

Reading Foucault Reading Lawrence:
Body, Voice, and Sexuality in *Lady Chatterley's
Lover*

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No one ordinarily puts such experiences into words.

— Graham Hough (159)

In his classic study *The Dark Sun*, Graham Hough introduces Lawrence's work through a spatial metaphor: "whatever his ultimate reputation," Hough argues, Lawrence's writing will continue to be studied because it is "part of a general alteration of the mental and moral landscape" that took place in Western culture through the first half of the century (1-2). Mapped onto the specific historical shifts of the period, the image of the psychic landscape transforms into that of an earthquake:

The distribution of attention alters; the sea submerges formerly frequented valleys; unknown peaks appear above its surface; and though the total quantity of land and water presumably remain the same, the arrangement of the landscape becomes suddenly unfamiliar. It will surely be recognized by future historians of culture that there was an upheaval in the early part of this century as great as the now familiar Romantic one of a hundred and fifty years ago. (Hough 2)



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Like much Lawrence criticism, Hough's work attempts "to place" Lawrence within this psychic-historical landscape. This is a difficult job, since Lawrence—concerned, like "the ambiguous Freud," with the unconscious elements of the psyche—is submerged within the general psychic landscape, riding "some unseen, unknown current of attention that carried artists and scientists along together" (Hough 3). "To this stream," Hough says, "Lawrence belongs" (3).

The image of the psychic landscape comes so readily to hand that it is difficult to see just what aesthetic, pedagogical, and political choices are involved in "placing" Lawrence's works within histories of literature and modernity. Hough implies that the seismic shift which Lawrence, among others, recorded has not been repeated since then, and thus that we inhabit the same mental landscape as he—but by submerging Lawrence in the "stream" of unconscious concern, Hough makes invisible those whom he considers the central chroniclers of this psychic earthquake. Indeed, this aspect of the mental landscape image highlights a central weakness in the metaphorical structure it designates, and suggests that the whole idea of placing Lawrence within a *single* shared psychological terrain may need to be rethought.

With regard to *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, this rethinking will necessarily involve relating these historical concerns to the sexual thematics of the book. What difficulty remains in our making sense of the representation of sexuality in *Lady Chatterley's Lover* may therefore arise not from the text's treatment of material normally repressed, its voicing of issues silenced in everyday discourse and thus its break with our practical understanding of sex and its relation to language, but rather from our common implication with Lawrence in an overarching process of modernity—in our "continu[ing] to inhabit the psychic landscape of Lawrence's fiction" (Sanders 11), or perhaps more accurately, in the way Lawrence's texts, and *Chatterley* especially, retain their form and apparent clarity within our own psychic horizon. Though any adequate reading of *Lady Chatterley's Lover* must take its treatment of sexuality into account, it seems very few, if any, critics of the novel do not at some point repeat the

sexual problematic they examine. We may suggest a few reasons for this repetition. Among the more obvious are the initial hostile reaction to *Chatterley*, and the understandable discomfort of Lawrence scholars—which is the mirror image of the revulsion that marked so much early response to the book—with criticizing a novel that has been condemned enough; the continuing tendency to justify criticism by claims of value and thus avoid complicating works we examine because we *like* them; the lack of historical distance between Lawrence and ourselves, which makes it difficult to historicize modern representations of sexuality; the abiding force of modern rhetorics of (sexual and political) liberation; and the ease with which both *Chatterley* and Lawrence's defenses of the book dovetail with such rhetorics.

Yet if we desire “that criticism should be [...] capable of distinguishing itself from the text's offered ideology” (Smith 27), we need to understand the specific historical and thematic tensions implied here—their contradictions and, in the case of a complex text with a variety of ideological imperatives such as *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, their multiplicity—one of which I will call the text's sexual/somatic truth impulse. In brief, this idea, played out in *Lady Chatterley's Lover* and much of Lawrence's other writing and offered as the most internally authorized interpretative ground of the novel, would find in the fulfillment of bodily or sexual desires and needs a certain immutable truth—an existential contact with a preverbal key to our own selves which is at once totally private and the sole source of contact with others. Whatever the complications of such an ideology in *Lady Chatterley's Lover*,¹ and though Lawrence admittedly stands opposed to many elements of a modern internalized subjectivity, this ideology, and hence *Chatterley* itself, can and must be read into the history of that internalization. No matter how much Lawrence seems to stand against certain strains of modernist thought, his conceptions of identity are still inscribed within what has come to be called the construction of the modern subject, perhaps best described by that subject's greatest recent defendant, Charles Taylor.² Indeed, an internalized subjectivity as the ground of all possible action and a counterweight to social and historical pressures is

more like the air one breathes than a choice, rational or otherwise. As Nancy Armstrong puts it: “by the end of the nineteenth century the word [subjectivity] had apparently achieved palpability to the degree that people no longer asked whether it was the basis for identity. Nor did they seem inclined to challenge the fact that subjectivity was essentially sexual in nature” (225). To understand the complications of that conflation (identity-subjectivity-sexuality) in *Lady Chatterley’s Lover* is one aim of this essay.

