

## LADY CHATTERLEY'S LOVER

"The valid blood-relation between man and woman" is explained fully and finally in Lawrence's most controversial novel, Lady Chatterley's Lover. He expresses here the state of sex relationship much more explicitly than he did anywhere, for he believed that a deep and enduring man-woman relation couldn't be established so long as people had false and wrong attitudes toward sex, the most vital instinct man has.<sup>343</sup> Lawrence felt that men and women of his time were sexually ill through generations of misdirection about sex. Because of their inherited Victorian prudery sex was treated hypocritically: it was a taboo, and associated with indecency - as something shameful and disgusting.<sup>344</sup> In other words they were too prone to concentrate everything on the mental life, and paid less attention to their physical beings, considered as the sexual animal parts. Thus, he felt, they were living only with half of themselves, and, consequently, their lives were poor and emaculated.<sup>345</sup> Having believed that sex formed a very essential part of man-woman relationship, and that the physical life was of great importance, Lawrence wrote Lady Chatterley's Lover in order to, as he says, "make the sex relation valid and precious, instead of shameful,"<sup>346</sup> and to enable man and women "to think sex, fully, completely, honestly, and cleanly."<sup>347</sup>

The novel's strong pattern<sup>is</sup> derived from the contrast

between the two couples, Sir Clifford and his wife, and Mellors and Lady Chatterley. The relationship of the first pair is another example of a wrong kind of marriage, which can never be right. Sir Clifford stands for the people who lack the emotional depth and the capability for sincere relationship and tenderness, and who have a false attitude towards sex. Because of his intellectuality and his cold-bloodedness, he tries to mentalize sex - to change it from the basic physical meaning into a mental quality.<sup>348</sup> His relation with Constance Chatterley is a kind of companionship that goes beyond love, where sex seems almost irrelevant. To him "sex was merely an accident, as an adjunct, one of the curious obsolete, organic processes which persisted in its own clumsiness, but was not really necessary."<sup>349</sup> And his impotence, caused by a war-wound, cuts the physical side of marriage from his wife completely.<sup>350</sup> Connie (Lady Chatterley), who is passionate and whose sexual instinct is healthy, has to live with him in his family house, Wragby Hall, where everything is organized mechanically in "good order, strict cleanliness, and strict punctuality,"<sup>351</sup> utterly isolated from other people; for Clifford, because of the pride in his class superiority and the lack of human warmth, doesn't want to be acquainted with the lower-class people, even the miners who work for him.<sup>352</sup> His isolation from the colliers on whom his wealth depends has its root in his isolation from Connie. Between them "there was no touch, no actual contact. It was as if the whole thing took place in a vacuum."<sup>353</sup> And "he was so much at one with her, in his

mind and hers, but bodily they are non-existent to one another too."<sup>354</sup> It is a purely mental life they share. Connie, since she likes him chiefly for his intellectuality, doesn't mind to lead this kind of life with him.

Clifford's mental activity is writing, and he, very soon, meets with remarkably rapid success, although there is "nothing" in his stories.<sup>355</sup> In all that he does Connie is very close to him in mind, and she accepts Clifford's increasingly narrow view of life. He tries to convince her that the real meaning of marriage is "the life-long companionship - the living together from day to day, not the sleeping together,"<sup>356</sup> and that sex is only a trivial addition to life, and really of no great importance. "If we stick to that," he says, "we ought to be able to arrange this sex thing, as we arrange going to the dentist..."<sup>357</sup> Besides, he gathers an intellectual circle around him, mostly men, and all of them relegate sex to the status of a merely primitive or mechanical act. For them sex is a casual thing, rather obsolete, and "not necessary." "The whole point about the sexual problem is," Hammond, one of the intellectualse says, "that there is no point to it... we don't want to follow a man into the w.c., so why should we want to follow him to bed with a woman...If we took no more notice of the one thing than the other, there'd be no problem."<sup>358</sup> To him sex is slightly irritating, and perhaps at bottom rather degrading - as "going to the w.c." also is. Connie feels dull with this kind of talk; and time rolls on at the hall in a kind of void, unmarked by any significant human contacts. "Time went on. Whatever happened, nothing

happened, because she was so beautifully out of contact. She and Clifford lived in their ideas and their books..."<sup>359</sup>

But very soon Connie's "body" rebels against the mental life, and claims its own needs. Unlike Clifford she has a body that will not be easily denied or subdued.<sup>360</sup> Connie becomes more and more restless and lonely, and inevitably she takes a lover - Michaelais, a successful trivial playwright, the cynical "outsider" whose "stray-dog" soul appeals to the potential mother in her. It is her loneliness and warm heartedness that drives her into Michaelais' arms. Connie is not looking for sexual satisfaction. If it had simply been a case that her husband was sterile and she wanted sex, she could have, and would have, had sex in every hedge and ditch round Wragby.

