

BODY OBJECTIFICATION AS ILLUSTRATION OF SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS IN THE NOVEL 'LADY CHATTERLEY'S LOVER' BY DAVID HERBERT LAWRENCE

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Abstract

Lady Chatterley's Lover is one of Lawrence's novel that caused the most controversy in the English society back then. This is one of the few books which was prosecuted for obscene and immoral scenes and the use of inappropriate words, as members of aristocratic English society formulated it. The fact is that Lawrence through this novel in a different way of description and presentation of the body describes all the shortcomings and contradictions of the English society then. What makes this novel contemporary even nowadays is that unfortunately these relations are still present, with the only difference is that ruling class present those who are the owners of capital and the working class remained the same, only the means of labour and the ways of working have changed.

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When analysing this novel moral and objectification should be seen in a wider context. If the literature is one of the elements of social control, then Lawrence's illustration of the body and sexuality is the contrast to overall social and sociological control of the society back then. Lawrence through illustration of the gamekeeper's and Connie's body, as representatives of two different social classes, politesse the problem of socially contrasted classes. By that act he makes enormous distance from morally accepted norms. When the social reaction on the publishing the novel *Lady Chatterley's Lover* is analysed it is clear how much this novel was contrasting with socially accep-

ted norms of the society back then. It is not only up to certain words the things that cause attention of the censors, but the fact that Lawrence with the use of those words illustrates neutral relationship of the members of different classes, thus criticizing the relation of superior and subordinate class. Lawrence points out that 'culture and civilization have taught us to differentiate word from the act, thought from the action or physical reaction.'¹

Seen from this perspective, it is clear that D. H. Lawrence's novel is not at least obscene, nor filled with 'shameful' words or acts. Lawrence thinks that his book is necessary and useful to society and illustrates that with several examples, putting in contrast an aged puritan man who ends up at the court because he raped an underage girl, and a young man from the jazz generation who his life and body sees as a cocktail which he takes and rushes forward, not looking back.²

Lady Chatterlăo's Lover is a story that celebrates a healthy physical relationship between members of the two different classes. What is interesting in this novel is the fact that in almost all Lawrence's novels a female body is the object of observation, description and analyse. In *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, the two male bodies is what Lawrence puts in contrast: a healthy, potent body of the gamekeeper Melrose and sick, disabled body of Sir Clifford.

The novel itself is filled with specific relationship among the characters. From the very beginning through the description of the sisters' development, Constance and Hilda, Lawrence emphasises that there is the change in the generations and that the new generation is wild, playful, curious in its great wish to change relationships in society around them. Sisters are the members of intellectual social classes. Their interlocutors are students, members of certain young intelligence of cosmopolitan spirit. They passionately discuss on various spiritual, social, intellectual and emotional issues with young men they socialise with. Physical relationship is unsatisfactory because it represents just a bare result of intellectual struggles. Connie finds unsatisfactory that and first uncomplete contact. She simply does not understand the point of such a relationship, when she feels more excitement during some discussion with an interesting topic where she can show completely all the sharpness of her intellect and orator capability. At the beginning, Connie is a girl of sensual body, ruddy cheeks, soft face and sharp intellect who indulges in the beauties of art, good, qualitative and constituent conversation on topics connected to the whole society, because she is the society. Connie is, a typical representative of young, wild conscious middle intellectual class. The relationship between genders represents a kind of mini arena for the proving of scientific theses, that is physical relationship of man and woman is a re-

1 Лоренс, Д. Х., *Љубавник леџи Четерти*, Отокар Крешовани, Ријека, 1963. стр. 6.

2 Ibid, стр. 9.

lationship of different social classes of the English society, as it is described at the beginning of the novel. Physically more capable, in this case men, or ruling class in wider perspective, take like a predator what they believe belongs to them by the right of birth. The only weird thing in this relationship is the fact, they take and use what does not belong to them, the ruling class, well almost everything, the right on work, vacation, food, even life itself. The joyful socialising lasts until the beginning of The World War I. In the moment of disturbance of global scale, the border between the members of different social classes starts to disappear. The cosmopolitan gang falls apart because it is made of the members of different nations. Connie's boyfriend gets killed, and Connie returns in England where she joins to intellectual elite of Cambridge students. There is a real patriotic euphoria in England at the beginning of the war. Intellectual youth of England observes everything with a mild irony. In this environment we meet Clifford and his brother who laughs on the news of killing of English young men on front line. This laughter, so horrible and sarcastic is heard until the moment when Clifford faces the loss of his brother and his own wounding.