No theorist aids us more in reaching such an understanding than Michel Foucault, who in his *History of Sexuality* has narrated precisely the development of the problematic of subjectivity that Lawrence articulates. Indeed, Foucault’s late work marks the most decisive break with and analysis of the discourse of sexualized subjectivity in modern theory, and the one most likely to provide a stable critical vantage-point for analyzing that discourse in Lawrence. The Foucauldian reading of my title emphasizes the disciplinary gesture involved in all acts of critical placing, the inevitable coincidence of historical description and present institutional intervention.

But, with its polemical anti-Freudianism, Foucault’s project in the *History*, while allowing us to glimpse the place of Lawrence’s work in the growth of the modern “technology of power” (12),³ makes *Lady Chatterley’s Lover*, as with all cultural artifacts, merely a function of such technology. Further, since Foucault in the *History* specifically identifies Lawrence as representing what he writes against (157), most Lawrence criticism that has taken Foucault into account has followed Foucault’s lead and opposed the two writers: criticism has thus been obligated to defend Lawrence against Foucault (or vice versa), not always to good effect. It is possible, I believe, to read common threads in Foucault and Lawrence without pitting them against each other; however, that would require a longer and more complex reading of Foucault than I am able to give here.

In order to account for the contradictory and possibly resistant functions of Lawrence’s writing, I will turn to Elaine Scarry’s *The Body in Pain*, which implicitly

both extends and undermines Foucault's project. Because what follows obviously has implications for a larger understanding of modernist cultural production, it must take a merely preliminary form, offering suggestions for a reading of Lawrence and other novelists of "identity" which might profitably be taken elsewhere.⁴ Lawrence becomes in this reading paradigmatic of the manifold plights of modernism,⁵ mainly because his work offers such extreme examples of modernist constructions of the subject and their continuing self-resistance in the process of representation.

But first, we must suspend the question of value. Lydia Blanchard, in her intriguingly titled "Lawrence, Foucault, and the Language of Sexuality," cripples what might be a profitable comparison by attempting to show that "Foucault underestimates Lawrence" (18) and that Lawrence is acutely aware of the complexities of "the relationship between language and sexuality" (21). Variations of this last phrase run like a mantra through Blanchard's essay (see pp. 18, 21-25, 30, 33), culminating in a passage that reads the novel as a whole as prefiguring Blanchard's peculiar version of Foucault:

Lady Chatterley's Lover is a study of the tension between these two ideas, between the need to rescue sexuality from secrecy, to bring it into discourse, and the simultaneous recognition that the re-creation of sexuality in language must always, at the same time, resist language. (33)

By this move—by finding "tension" in Lawrence's representation of sexuality—Blanchard hopes to read *Lady Chatterley's Lover* as an analysis rather than an expression of the Foucauldian problematic. Additionally, Blanchard takes on the unnecessary and outdated burden of unity, forcing a reading of Lawrence's work "as a whole" (19; her emphasis) which forecloses the possibility of contradictions in the representation of subjects.⁶ This in turn puts her in the awkward position of having to read Foucault's work as a unity as well, effacing the distance and difference between early texts (written before Foucault had broken from the Freudian influence, as well as the influence of Sartre and Merleau-Ponty) and later works such as *The History of*

Sexuality. Thus the *History* becomes for Blanchard a work based on a theory of repression and liberation (18)—the very theory Foucault has at every step been careful to demolish!

Blanchard's essay illustrates what faces all analyses of modernist representations of sexuality and subjectivity—the necessity and difficulty of viewing those representations as social and linguistic constructions rather than as natural or given. This view might be especially difficult to achieve when the “subject” is Lawrence, a writer who seems especially concerned with discovering the sexuality that lies beyond or behind discourse—a writer, moreover, who found it necessary to distinguish between *real* sex, *real* desire, and *counterfeit* (read, socially constructed) desire (LCL 316).

Indeed, one discovers in most mainstream Lawrence criticism a more or less uncontested repetition of *Lady Chatterley's Lover's* idealized account of subjectivity. Among the classic studies of Lawrence, H. M. Daleski's *The Forked Flame* is one of the most sophisticated; its persistent dualism, however, merely repeats at a certain level of abstraction the social/“natural” opposition performed in the novel:

There are, in the first place, two opposed ‘worlds’ of the novel, the two main and contrasted symbols, the house, Wragby, and the wood. Second, there are the two opposed characters, Clifford, the owner of Wragby, and Mellors, the keeper of the wood. (265)⁷

Elsewhere Daleski writes approvingly of Lawrence's concern “that the ‘penis’ and the ‘intellect’ should be reconciled” (259), and of obscenity in the novel, Daleski notes that Lawrence “was trying to use [obscene] words in two different ways at the same time” (264). This double-edged obscenity retains the earthiness of the sexual act in description for two reasons: to thwart the (counterfeit) spiritualization of sex, and to connect (natural) sex positively to the physical body.

