connie asks him whether he cares for the child’s father or not:

> Does it matter very much? Do these things really affect us very deeply? ...You had that lover in Germany... what is it now? Nothing almost. It seems to me that
it isn’t these little acts and little connections we make in our lives that matter so very much. They pass away, and where are they? Where.... Where are the snows of yesterday? .... It’s what endures through one’s life that matters; my own life matters to me in its long continuance and development. [...] If we brought it up in Wragby, it would belong to us and to the place. I don’t believe very intensely in fatherhood. If we had the child to rear, it would be our won and it would carry on. (45)

Unlike Clifford, Mellors’ education has favoured and fostered his upward mobility and shaped his vision of a more humane society with new kinds of human relationships. Koh accounts for the natural nobility of Mellors and considers him to be “a natural aristocrat, a gentleman in everything except birth, and his education and background allow him to condemn both the destructive industrial capitalism and the world of the disciplined modern masses. He views industrial bourgeois society as insane.” (195) The lugubrious atmosphere of the Tevershall and Wragby push Mellors to embrace a new type of human interaction based mainly on the sharing of bodily pleasure through the many sexual encounters he has with Connie. Mellors, as the antithesis of Clifford, speaks for Lawrence’s rejection of the mechanical aspect of pre-war society. The subjugation of the human body under the industrial machines has estranged man and has denied him the spontaneous sensual instincts in life. The Mellors-Constance liaison suggests Lawrence’s vision of new kinds of relationships that will transcend class fractions and which, definitely set the path for a regenerated society.

Constance Chatterley and her lover exhibit a great deal of cynicism in regard to traditional ideas of the whole experience of man including, Man, truth, justice, reason and freedom. This is reminiscent of Foucault’s notion of ‘eventalization’ that he explains as “the making visible of a singularity in places where there is temptation to invoke a historical constant, an immediate anthropological trait, or an obviousness which imposes itself uniformly on all” (A Preface to transgression 6) The cross-caste affair exemplifies Foucault’s working of eventalization in both its ethical and political modes, in questioning the institutions of power that depend upon these traditional ideas for their survival. Constance Chatterley, caught in a sterile and unfulfilling marriage, strives to forge a more humane way of living. Such a mode of life will acknowledge the inevitability of sensuality if we were to lead a free from of existence. Sensuality seems to be the only alternative to emancipate people from the manacles of both industry and cultural nothingness. Insofar as industrialization is concerned, the novel is all the more condemning. Although it hails a society with virtually no class-boundaries, LCL throws a look of nostalgia to the pre-industrial period. Mellors and Constance Chatterley create their own world far away from the rules of upper class society. It seems that by distancing themselves from their societies, they manage to better understand its decadence. This point can be illustrated by the following quotation from Thomas Reed Whissen when he writes:

Looking about them at what must have seemed a hopeless situation—a social worker's nightmare—the sensitive artists of the times rebelled in the only way they knew how, the only way left—inwardly. They saw no possibility whatsoever of reforming society, and so they set about distancing themselves from it. They fancied themselves "aesthetes," choosing "art for art's sake" as their credo. Since nothing artistic seemed to have any effect whatsoever on a society determined to glorify bad taste, these aesthetes could only conclude that "all art is useless" and take whatever satisfaction they could in producing works that existed only for
their own sake. In fact, they soon came to elevate literary criticism to the position of the highest art form, maintaining that if art is a notch above reality, criticism is a notch above art. (xix)

We can argue axiomatically, from what has just been said, that LCL helps to settle the debate over the blurring of class boundaries. Lawrence’s vision of social reform is one that shakes the class system. The introduction of Mellors in the life of Connie is symbolic as it announces the possibility of a social regeneration which will transform the oppressing industrial society into a more humane one. Lawrence expresses his discontent with the working of modern industrialization on the individuals. What Clifford sees as the unalterable order of things is in fact an artificial disorder which deforms the natural and imposes on its disciplinary power and regulation. The Connie-Mellors affair is a note of hope of social and cultural renewal. The new order will establish a community where the individual enjoys his whole freedom.