The contrast in the feelings which Lawrence shows in only several pages is extraordinary. The playful youth from the beginning of the book is suddenly very serious and one might say even overtaken with the state in the world. The personal loss certainly hurts more and are not funny as it was the case with somebody else's losses. The whole society is now in the function of government's war plans, and personal faiths are pushed aside. Connie and Clifford start their life together, which is done for general good sake, because Clifford, as the only living heir of Chetterley's has the obligation to provide the next heir. The first days of life together pass in introduction and the beauties of honey moon. The martial happiness of the Chatterleyes and physical fulfilment unfortunately last for a very short period of time because Clifford must return to the front line and gets terrible wounded. Clifford returns home after the front line in a very serious condition. Thanks to capability of doctors and medical achievements Clifford will survive, but his life will never be the same. Here we can see that Clifford from the very beginning of the novel represents new, technically improved English society without emotions. The new society, as Lawrence describes in this novel, is on the good way to become inhuman, automated and sick. The lack of healthy physical relationship and physical closeness with another human being makes Clifford an emotional cripple. Clifford is incapable to live along with the people of Tevershall, although he was born and raised in this environment, he can less understand the miners, villagers and his staff then Connie who is, to be honest, somewhat closer to them by her class. Connie, contrary to Clifford, tries to understand what kind of problems troubles the citizens of

Tevershall and what are difficulties of dissatisfied miners. She defends the miners and tries to explain Clifford, who is freshly awakened industrialist, that he cannot accomplish the respect and obedience of the miners otherwise, but through the conversation. Unfortunately, Clifford will prove her contrary. In the new, industrial world, which looks more like a slavery society, the mine owner is in a way the owner of the miners' lives, as well as the whole social class which depends on the owner's attitude. Bodies and strength of the miners represent for Clifford only a bare instrument that works, earns and provides for him. In this case, the miners' bodies are the objects, but not a sexual one, as this is the case with the bodies of Melrose or Connie, but the object which represents an instrument of class division. It is the clear contrast between the Clifford's physically incapable body which represents industrial and intellectual class, and the miners' bodies, which are battered and exhausted with hard work but still persistent and at the end adjusted to hard life and new industrial society. It can be concluded that in the new society intellectual automatism will rule, not natural selection.

In the preface *Lover Lady Chatterley's Lover* Archibald MacLeish states that sometimes characters are more symbols than human beings and sometimes through text propaganda purpose appears. It can be clearly concluded against which is Lawrence in the modern, industrialized world but also it is not entirely clear what he stands for.³

Lawrence attitudes regarding class differences are clear, he represents the working class, but it is not completely clear the goal nor what is the future of this class. The characters really are a kind of symbol of class affiliation, Clifford ownership class, Connie middle, game keeper working and every one of them in many ways illustrates all the problems, all the differences and all the intransigence of the class. At the beginning of the novel Connie is a typical representative of the curious middle class who tends to climb over on the social scale. In the beginning of married life Clifford and Connie through their physical contact and interaction, we can guess that this is just a perfect combination. The young couple understand each other perfectly and together they survive the cruel world at the beginning of the First World War. However, as time passes and Clifford is more accustomed to his handicap. Connie, who was initially a perfect support and comfort, is gradually becoming distant. Because of the remoteness, Connie is able to look at things from another angle. She realizes that she is involved in a vicious cycle of physical, mental and emotional discontent. At a different perspective of observation Connie is encouraged by the new acquaintance with the local game keeper, who by his birth belongs to the working class, but thro-

³ Lawrence, D. H., *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, Grove Press, New York, 1959. VI, (предговор написао: Archibald Macleish).