These motivations might seem to prefigure Foucault's injunction that sex “is doubtless but an ideal point made necessary by the deployment of sexuality and its operation,” or that “[t]he rallying point for the counterattack against the deployment

of sexuality ought not to be sex-desire, but bodies and pleasures" (*History* 155, 157). In their vocabularies of opposition, Foucault and Lawrence may significantly resemble each other. Indeed, Foucault's polemic against a "history of mentalities" in favor of a "history of bodies" (*History* 152) may seem a repetition of Connie Chatterley's parting shots to her husband Clifford before her trip to Venice:

"No thank you! Give me the body. I believe the life of the body is a greater reality than the life of the mind: when the body is really wakened to life. But so many people, like your famous wind-machine, have only got minds tacked on to their physical corpses." (*LCL* 234)

Connie's "life of the body," however, with its implications of a naturalized sexuality, is far from Foucault's vision of a history "in which the biological and the historical are not consecutive to one another [...] but are bound together in an increasingly complex fashion in accordance with the development of the modern technologies of power that take life as their objective" (*History* 152). What Foucault continuously stresses, that "sex" must not be taken for granted or naturalized in any way, is in fact directly opposed to the language of liberation embraced by Connie after her affair with Mellors (and borrowed in turn by most defenders of the novel in criticism).⁸ The surface similarities in the discourse of Foucault and Lawrence, which Blanchard takes to indicate a similar attitude, point rather toward the kinds of radical conceptual break that can occur with little perceived change in vocabulary which Foucault, throughout his career, never tired of pointing out.⁹

This is not to find fault with either Lawrence or his mainstream interpreters. Indeed, I would argue that a properly Foucauldian historicizing of the problem in Lawrence avoids the kind of blame that might accompany a developmental, evolutionary, or "progressive" history. As Foucault says in "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History": "Humanity does not gradually progress from combat to combat until it arrives at universal reciprocity, where the rule of law finally replaces warfare; humanity installs each of its violences into a system of rules and thus proceeds from domination to

domination” (151). Thus, I want here merely to suggest the complexities of conceptual syntax, the ways in which the discourse of sexuality locates itself in the most concerted attempts to escape it. As we shall see, while isolating the deployment of sexuality in *Lady Chatterley’s Lover* allows perhaps a greater understanding of the ways in which its discourse of sexual-somatic liberation is inscribed within relations of power, other representations of embodiment are locatable within the novel (though these may need to be teased out).

We can best see the particular deployments of “sex” in *Lady Chatterley’s Lover* through the two most lengthy lovemaking scenes in the novel, both of which exhibit a curious combination of descriptive poverty and discursive excess.¹⁰ Other representations of sexual intimacy are of course available, but these are rather extended, and as sticking points in the critical history of the novel’s evaluation—notoriously difficult to reconcile with the rest of the work, either stylistically, thematically, or structurally—they offer, it seems to me, key points to locate the text’s “offered ideology,” to repeat Smith’s phrase (27).

In the first, in Chapter Ten, the figure is that of simultaneous orgasm: as Mellors says, “We came-off together, that time,” and then: “Most folks live their lives through, and they never know it” (*LCL* 134). Blanchard finds that the scene “re-creates the rhythms of intercourse in a truly brilliant way” (27), but at the same time parodies itself. Thus, according to Blanchard, “She clung to him unconscious in passion” is a “brilliant” line, while “rippling, rippling, like a flapping overlapping of soft flames, soft as feathers” (*LCL* 133) reads for Blanchard like self-parody. In fact, however, the only indication of parody in this passage is Blanchard’s preference for one type of description over another; the lines contain none of the self-conscious markers of parodic intent that might, in Blanchard’s view, exonerate Lawrence from naive description.

Moreover, the two passages are more alike than one at first might realize. “[R]ippling[. . .], rippling, rippling” only highlights a feature of the scene as a whole—

the limited available vocabulary for sexual scene-writing. The entire scene is constructed through repetition: “too soon, too soon,” “different, different,” “wait, wait,” “withdrawing, withdrawing,” “soft and softly clamouring [. . .], clamouring” (LCL 133). The passage Blanchard admires is neither more serious nor less repetitive and chiasmic than the rest of the scene:

She clung to him *unconscious* in passion, and he never quite slipped from her. And she felt the soft bud of him within her stirring and in *strange rhythms* flushing up into her, with a *strange, rhythmic growing motion, swelling and swelling* till it filled all her cleaving *consciousness*. And then began again the unspeakable *motion* that was not really *motion*, but pure deepening whirlpools of sensation, swirling *deeper and deeper* through all her tissue and *consciousness*, till she was one perfect concentric fluid of feeling. And she lay there *crying* in *unconscious*, inarticulate *cries*[. . .]. (LCL 133-4; emphasis added)

Here, in a remarkable description of what Connie feels, “consciousness” is “cleaving” and leads to an “unconscious” state; sexual “motion” is both “unspeakable” and the source of “cries” which are nonetheless “inarticulate.” Sex in this passage is the subject of an obsessive repetition both overflowing and inadequate, a hypothetical horizon of not only linguistic chiasmus: the place where distinctions collapse, where consciousness folds into the unconscious and language becomes inarticulate.¹¹ This passage articulates what Foucault defines as the place of sexuality in modern rhetorics of truth: “The essential point is that sex was not only a matter of sensation and pleasure, of law and taboo, but also of truth and falsehood, that the truth of sex became something fundamental, useful, or dangerous, precious or formidable: in short, that sex was constituted as a problem of truth” (*History* 56). This constitution makes the problem of sexuality and language especially frustrating in the discourse of *Lady Chatterley’s Lover*, where sex stands both beyond language and in desperate need of articulation.