The new social order the novel seeks to establish is the antithesis of the modern age that the opening of the novel labels ‘tragic.’ The tragedy mentioned in the opening paragraph is nothing but- to use Koh’s words- “the regimentation and mechanism, epitomized by Chatterley’s Colliers.” (200.) However, this tragedy is also a diagnosis of the life of the characters in the novel, especially Connie’s personal tragedy, which includes her barren life with her crippled husband and the intellectual life he tries to create for both of them. The ruins mentioned in the same opening paragraph are both physically and socially. Physically, they stand for the material damages of WWI, and socially they reflect the destruction of the values and social order which are part of the war legacy.

I have argued in the beginning of this paper that LCL is constructive. However, this constructive nature of the novel is not in its transgression of class boundaries, but in the type of union Connie and her lover seek. Put differently, LCL aims to maintain the Victorian notion of family and marriage. This is particularly evident when we take into our account the following assumption: Lawrence does not break the class boundaries for the sake of being transgressive; he is keener to show that the same ideal of family can be achieved differently. His cynicism targets the dull and empty life of the upper class and offers an alternative mode of life whereby the same notion of marriage can still be got. The alternative he pushes forward gives supremacy to the body and sensuality over money and birth. Lawrence is cynical towards the upper class and he ridicules its greatness. He destroys its notion of morality and decency with a tale of explicit profanity. Yet, his cynicism is by no means an advertisement for free sex and immorality. Lawrence defends his novel in his famous essay “A Propos of Lady Chatterley’s Lover,” by clarifying that ‘he was no advocate of sex or profanity for their own sake.’ (LCL, xii) That Lawrence advocates the same orderly society can be easily demonstrated through the questioning of the purpose of the novel in general. The protagonists are after a conventional marriage, and a conventional sexuality with male dominance. Connie transgresses her class but she remains entrapped in her gender. The same argument about conventionality and male chauvinism can be seen in Mellors’ relation to his wife. Mellors is trying to escape a non-gratifying marriage. Within his first marriage, Mellors suffered tremendous abuse from his aggressive wife. The study of sexuality and gender offers new insight into the novel, but it is beyond the scope of this paper.

Both characters seek to find a true sense of the self and to be able to find a way to reconcile the bodily and the spiritual needs. The novel can be subscribed within the tradition of the
modernist novel as it shares the same concern over the repercussions of technology the stratification of society at the individual level. The transgression of social classes becomes a necessary step in the journey to self discovery. This point is discussed by Vivas when he notes:

Rather than mere sexual radicalism, this novel's chief concern--although it is also concerned, to a far greater extent than most modernist fiction, with the pitfalls of technology and the barriers of class--is with what Lawrence understands to be the inability of the modern self to unite the mind and the body. D.H. Lawrence believed that without a realization of sex and the body, the mind wanders aimlessly in the wasteland of modern industrial technology.

The transgression of class boundaries in the novel has no anarchist intention. It only calls for a new sphere for self-realization, the essence of which is uncensored sensuality. The freedom of the individual from all types of bonds, namely the social ones, is a requisite for the building up of a new ego. This is one of the ways in which cynicism offers an alternative to what it rejects. The social bankruptcy that the novel depicts is exemplified in the Wragby life and more particularly in the emasculation of Sir Clifford. The coal-mining society in which Constance finds herself is soulless. The alternative that Lawrence provides in the novel is based solely on sensuality. The true obstacle in front of self-realization is the negation of the body and its desires.

In conclusion one might say that the novel is transformative. The reader is led by the narrator to realize the ugliness of the pre-war social system and to embrace a new class consciousness. This is achieved through a binary phase, where the first phase consists of the exposition of a dying social system. This exposition starts with a bleak image of the English society in the wake of WWI and moves on to give an example of such an empty society through the character of Sir Clifford. The latter epitomizes the pre-war rigidity of the social system. He exhibits a great deal of fervour in matters of industry and class, and succeeds to maintain his position as the master of the pits. The second phase consists in the vicarious love affair between Connie Chatterley and Mellors. This affair is presented as the alternative to what the narrator rejects and pushes the reader to discard. Therefore, the transgression of class boundaries in the novel is not done for the sake of transgressing them. Lawrence is keen to show that this transgression can be culturally and socially productive.
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Books

Articles