ugh his education and military service was on his way to also climb the social ladder. At the beginning of this combination works well. All classes are intertwined, and complement each other, and they are dependent on each other. In contrast to such a beginning, the end is quite different. All the characters are somehow returning to a class backward: Connie binds to gamekeeper, Melrose gives up the standard language and moves to the dialect, and Clifford experience some kind of spiritual, class and emotional collapse. He will bind his life to Mrs. Bolton, a nurse and a new member of staff, who eventually grows into something more important than just a member of the staff and thus climbs up the social ladder. Lawrence through a physical description of the characters illustrates the class where characters belong to. Connie's core young woman typical female attributes. Its appearance is by no means appropriate for the times in which he lives, when women are thin and built more like boys, but as a future mother. The moment you begin to suffer as a result of physical inactivity Connie weak physically, her emotional strength also decreases. Her salvation found in relation to the gamekeeper, whose healthy body just represents the class to which it belongs, the working class. Lawrence through a physical description of the characters illustrates the class where characters belong. Connie is a healthy young woman with typical female attributes. With her appearance she is by no means appropriate for the times in which she lives, when women are thin and built more like boys, but as a future mother. In the moment she begins to suffer as a result of her physical inactivity Connie starts to weak physically, her emotional strength also decreases. She finds her salvation in relation with the gamekeeper, whose healthy body also represents the class to which he belongs, the working class. His body is a body built to withstand a variety of efforts. In some descriptions in moments of absolute physical and emotional nakedness Lawrence places the body of game keeper in a sort of contrast to himself. More broadly it is described the contrast of fragility and extraordinary physical strength of the new working class, which with the development of technology and machines become just an instrument for launching industrial machinery, in some way, a screw which drives, but unfortunately a necessary one. The question is whether the new people in the modern world will become uniformed figures moving in a predetermined protocol, without thoughts and feelings? Clifford's body represents the ruling class. Strong intellect and body damaged in the war represents what to Lawrence's predictions will happen to the ruling class. Clifford's emotional breakdown at the end of the novel, and his total surrender to Mrs. Bolton represents only a simple illustration of the future, and it is clear, according to Lawrence, it will not be at all fabulous. High class due to alienation from

simple and natural relations would be brought to collapse and eventually set partly in a precarious position.

Mrs. Bolton is a strong woman. She has all the features one caring woman who is accustomed to nurture patients. A sufficient amount of tenderness and bitterness due to premature loss of her husband, who is in fact characterized as a coward, have made Mrs. Bolton perfect expert on social conditions and wise counselor and observer of The Chatterley's home. Mrs. Bolton monitors the situation between spouses at all times. She is a friend in long sleepless nights to Clifford and, in some ways, an ally of Constanca in her secret relationship with a game keeper. At one moment she tries to create a positive climate in case Constance gets pregnant creating illusory story of incredible possibilities. Mrs. Bolton actually tries to keep the existing emotional and social state. She is aware of the new conditions in which Mrs. Chatterley's is, and according to that, she tries to keep the temporary state.

Yajing Li in her paper *Love Accounts in D. H. Lawrence's Novels* points out that Lawrence believed that industrialized western culture is inhuman because it emphasises the intellectual characteristics versus the natural ones or physical, which leads to complete alienation. Li points out further that this culture, as such, is fainting and that humankind will soon evaluate into a new state of consciousness, that is the state that it belongs to the nature. One of the aspects of this 'blood consciousness' would be the acceptance of the need for sexual fulfilment.⁴

The proof of this claim just could be Lawrence's description of Constanca, which due to physical emptiness and dissatisfaction gradually veins, and from the beginning of an affair with a game keeper, an affair that completely absorbs her and fulfills physically, her body gets again healthy and vibrant segments. The primeval human need is bonding with another human being. Only a full understanding of himself and the people around us can lead to progress of individuals and society as a whole. An iconic is the human need to get close to another human being. Only complete understanding of oneself, and people surrounding us can lead to progress of individual and complete society.