Connie feels wrongly that the relationship with Michaelais will drive away a sense of being lost from her. Michaelais regards sex as an interesting and pleasant pastime, and flattering to his own ego, but who has never really experienced it in the manner of which Lawrence approves: "...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..."<sup>361</sup> Connie is rather slow in the physical consummation with him, and furiously Michaelais abuses her, at an intimate moment, for her trick of holding back in the act of love, then making him "hang on" until she satisfied herself: "This speech was one of the crucial blows of Connie's life. It killed something in her...her whole sexual feeling for him, or for any man, collapsed that night..."<sup>362</sup>

He unexpectedly strikes her belief in perfect human freedom, and Connie begins to doubt if a woman has the right to the exaltation of love.

The relations between Michaelis and Connie illustrates a wrong kind of sex relationship - a relationship in which each of the lovers is considered to be only an instrument for the other's pleasure. Michaelis has no regard for her (or for himself) as a human being, and he wants to use Connie simply as an object, as a body on which he can find his own thrill. Sex is treated as casual and promiscuous,<sup>363</sup> bringing no real joy neither to man nor woman. Connie, then, continues to go through the days drearily, with an increasing weariness. "There was nothing now but this empty treadmill of what Clifford called the integrated life, the long living together of two people, who are in the habit of being in the same house with one another."<sup>364</sup> And Connie feels that she has been cheated:

All the great words, it seemed to Connie, were cancelled for her generation, no love, joy, happiness, home, mother, father, husband, all these great dynamic words were half dead now, and dying from day to day. Home was a place you lived in, love was a thing you didn't fool yourself about, joy was a word you applied to a good Charleston, happiness was a term of hypocrisy used to bluff other people, a father was an individual who enjoyed his own existence, a husband was a man you lived with and kept going in spirits. As for sex, the last of the great words, it was just a cocktail term for an excitement that bucked you up for a while, then left you more ruggy than ever...<sup>365</sup>

To her all these words apply to the deadness of the old morality, represented by Sir Clifford, who, because of his lack of human warmth, strips all warm meanings from the words. "The casual sex" he says emphatically, "is nothing, compared to the long life lived together."<sup>366</sup> And Connie gradually sees that he is not only physically impotent but also spiritually sterile. Once he suggests to her to find a "suitable" man to give her a child: "If we brought it up at 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 own..."<sup>367</sup> Connie feels that his offer to accept the child, which he calls "it", as his own, is not an act of kindness. He regards her body as only an instrument to produce children; she knows from her experiences that to give herself is not a simple mechanical act, but one heavy with emotional implications, and she hates his idea that a child should be born solely from individuals who do not love each other. Clifford's lack of human sympathy is revealed to Connie more when they go to the wood together.<sup>368</sup> When his motor chair breaks down Clifford furiously tries to start it up again, but when nothing happens, he agrees to horn for Mellors. Then Mellors comes; but Clifford, because of the pride in his class superiority, refuses any aid from his gamekeeper, whom he treats rather contemptuously. He tries to make the chair run up the hill by its own engine - to show to Connie and Mellors that the machine will never fail man. But the motor doesn't run, and Clifford is forced by circumstance to ask for Mellors' help.

Mellors nearly kills himself in pushing the mechanical wheel chair. Connie for the first time "consciously and definitely hated Clifford."<sup>369</sup> And she feels much more detached from him: "it was strange, how, free and full of life it made her feel, to hate him and to admit it fully to herself. - 'Now I've hated him, I shall never be able to go on living with him,' came the thought into her mind."<sup>370</sup> She hates him consciously and vividly because she feels that he has made a false demand on her sympathies. Clifford is not a cripple to whom she should give her sympathy. He is proud and has no real warm feelings for anyone:

Deep inside herself, a sense of injustice, of being defrauded, began to burn in Connie...Poor Clifford, he was not to blame. His was the greater misfortune. It was all part of the general catastrophe.