We find the other exalted sex scene, of course, in Chapter Sixteen, in the

notoriously transgressive night with Mellors.¹² Strictly speaking, however, this is hardly a “scene” at all, but a largely evaluative description of the night. It is worth quoting at some length:

In this short summer night she learnt so much. She would have thought a woman would have died of shame. Instead of which, the shame died. Shame, which is fear: the deep organic shame, the old, old physical fear which crouches in the bodily roots of us, and can only be chased away by the sensual fire, at last it was roused up and routed by the phallic hunt of the man, and she came to the very heart of the jungle of herself. She felt, now, she had come to the real bed-rock of her nature, and was essentially shameless. She was her sensual self, naked and unashamed. She felt a triumph, almost a vainglory. So! That was how it was! That was life! That was how oneself really was! There was nothing left to disguise or be ashamed of. She shared her ultimate nakedness with a man, another being. (*LCL* 247)

It might strike the reader as odd that a passage which describes a release from shame should never say (is perhaps ashamed of saying) what did the releasing—that the anal intercourse which is suggested here and alluded to elsewhere in the novel (see *LCL* 267) remains unmentioned. Perhaps we can ascribe this to the publishing restrictions of the time—but, of course, Lawrence ignored those restrictions elsewhere in the novel. We could better read this feature as a combination of lack and excess similar to that in the passage from Chapter Ten discussed above. Again, we have a long discursive passage which somehow inadequately describes what is taking place, which has the strange quality of talking *around* its subject.

Lady Chatterley's Lover as a whole, of course, presents many different, diverging, and even contradictory representations of sex, sexuality, and sexual practice. Doubtless some of its characters embody certain historically recognizable, even stereotyped forms of sexual identification and expression; moreover, representations of sexuality in *Lady Chatterley's Lover* are stylized to the point of a marked

allusiveness.¹³ Nonetheless, the relationship of Connie and Mellors is clearly represented as *resistant* to socialized forms of sexuality—including those of other characters in the novel—and thus as tending toward a “natural” sexual expression. As Gerald Doherty argues, “Despite the tentativeness of the conclusion—after all, the lovers are still separated—*Lady Chatterley’s Lover* is the sole Lawrentian novel to formulate an unequivocal message, to commit both the protagonists to it, and, in writing it into the future, to raise obsessively the question of its transmission” (1143). The issue, then, is the way these key passages in the transmission of that message, passages ideologically and thematically loaded, break down at the very moment when sex is put most fully into discourse.¹⁴

In the *History* Foucault again helps us, this time in his discussion of the institution of confession: “One has to be completely taken in by [. . .] confession in order to attribute a fundamental role to censorship, to taboos regarding speaking and thinking; one has to have an inverted image of power in order to believe that all these voices [. . .] are speaking to us of freedom” (60). Foucault shows how a modern text of liberating sexuality can partake of that larger discursive formation in which, as Foucault supposes, “the obligation to conceal [sex] was but another aspect of the duty to admit to it” (*History* 61). And vice versa; or rather, the confession of sex in *Lady Chatterley’s Lover* effectively conceals its implication and origin in historical formations and distributions of power. It does so much as Lawrence, revising the novel, deemphasized class and history in favor of a sexuality which was more and more presented as given, beyond language and hence not inscribed in history¹⁵—a sexuality which was suspected, as Foucault says, “of harboring a fundamental secret” (69). The “central motivating idea” of the novel may remain the conflict between the classes (Squires 16), but in the presentation of the protagonists, Lawrence minimized class transgression as a motivating force much as he dropped individual working-class characters.¹⁶

In general, sexuality abstracted from history becomes of supreme importance in

modernist definitions of subjectivity; it becomes “essence” as compared to the “accidents” of social position, class, occupation, and lineage—all of which are necessarily refined out of existence, while sexuality gets deployed as though its ideological force were merely natural. Though reflections on class society and even society’s *effects* on sexuality appear throughout the novel, the search for a naturalized sexual expression and communion is largely opposed to the world of socially constructed relationships. The historical dynamics of the sexual/somatic truth impulse in *Lady Chatterley’s Lover* are slighted; in their place we are left with “life,” “sex,” “truth.”¹⁷

Having reached this perspective on the place of sexuality and the effacement of the historical sex-dynamic in the society in which *Lady Chatterley’s Lover* is inscribed (which is not to say merely that the novel is antihistorical), we are now in a position to gauge the resistance to that ideology in the text. I assume that such ideologies are never uncontested, and that the suppression of the counter-discourse necessarily opens up other possibilities of reading which we are able to appropriate. We can locate key spots in the narrative where the discourse on sexuality is problematized. In these episodes, history—which Fredric Jameson has memorably defined as “what hurts” (102)—returns in the protagonists’ very attempt to escape it, reveals itself as never having left, and sexuality in turn is shown to be part of larger configurations of power. To discuss these moments I turn not to a strictly Marxist model, but for a number of reasons to Elaine Scarry, whose *The Body in Pain* offers a powerful theory of creation and imagination.¹⁸

Scarry’s work is a useful safeguard against the excesses of Foucault, as well; for while as somatic in focus as is Foucault’s *History of Sexuality*, Scarry’s project adds to Foucault’s history of bodies and pleasures the element of *pain*. *The Body in Pain* asks us to view the manifold discourses of decreation (Amnesty International torture documents, the discourse on and justification of war) and of creation (Marx on labor, the Hebrew and Greek scriptures) in order to trace the relation of pain and imagination.