Li further states that the novel *Lady Chatterley's Lover* proved that Lawrence explicit scenes of nudity and sex does not use for the sake of sex. There is no doubt that the book is moral one. Lawrence leads to the conclusion that in fact the old doctrine makes mistake, the one that says that sexuality and moral are separate units.⁵

This segment of human relations, since it is inherently natural as such is moral. As well as the relations in which the human body appears. If the re-

4 Li, Yajing, *Love Accounts in D.H. Lawrence's Novels*, US-China Foreign Language, USA, 2006, 31.

5 Ibid, 30-31.

relationship was created out of pure desire and need to express affection of two human beings, this relationship cannot be immoral. Seen in this light, Lawrence was right when he argues that sexuality and morality should not be seen as separate entities. In a healthy relationship between two people there should come to a rapprochement and deepening of relations. The consequences of a lack of understanding and coexistence by force are obvious if we look at the relationship of Connie and Clifford. That artificial relationship, without complete physical and psychological understanding is empty and unsatisfactory. Put in the words of one of Lawrence's characters the relationship between two people is nothing but the exchange of feelings, rather than the exchange of ideas.⁶ This notion exactly describes Lawrence's attitude on human interaction. Eventually this interaction between Clifford and Constanca is lost and become everything, but the exchange of emotions. Clifford and Connie fulfil their life with the exchange of ideas, attitudes on different social issues. The Chatterley's are surrounded by people who have empty attitudes and endlessly lot of time to discuss about them. An excellent illustration of this claim is the scene when Clifford and Connie are visited by Clifford's Cambridge friends who endlessly discuss on various issues. The whole time, Connie sits calmly in the corner with her broidery. She does not include in the conversation for a moment, but she is also well aware that without her presence, this conversation would not be as lively, and participants would not be so eloquent. At the end, the topic of discussion itself is pointless and meaningless.

It can be stated that in the book there is a kind of contrast in manifestation of love. Love or similar sentiment between Connie and Clifford is a high-ranking socially acceptable behavior. Often there are pictures in various journals of Clifford sitting in a wheelchair in an intellectual pose and Connie, a silent, young woman, the perfect companion and shadow. Connie represents many English women after World War I. However, the "soft" sentiment and that sad, lost gaze, as presented in the photos, only present essentially the despair in which Connie is currently in and the contrast by its exuberant youth feels to the absence of physical fulfillment. Clifford his disability tries to replace with intensive writing of popular works, and later with full commitment to the mine, its modernization, as well as innovations that are related to the production of secondary products from the ore. How much Clifford is infatuated with technical achievements and his faith in the new, technical world, illustrates the scene when Connie and Clifford go for a walk and when his motor wheelchair brakes. His helplessness and despair are clearly displayed when he shouts at gamekeeper not to help him if the help is not sought. What Lawrence underscores here is a victory for the

⁶ Лоренс, Д. Х., *Љубавник леџи Четерти*, "Отокар Крешовани", Ријека, 1963., 45.

natural over the technical. What Lawrence points out here is a certain victory of natural over technical. Joint Connie's and the gamekeeper's strength will push Clifford and his machine to the house. In a brief illustration of this scene we can see the segments of Lawrence's attitudes, and that is return to the nature, simple relationship of the human being to oneself and two human beings will provide humankind the continuity of existence. The disposal of our own bodies and orientation towards new, technical achievements, as illustrated in the character of Clifford, will make us incapable of automated machines, which cannot function if it breaks the smallest screw or quite a bit overheats. Even worse, it will make of us semi-automatic products that do not work in the natural environment.

The question is whether humanity moves away from the body's own need for moral reasons or moral reasons are you just stumbling block of the whole social system. Does the ruling class, nurturing "moral principles" descends away individuals from each other and from themselves or simply imposes a certain code of conduct that would subordinate the working class to their own needs and ideas? Lawrence through numerous descriptions of love scenes between Connie and gamekeeper tries to describe this. He describes the act of union, which complement each other giving the story fullness and meaning. This attitude is exactly the attitude that Lawrence considers natural.

1. The body represents the only form that is the driving force of a strong desire, natural and complete. Although Connie and Melrose are from different social classes and speak different dialects, their bodies recognize each other in the primal desire to complement each other and make them happy. Here social attitudes and social codes do not play any role in the primordial relationship that they establish with each other. Melrose is a man, and Connie is a woman who has needs and whose needs just a body, primordial and potent, can fulfill. The social codes and norms of behavior that are imposed by a small number of people who rule fall into the water, simply because the body seeks its satisfaction, which is natural and logical in itself enough.
2. The theme of social turmoil and mutual misunderstanding due to various social affiliation is extremely close to Lawrence from his own life. England in which Lawrence was writing was England of great turmoil and change. In the English society then was important to nurture socially acceptable relationship although such relationships is often a torture for one of the characters. A great example are Connie and Clifford. Connie had with Clifford socially acceptable relationship, but due to the lack of a healthy physical relationship gradually begins to fade, and the Lawrence very vividly demonstrated in numerous descriptions of the vigorous

body of the heroine of the novel and her essential contrast presented in the form of Clifford. Interestingly, Clifford's character is presented as morally correct in that society, and Connie is the one who has left home and family for the gamekeeper. We could say that Lawrence's had a little different sense of moral from the morality of his society. Lawrence to some extent justifies the Connie to leave Clifford and her new life makes with Melrose and the future child. For him is quite natural and morally justified to respect our own wishes.