And yet was he not in a way to blame? This lack of warmth, this lack of the simple warm, physical contact, was he not to blame for that? He was never really warm, nor ever kind, only thoughtful, considerate, in a well-bred, cold sort of way! But never warm as a man can be warm to a woman, as even Connie's father could be warm to her, with the warmth of a man who did himself well, and intended, but who still could comfort a woman with a bit of his masculine glow. 371

Connie's hatred of Clifford is increased when she accidentally sees Mellora washing in the yard.<sup>372</sup> His strong body symbolically makes her aware of hers; and she begins to realize how the mechanical marriage with Clifford has degenerated it. Suddenly a sense of life slipping past, unlivid comes to Connie, and she sees the significance of her doctor's words: "You're spending your life without renewal<sup>of</sup> it."<sup>373</sup> And she feels she has made a serious mistake in marrying Clifford: "A sense of rebellion smouldered in Connie. What was the good of it all? What was the good of her sacrifice,

her devoting her life to Clifford? What was she ~~she~~ serving after all? A cold spirit of vanity, that had no warm human contacts ..."<sup>374</sup> Connie revolts against Clifford by detaching herself away from him: Mrs. Bolton, the Parish nurse, is called in to replace her at Clifford's side, and Connie spends more and more time in walking in the wood - the only sanctuary from the menace of industrialism. Eventually she finds what she wants - "a resurrection in the body" in her relations with Mellors.<sup>375</sup>

The relationship between Mellors and Connie is intended as an example of a proper sex relationship where tenderness, physical passion, and mutual respect all flow together. It begins rather slowly, because neither she nor he wants to be involved with each other. Connie, since Michaelais, doesn't want to make a new mistake with other men. Mellors himself is a grown man of nearly forty, whose experiences with women only brought bitterness to him. His manhood was offended by his "spiritual" girl friends, and sex in his married life became a brutish activity, for Bertha Coutts liked to "grind her own coffee" in the act of love, and, opposite to Clifford, tried to put marriage on a purely physical level. Mellors has kept himself aloof from his wife for four years, and determined not to make any contact with women again. This makes him rather rude to Connie whose presence in the wood is a kind of trespass on his privacy. He resents her demand of using his cottage as her resting place; Mellors speaks dialect to her, and his manner is coarse and sneering. Since he has no right to prevent Connie from going in the wood,



Mellors tries to avoid her as far as possible. But finally he can't resist her, and when compassion and desire become powerfully mingled he gives up his isolation. This happens on one lovely sunny day when the first chick hatches out. "Connie crouched to watch in a sort of ecstasy. Life, life! Pure, sparkly, fearless new life!"<sup>376</sup> And she cries bitterly at the sense of her own forlornness. Mellors, moved by compassion, goes to her. "You shouldn't cry,"<sup>377</sup> he says softly, and so starts their relationship.

The physical relations between Mellors and Connie are fully described because Lawrence wanted to show the depth and enduring quality of the true sex relationship, and to make us see that sexual act is not shameful or degrading, but is natural and necessary.<sup>378</sup> Each episode indicated its effect on Connie's awareness of her sexual nature - how "the phallic consciousness" is awakened in her, and how she learns to know the real meanings of "tenderness" and "passion." It conveys some part of the general change of being in Connie - from the first submission to the final rooting out of shame. Moreover, the full description of the sexual act shows that sex relationship is a mutual process, not the physical coming together for satisfaction of a quick physical need, but a deep, and enduring relationship where man and woman have emotional commitment with each other, as Connie and Mellors do.

Mellors, after his first sexual encounter with Connie, feels sorry for what he has done to her: "Almost with bitterness he watched her go. She had connected him up again,

when he had wanted to be alone...he had taken a woman, and brought on himself a new circle of pain and doom..."<sup>379</sup> But at the same time he feels warm at the thought of Connie whose tenderness has not been destroyed neither by education nor industrialism.

He thought with infinite tenderness of the woman. Poor forlorn thing, she was nicer than she knew, and oh! so much too nice for the tough lot she was in contact with. Poor thing, she too had some of the vulnerability of the wild hyacinths, she wasn't all tough rubber-goods and platinum, like the modern girl...Tender! somewhere she was tender, tender with a tenderness of the growing hyacinths, something that has gone out of the celluloid women of today...<sup>380</sup>

Mellors himself possesses tenderness which Sir Clifford and his race lack. And in describing Mellors' relations with Connie the words "warm", "tender", "human" are used repeatedly to suggest the importance of tenderness in man-woman relationship.<sup>381</sup> Mellors and Connie are the only couple in the industrialized Tevershall village, which is described as the negation of all beauty, whose relationship is full of warmth, humanity and tenderness.<sup>382</sup> The "phallic tenderness" solves the old dominance - submission problem in marriage, since Connie now submits to Mellors because of the warmth between them, and he yields to her, if necessary, for the same reason. Both of them find what Lawrence called "the passionate secret sources of life" where "the tide of sensitive awareness needs to ebb and flow, cleansing and freshening..."<sup>383</sup> Connie is transformed into a new being.