Scarry constructs a dialectic of *body* and *voice* as a way of mapping the extremes of human experience. She aims to bring the complicated dynamics of pain and the imagination out in the open, and to show concomitantly the ways historical representation effaces bodily experience.¹⁹ To perform the first is to perform the second, because pain and the imagination exist in a complex dialectical relation. Imaginative and material creations (what Scarry calls “making up” and “making real”—they exist on a continuum rather than as separate categories) relieve pain, but they are paradoxically brought into existence by the (painful) material facts of human existence.

Her project is, obviously, too ambitious to summarize here.²⁰ Indeed, it may seem peripheral to the concerns of *Lady Chatterley’s Lover* or this essay, as her work is directed largely toward pain rather than pleasures. However, *Lady Chatterley* is clearly implicated in certain kinds of pain—Connie’s and Mellor’s psychological and Clifford’s physical ones come to mind—and it is also deeply invested in the problem of articulation as it relates to bodily experience. Also, while not a strictly phenomenological account, Scarry’s arguments represent the body more materially, perhaps, even than Foucault. My conclusion will work mainly by juxtaposition in an attempt to read a counter-voice to the sexual/somatic truth impulse detailed above in *Lady Chatterley’s Lover*.

Chapter Four of *Lady Chatterley* mainly narrates the conversations of visitors to the Chatterley household: “regular men, constants: men who had been at Cambridge with Clifford” (*LCL* 31). These men have regular conversations about private matters, but without anchored reference to private experience; while not exactly hypothetical, all their conversations have an abstracted quality, because “[t]hey all believed in the life of the mind, and keeping pure the integrity of the mind. What you did apart from that was your private affair, and didn’t much matter” (31). They converse in the presence of Connie, who does not speak and so becomes a kind of “absent cause” (to appropriate Althusser via Jameson) of their conversations, much of which revolve around sex. This is true even of Tommy Dukes, who “was a little inspired by

[Connie's] presence" (*LCL* 35). In the male-to-male conversations in this chapter, Connie participates largely as spectator (though one could easily argue in Bakhtinian fashion that this is a form of dialogue) to their theater. One can see what Foucault calls a "will to truth" though their discussions of sexuality and certainly some of the rhetoric of liberation in Tommy Dukes's argument for "having a good heart, a chirpy penis, a lively intelligence, and the courage to say shit! in front of a lady" (*LCL* 39). All of these qualities—even the chirpy penis—define essential humanity in terms of an inwardly focused subjectivity, and the last quality purposely thwarts social convention.

If Connie were really a participant in the dialogue instead of a passive spectator, her intervention would not have been perceived as an interruption. And if such a concept of subjectivity were truly lived, Connie's interruption might not have been resented by the men. But it is:

The men resented it: she should have pretended to hear nothing. They hated her admitting she had attended closely to such talk. (*LCL* 40)

Connie's comment, "There are nice women in the world" (*LCL* 40), disrupts the conversation in two ways. First, the sentence itself—responding to Dukes's assertion that he "can only talk" rather than act sexually—refers to the lives of actual women, and thus puts the responsibility on Dukes, not on imagined partners. Second, by speaking Connie reminds the men of her presence, of the complex historical entanglements of their position. They can perhaps say *shit* in front of a lady only if the lady remains silent. By speaking, she challenges the abstraction of their arguments. She has perhaps catalyzed the conversation by her presence, but in the way that a theatrical performance before a live audience may take on more energy than a dress rehearsal. Her interruption destroys the illusion of her previous participation. The subsequent retreat by the men—"I'll remain as I am, and live the mental life," a life which is "all too simple" (*LCL* 40)—sounds even more hollow than their earlier rhetoric.

This scene enacts what Scarry would call a juxtaposition of body and voice—

“what occurs in civilization,” she writes, is that “the extreme fact of the body [. . .] is laid edge to edge with an extreme of sublimation, not a partially materialized and thus self-substantiating construction but a wholly verbal and disembodied assertion of impregnability” (126). This juxtaposition can have multiple effects, some of them creative, as when “[a]n unsubstantiated statement (unsubstantiated because its realization belongs to the future) is given substantiation by being placed immediately beside the material reality of the body” (Scarry 127). In this case, however, the force of the male rhetoric depends upon the *de facto* absence of the female body from the scene; Connie’s assertion of her bodily reality deconstructs the male “life of the mind” at the same time that it brings her own place, history, and gender to bear upon the situation.

It is not merely that Connie offers a Lawrentian version of subjectivity, for such a subjectivity is still caught within an idealized sexuality. Indeed, Dukes’s own notions of sexuality rather parallel Connie’s, and we notice that his later assertion of a “democracy of touch,” which will come through shoving away historical accidents of money and so on, “echoed inside Connie” (*LCL* 75). It is, rather, that Connie’s body entirely deconstructs internalized notions of subjectivity and strips the veneer from the mental discourse of sexuality. Sex is shown to be a product not of “a good heart, a chirpy penis, a lively intelligence, and the courage to say ‘shit!’ in front of a lady” (*LCL* 39), but, as Foucault writes, of a larger “deployment of sexuality organized by power in its grip on bodies and their materiality, their forces, energies, sensations, and pleasures” (*History* 155). In this case, the grip on the body is intended to efface the body’s history in favor of its essential ‘life,’ a life which Connie shows to be a socially constructed illusion.