3. Lawrence's use sexual act in his works was very shocking for the time in which he wrote, and later. But when we look at total of his work, just that scenes seem as natural part of his novels and stories. If we delete them or change, his work would lose meaning and compatibility. The value of these scenes is even greater because Lawrence was not interested in human touch as mere physical gratification. Lawrence in a physical relationship and intimacy of the body and touch, saw a way to restore the human being itself and its primordial essence, which is in harmony with nature and from nature arises. Li also points that the importance of highlighting the sexual act is not to increase the functions of sex in our lives, but to defend the feelings and sexuality that are based on morality. According to Li, this is a unity of body and soul. Lawrence puts in contrast the pure sexual act without feeling that in part will lead to a complete separation of humanity. Although sexual desire requires the unification of men and women, this unification is not only a result of this kind of desire, but the union of sentiments. Otherwise there would be no harmony between body and soul, it would be mere fornication.⁷

Lawrence emphasizes the extent to which basic social norms and moral principles in society diminish. Through the illustration of the human body and placing that same body in different situations of physical relationships Lawrence points to the fact that the human individual is always in a kind of shackles, mental or physical in relation to the ruling class. That is precisely the ruling class is trying to ornament their own parameters authorities through various management methods. In this way, the ruling class by the various moral norms and attitudes is trying to build a larger gap between members of different classes. An excellent example to illustrate this thesis is the scene where Clifford writes Connie about the events on the estate and the scenes that take place with a gamekeeper who was "visited" by ex-wife. Through an ironic and mocking tone, making use of the ornate literary style Clifford describes how "mad" wife visited the "poor" gamekeeper and tried to force restore and reconstruct the marital relationship. In anger

⁷ Li, Yajing, *Love Accounts in D.H. Lawrence's Novels*, US-China Foreign Language, USA, 2006, 30.

Melrose's wife displays all the details of married life of the divorced spouse without sparing words nor descriptions. What Clifford does not mention in his letter it is announced that Connie is also part of the martial triangle. It is clear that Connie is protected as a member of the ruling class, a gamekeeper must leave the estate, while his wife is under the threat of imprisonment. It is clear that different criteria are present when it comes to morally judgement to the members of different classes, although all of them are participants in the same event. The question is whether this is the outcome of the high moral of English society. This makes Constanca's to her life with Melrose so devastating not only for Clifford, but also for the entire English high society. It is devastating that despite all the differences and different habits, one member of high society is ready to give up all the benefits that high class offers for small joys of life and physical satisfaction. With this act Connie humiliated not only herself, but all members of the upper class. Despite that, she allowed the mixing and breaking the unbreakable social bonds and norms.

In this case, Lawrence represents characters bodies only as mere objects. Putting them for the first time in such a direct connection, Lawrence's characters are real social puppets. Each of these puppet has perfectly prepared role that at one moment should be played. The problem arises when puppets confuse texts and quotations. There is a strange mixture and strange turnover. But if one think about it more deeply, perhaps these turnovers are not so unexpected. There is no doubt that in some strict boundaries between different social units came to saturation. Further social progress is possible only if members of different classes mix. In this way, one could avoid the terrible saturation in social circles, and the human race would again could be healthy and free.

Lawrence is a man rich in spirit and extraordinary standpoints. Lawrence's beliefs are different from the beliefs of his contemporaries. In his latest novel, *Lady Chatterley's Lover* he described English society as he saw and experienced it. Of course, individual units of *Lady Chatterley's Lover* can be viewed globally and as a general remark on the social situation in the early twentieth century. The moral aspects of society in relation to Lawrence's standpoints are somewhat different and inappropriate.

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