And it seemed she was like the sea, nothing but dark waves rising and heaving, heaving with a great swell, so that slowly her whole darkness was in motion, and she was ocean rolling its dark, dumb mass. Oh, and far down inside her the deeps parted and rolled asunder, in long, far-travelling billows, and ever, at the quick of her, the depths

parted and rolled asunder, from the centre of soft plunging, as the plunger went deeper and deeper, touching lower...till suddenly, in a short, shuddering convulsion, the quick of all her plasm was touched, she knew herself touched, the consummation was upon her, and she was gone. She was gone and she was born: a woman...384

This is the state where she and Mellors achieve an experience of complete abandoned sensual enjoyment, simply for its own sake. They are fully alive now, and as Lawrence puts it in Apocalypse:

For man, the vast marvel is to be alive. For man, as for flower and beast and bird, the supreme triumph is to be most vividly, most perfectly alive. Whatever the unborn and the dead may know, they cannot know the beauty, the marvel of being alive in the flesh. The dead may look after the dead afterwards. But the magnificent here and now of life is the flesh of ours and ours alone, and ours only for a time...385

Connie is awake to passion, beauty and human warmth through her relationship with Mellors, who returns, from lonely isolation, to life and warm-hearted love. With Connie by his side Mellors is ready to fight against the world where all life sacrificed to "coal and iron": "And she is my mate. And it is a battle against the mone, and the machine, and the insentient ideal mongkeyishness of the world. And she will stand behind me..."<sup>386</sup> Love is used as a weapon against mechanism which robs life of its purpose and vitality.

When Connie is pregnant, they decide to live together on a farm of their own, and each tries to divorce a former mate. They refuse to pass the baby into Clifford's hands, because they feel that the baby is the product of their love. Their relationship is a serious, responsible affair though it is not within wedlock. Had they only wanted promiscuous sex they wouldn't have thought of marriage, and of their living

together. This is seen clearly in Mellors' letter to Connie, who is waiting to join him when he gets a divorce:

...Now it is time to be chaste - it is so good to be chaste, like a river of cold water in my soul. I love the chastity now that it flows between us. It is like fresh water and rain. How can one want wearisomely to philander. What a misery to be like Don Juan, and impotent ever to buck oneself into peace, and the little flame alight, impotent and unable to be chaste in the cool between-whiles, as by a river.<sup>387</sup>

Between Mellors and Connie there will be periods of extraordinary chasteness. Love, for them, is associated with tenderness, with thought for the other person, with the creation of new life, with regard for the consequence, and not with the mere satisfaction of the animal body. This is a proper relationship between man and woman which should combine them perfectly together. Lawrence defines this right relation by contrasting it with the unsatisfactory relation between Michaelis and Connie, Sir Clifford and Connie, and Mellors and Bertha Coutts. Lawrence believes that man is whole, mortal flesh and spirit, and that his two parts are not at war with each other. Man can't come to mental fulness if he attempts to get rid of his physical being by thinking that it is a sexual animal, and he can't know the content in the mind if he tries to destroy the natural being of his body. In other words body and mind are equally important. Body without mind is brutish; mind without body (which Lawrence thought a more common error today) is a depart from our double being. Connie's relations with Clifford goes wrong because of his attempt to put marriage on a pure spiritual level: "Marriage" Lawrence says, "is no marriage that is not basically and permanently phallic."<sup>388</sup>

Mellors breaks from his wife because she demands too much physical thrill from him.

In the relations between Mellors and Connie sex is raised from a mere animal function to a truly human activity, associated with tenderness, compassion, and mutual affection. And with the purpose of making "the sex relation valid and precious, instead of shameful,"<sup>389</sup> and of enabling men and women "to think sex, fully, completely, honestly, and cleanly,"<sup>390</sup> Lawrence describes poetically the intimate sexual act between Connie and Mellors much more fully than other English novelists before him.<sup>391</sup> He shows openly and frankly, with great reverence, of course, what everybody knows in private and what everyone knows to be important. And believing that sex is natural and necessary, and that it is a basic of the life-long union in mind and soul of man and woman, Lawrence lays a great emphasis on the physical side of love. "There is nothing wrong with sexual feelings in themselves," he says, "so long as they are straightforward and not sneaking or sly. The trouble with sex is that we daren't speak of it or think of it naturally."<sup>392</sup> Lawrence felt that so long as man and woman regarded sex as something shameful, and disgusting, they would lose what might be their vital strength, and couldn't establish a deep and enduring relationship between them. And in order to liberate the people from the Victorian prudery, and to make "an adjustment in consciousness to the basic physical realities,"<sup>393</sup> Lawrence used many obscene words connected with the body, including "the four-letter

words," through the mouth of Mellors, a man of the lower class.<sup>394</sup> He felt that all the "great words" never stand by themselves but always spring from living relationships, and lead to the soul's fulfillment in this life. And, because of this, Connie, when she is fulfilled with Mellors, sees the sacred meaning of the word "love" and feels warm when Mellors uses the obscene words in his speech.