At the end of the novel, Mellors’s letter again expresses a dialectic of body and voice:

“Well, so many words, because I can’t touch you. If I could sleep with my arm around you, the ink could stay in the bottle. We could be chaste together just

as we can fuck together. But we have to be separate for a while, and I suppose it is really the wiser way. If only one were sure.” (*LCL* 301)

The voice of this passage—the agency of the letter—makes up for the lack of the body of the beloved. This absence is a form of pain, and Mellors compensates by writing to Connie, a form of imagination. Scarry likewise argues that pain “is an intentional state without an intentional object; imagining is an intentional object without an experienceable intentional state” (164). But in order to grasp the full significance of Mellors’s letter, we need to remember that what keeps Connie and Mellors apart are a series of social and legal obstacles brought on by their earlier marriages—in short, history as a source of alienation. Returning to Jameson, then, we can read “History is what hurts” in a new way. Although Mellors’s letter tries to efface history in order to affirm the life of the body,²¹ he can never forget that its subject and source constitute history in the fullest sense, that the life of the body is created in and through that history, and that it is by living in history rather than ignoring it that the lovers will return to a life of fullest communion and touch.

I want to conclude by reading the passage in Chapter Ten where Mellors and Connie first make love.²² The lovemaking is catalyzed by a particular event:

The keeper, squatting beside her, was also watching with an amused face the bold little bird in her hands. Suddenly he saw a tear fall on to her wrist.

And he stood up, and stood away, moving to the other coop. For suddenly he was aware of the old flame shooting and leaping up in his loins, that he had hoped was quiescent forever. He fought against it, turning his back to her. But it leapt, and leapt downwards, circling in his knees. (*LCL* 115)

Read in the terms given to us by traditional Lawrence criticism, this passage would enact a collapse of social distinctions and a revelation of what is common to Connie and Mellors.²³ Whereas before, Connie played the social role of Lady Chatterley, in this scene her title disappears in favor of her essential femininity; Mellors, on the other hand, is a “keeper” of game only for a moment, and his social role too is stripped away

in favor of his human and humane qualities. The tear raises in Mellors a feeling built partly of desire, partly of Lawrentian tenderness, and would result in a kind of liberation from history. While the history of *Lady Chatterley* criticism is divided on the extent of the novel's escapism, this drive toward communion is largely seen appreciatively even by those who find *Lady Chatterley* a falling-off in Lawrence's work. What Mellors feels is all that he has repressed, coming back: the resurrection of the body.

Read through the perspective of Foucault's *History of Sexuality*, such a resurrection of the body would itself be complicated, and the sexual liberation sought by Mellors and Connie would be seen as an escapist fantasy that is really just another form of control and channeling. In a Foucauldian reading the natural sexual communion of individuals, so central to what drove both the novel and Lawrence's rewriting of it, is itself called into question.

In modern society this system defines people in terms of interior subjectivity and sexuality, but such definitions do not serve to release one from power relations even within the domestic sphere, much less in history as a whole. Indeed, as Nancy Armstrong has argued, the introduction of this new subjectivity in the domestic sphere, though in one sense a release from an earlier class-constructed system of personal identity, "introduce[s] a new form of political power" (3). It would take us too far from our protagonists fully to read representations of domestic power in this novel, though it would add greatly to our understanding of Clifford's relationship with Mrs. Bolton as well as Clifford's later increased interest in industry. Such a reading would also need to reconsider more widely Lawrence's representation of the domestic sphere, the sexual-spatial division of labor in and around both Wragby and Mellors's hut, Connie's loss of interest in Wragby, Mrs. Bolton's increasing control over the house, and Clifford's relative confinement. My interest here, however, is in the representation of sexual expression as the liberation of subjectivity within the (limited) framework of a late Foucauldian reading. In this reading, the most "tender"

moment in the book presents a falsely interiorized subjectivity which is seen as released from expressions and distributions of power, but which is actually a function of such power. The language of liberation continues and even intensifies the grip of power on bodies.

Finally, we can further complicate this passage by reading it through Scarry's *The Body in Pain*. If the received account of interiorized subjectivity took the body away from the text, Foucault's narrative of subjectivity as a function of larger structures of power similarly removes the possibility of effective voice. By returning the body to Lawrence—by resituating *Lady Chatterley's* "life of the body" in Scarry's materialist problematic—we paradoxically recover the possibility of voice and agency as well. In this reading, the tear that falls to Connie's wrist does not reveal her "essential" humanity or collapse class and social distinctions; on the contrary, the tear itself comes from her social predicament, as she reflects on the family of chicks and on her own inability to have a child with Clifford. The tear is a devocalized expression of *pain*, and Mellors's response has the strange quality of pain verging on imaginative response, conveyed by the repeated image of fire: "compassion flamed in his bowels for her" (*LCL* 115). So Mellors's response, while partly a union of the two of them, also is impelled by his own lack of self-union, a yearning in him akin to pain.

This is, as Scarry says, the way the body/voice dynamic works:

A state of consciousness other than pain—such as hunger or desire—will, if deprived of its object, begin to approach the neighborhood of pain [. . .]; conversely, when such a state is given an object, it is itself experienced as a pleasurable and self-eliminating (or more precisely, pleasurable because self-eliminating) physical occurrence. The interior states of physical hunger and psychological desire have nothing aversive, fearful, or unpleasant about them if the person experiencing them inhabits a world where food is bountiful and a companion is near. (166)

But Mellors, feeling the flame "leaping up in his loins, that he had hoped was quiescent

forever,” experiences something like pain, Connie’s proximity notwithstanding (*LCL* 115).

This response is at least in part, as we discover later, a response to his personal history. Additionally, such a reading would find in the moment with the chick—a moment another account might describe as “pastoral”—not a release from history but a moving encounter with Mellors’ world of *work*, his day-to-day job as gamekeeper. Scarry argues that “it is the [. . .] absolute intention of all human making to distribute the facts of sentience outward onto the created realm of artifice, and it is only by doing so that men and women are themselves relieved of the privacy and problems of that sentience” (288). In this sense, the relationship of Connie and Mellors is profoundly artifactual, as is their communal “making” of this and all “natural” love-scenes. If their relationship crosses class, it does so through a moment in which their own historical situations are deeply embedded. Indeed, those historical situations are the tools they use to make their lives.

What we need in accounting for modernist representations of sexuality and sexual “liberation,” and what I have tried to enact here, is an embodied reading that will neither settle for a discredited model of interiorized subjectivity nor for a totalizing perspective that forecloses the possibility of agency and resistance. I view the Foucauldian move as necessary but not sufficient for such a reading; for while it effectively upsets the dominant account of subjectivity offered in *Lady Chatterley’s Lover*, it reduces everything to an overarching technology of power. The move to Scarry attempts to form what Jameson calls a “dialectic of utopia and ideology” (281-99), and even, perhaps, attempts to situate agency within what he rightly views as history’s “untranscendable horizon” (102). However, that move might equally be seen as resisting Jameson’s alternate totalization. If history is the untranscendable horizon, the human body forms the “ground” or point of origin, and what Scarry calls “voice” enables the body to view the horizon. What we need to remember, and tend to forget, is that in this account neither body nor horizon is, strictly speaking, within

the field of vision.

Notes

1. For a searching examination of Lawrence's relation to existentialism and the complications of critical history that follow, see Adamowski.
2. See Taylor, Chapter 24 (especially 462-463), for a description of Lawrence's (and others') place within the history of modernity.
3. All references to Foucault will be to the *History of Sexuality, Volume 1*, unless otherwise indicated.
4. I adopt here the terminology of Philip M. Weinstein. What follows also owes a considerable debt to Nancy Armstrong's *Desire and Domestic Fiction*. There are other ways to go, of course, and my use of Scarry should imply that I do not take the Foucauldian perspective as a final one. Traditional Lawrence criticism has generally recognized Lawrence's locating identity and human commonality in the unconscious and in the somatic; it has broken apart, more often than not, on the rocks of evaluation. Graham Hough (discussed above) reads this emphasis positively, noting that in *Chatterley* "Lawrence means to assert the primacy of the deepest instinctual forces over the more superficial and personal kinds of attraction more commonly recognised in the civilised world" (149). Scott Sanders's Marxist study is somewhat more critical of Lawrence's imaginative solutions to historical problems, but like sees in the contradictions of his position a representatively modern figure (see the introduction [11-17] and the discussion of *Chatterley* [172-205]).
5. See Tony Pinkney's *D.H. Lawrence and Modernism*: "All the old Lawrentian provocations of *content*—sexual explicitness, right-wing politics, misogynistic violence—must now pass through the mill of the general question of modernism; they can no longer be confronted head-on, as they could be for inhabitants of that earlier epoch, but can only be posed obliquely, secondarily, through the medium of that epoch itself—of the nature of European and Anglo-American literary modernism" (2-3). Pinkney, I should add, recognizes that "there is not one but many modernisms" (3), though perhaps only one Lawrence. Indeed, Pinkney's reading of *Lady Chatterley* through an expansion of T. S. Eliot's early review of Joyce's *Ulysses* takes Eliot's view of *Ulysses*, and of modernism, rather for granted (130). As Hugh Kenner has pointed out, however, Lewis, Pound, and Eliot each found in *Ulysses* more or less a version of his own project (169-173); if Pinkney does not stabilize Lawrence through a narrow view of modernism, perhaps he organizes his view of modernism around a pre-stabilized Lawrence.
6. Possibilities exist for reading the entirety of an author's work without subjecting it to the burden of thematic noncontradiction. An intriguing example of this is found in Doherty.
7. See also Squires: "the plot alternates between Wragby and the wood. The polarization is, I have said, insistent but not crude. Wragby comes to symbolize mechanical energy, industrialism, intellectual sterility, egotism, will. The wood comes to symbolize natural energy, exceptional and sexual fertility, nature, silence, spontaneity, tenderness. Wragby is a tall, stone monument to centuries of intellectual dominance, the wood a small altar of carved oak that hymns wordlessly the sentient harmony of man and nature and the rhythmic universe" (26).
8. Indeed, what similarities may exist between Foucault's position and the views presented in the text are most pronounced before Connie's affair with Mellors, before even her marriage to Clifford: "a woman could yield to a man without yielding her inner, free self. That the poets and talkers about sex did not seem to have taken sufficiently into account. A woman could take a man, without really giving herself away" (*LCL* 7).
9. Foucault writes of Nietzsche's use of the term *Herkunft*, "origin" or "descent": "we should not be deceived into thinking that this heritage is an acquisition, a possession that grows and solidifies; rather, it is an unstable assemblage of faults, fissures, and heterogeneous layers that threaten the fragile inheritor from within or from underneath[. . .]" ("Nietzsche, Genealogy,

History” 146).

10. See Hough for a slightly different take on the issue of the inadequacy of language in such scenes (158). Hough does not seem to think that this inadequacy affects the sexual scenes as such, but rather just the first scene, where Connie and Mellors become lovers. As I demonstrate below, however, this descriptive poverty is implicated in sexual scenes throughout the novel, and is therefore not attributable to merely the new literary problem of describing the moment where the bonds of class are broken.

11. This passage also describes a *sequence* of events, however, and thus does not need to be read as such a collapse. However, the sequence of opposed psycho-physical states is presented so quickly as to describe an overall condition of *blurring*, which is not very far from a single temporal contradiction. See Kenner (7-9) for an analysis of the figure of chiasmus in Joyce. It would be possible, I think, to trace the use of this trope through various Modernist texts, exploring the ways in which it meets “plausible limits for expressive competence” (Kenner 9) in the Modernist novel’s representation of the subject.

12. See Rosemary Reeves Davis for an unusual reading of this episode as it relates to Mellors, not just Connie (167).

13. Jackson examines the allusions in *Lady Chatterley’s Lover*.

14. J. M. Coetzee has suggested that “*Lady Chatterley’s Lover* is a tale about the transgression of boundaries . . . whose local tensions and dramatic force depend upon the continuing viability of taboos. Taboo is a necessary condition of its existence” (9). So far, so good: but when Coetzee concludes that “[d]enying its transgressiveness, explaining it away, [Lawrence] ends by betraying the book’s proper *mysteria*” (10), I would argue instead that the idea of a “proper *mysteria*” itself needs to be questioned. See Foucault’s “Preface to Transgression” for a less idealized approach to transgressive discourse in literature.

15. This is of course a complicated issue, and I do not mean to suggest that Lawrence’s treatment of tenderness is “without any of the political overtones we have become accustomed to in the [previous] novels” (Hough 149). Rather, as Sanders has argued, the novel comes directly out of Lawrence’s response to the strikes of 1926 (Sanders 172). But though “the subversive nature of sexuality” is apparent in all versions of the novel, Lawrence’s decision to transform Parkin into Mellors, “who has all the credentials of a gentleman except genteel birth,” and to distance Connie from identifying with her social class in both the second and the third versions certainly changes the relative positions of class and personal identity in the book, and finally, it is arguable, refuses to admit class as a socially determining factor of subjectivity (Sanders 176-80).

16. See Squires (50-51) for a defense of Lawrence’s artistry in dropping these characters.

17. I conflate here two deployments of sexuality: that in Lawrence, and that in modern Western social life in general.

18. I avoid a strictly Marxist model for a number of reasons; among the chief of these is that Scott Sanders has already given an admirable and still useful Marxist reading of Lawrence’s major works, including *Chatterley*. Other reasons are more substantive: Marxists’ general hostility to the socially constructive effects of literature; their insistence on totality, which to my mind often steamrolls the text into unrecognizability; their frequent reliance on Freudian concepts of repression, as in Jameson (I have tried to avoid these formulations for reasons I hope are obvious). Scarry offers the most useful framework I know for what I would call a writerly materialist politics of cultural artifacts.

19. See especially her chapters on war (60-157) and labor (243-277).

20. David B. Morris gives an excellent summary and analysis of Scarry’s argument.

21. Perhaps nowhere is this clearer, paradoxically, than when Mellors raises the subject of

history in his letter. Talking of the miners, he locates the problems of class conflict in “our civilization and our education,” which inscribe the workers in an economy which depends “entirely on spending.” His solution to both problems, however, is a patently Utopian *escape* from history and economy, some form of primitive communism in the case of the miners: “They [the miners] ought to learn to be naked and handsome[. . .], and to sing in a mass and dance the old group dances, and carve the stools they sit on, and embroider their own emblems. Then they wouldn’t need money” (*LCL* 299-300).

22. Another possibility interpretation would read the scenes as progressing, developing, and marking a definable trajectory which is itself of interest (see Squires, especially Table 2, pp. 38-40). The problem of conclusions is of course a vexed one, and once “unity” is taken as a necessary critical principle, the question of what is to be unified is answerable in multiple ways, from the individual scene, through the entire work of a writer (Doherty) or the writer’s mind (Schneider) or age (Taylor).

23. See Jackson and Jackson for a useful overview. The move to formal evaluation of *Lady Chatterley’s Lover* in the 1970s may be read as neutralizing the fight between pro- and anti-Leavis camps by narrowing the debate to an aesthetic one (though one should remember that even those earlier debates between centripetal [Leavisite] and centrifugal [anti-Leavisite] critics took the existence of human nature as their ground).

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