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The Duality of High and Low Culture in D. H. Lawrence's *Lady Chatterley's Lover*

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Abstract

Lawrence, in *Lady Chatterley's Lover* (1928), reflects the post-war modern British society which condemns its individuals into a psychological trauma of ongoing conflicts between different classes and cultures. Advocating the exigency of a classless society, Lawrence shatters the hegemonic ideology of the highbrow culture which disdains working class culture as vulgar, coarse and commonplace. Reacting against the cultural displacement of working classes who are considered as masses, Lawrence indulges in revealing the authenticity and earnestness of the working class culture. Lawrence's depiction of an uncorrupt ethical standing of the working class culture is the negation of the concept of culture, associated with high class manners and ways of life. The prevailing concern of this study, therefore, will be to analyze Lawrence's *Lady Chatterley's Lover* from the perspective of cultural studies to unravel the clash of high and low cultures in relation to the hierarchical class structure of the post-war England.

Keywords

D. H. Lawrence

Lady Chatterley's Lover

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About Article

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D. H. Lawrence'ın *Lady Chatterley'in Sevgilisi* Romanında Üst ve Alt Kültür İkilemi

Öz

Lady Chatterley'in Sevgilisi romanında D. H. Lawrence, Birinci Dünya savaşı sonrası İngiliz toplumunda bireylerin nasıl bir sınıfsal ve kültürel çatışma içinde kalarak psikolojik tramvalara itildiklerini göstermektedir. Kültürlerin üstün veya aşağı görünmediği sınıfsız bir toplum yaratma gerekliliğini savunan Lawrence, kitleler olarak görülen işçi sınıfının kültürel olarak yerinden edilmesine karşı çıkarak otantik ve samimi bir işçi sınıfı kültürü ortaya çıkarır. Lawrence'ın işçi sınıfının henüz bozulmamış etik değerlerini ortaya çıkarması kendi döneminin üst sınıf hayat tarzıyla özdeşleşen kültür kavramını silmektedir. Bu nedenle, bu çalışmanın amacı *Lady Chatterley'in Sevgilisi* romanını kültürel perspektiften okuyarak savaş sonrası İngiltere toplumunun hiyerarşik sınıf yapısıyla ilintili üst ve alt kültür çatışmasını ortaya çıkarmaktır.

Anahtar Sözcükler

D. H. Lawrence

Lady Chatterley'in Sevgilisi

kültür araştırmaları

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Introduction

Constituting a literary testimony to the social, cultural, and political havoc of the post-war modern British society at the beginning of the 20th century, D. H. Lawrence's last novel *Lady Chatterley's Lover* has always been a center of profound public attention with its themes of sexual awakening and class conflicts. The book is notoriously known as a controversial book, going through numerous trials of profanity and causing a scandal due to its unrestricted use of offensive language to explore human sexuality (Baksi, 2019, p. 1). While David Holbrook debases *Lady Chatterley's Lover* as a pornographic novel with its full of "perverted logic" (Holbrook, 1992, p. 348), G. M. Hyde defines the book as a "reaction to pornography" (Hyde, 1990, p. 104). Alternately, Misha Berson draws attention to the fact that "Lawrence spends many more pages of his book on class snobbery, the evils of industrial capitalism, and the damage wrought by World War I, than he does on sex" (Berson, 1997, p. 17).

From the very beginning of the novel, social background of the characters are blatantly underscored by the author, endorsing the view that the social class of the characters bears an utmost importance in defining their relationship with others on both social and personal levels. Notwithstanding the political and the cultural engrossment of the novel, the notion of sexuality seems to be, at all times, one of the most popular subjects of the scholarly debates. This study, however, focuses on the cultural reading of the novel in terms of its representation of the high and low culture in modern British society which is torn apart between the conflicts of the upper and lower classes.

Conceptualization of Culture

Chris Barker delineates the duality between high and low culture in terms of class distinctions and defines high culture as "the peak of civilization and the concern of an educated minority" (Barker, 2004, p. 116). Conversely, the culture of the wider population, called as masses, is stigmatized as low form of culture and "contrasted to the authenticity claimed for high culture" (Barker, 2004, p. 116). Likewise, the late 19th century is marked by the cultural theorist Simon During as the period during which the separation of classes are most ostensibly observed according to the cultural codes that they represent. In this regard, "high culture" is associated with the minority "elite" that is predicated on "defending art" and institutionalized through "schools, libraries, concert halls, art galleries and museums, in order to disseminate hegemonic forms of civility" (During, 2005, p. 195). This elite culture, as During argues, "became organised around distinct moral-aesthetic principles, which included

the notion of the timelessness of culture, culture's responsibility for the provision of moral guidance" (During, 2005, p. 194).

The concept of culture in the 19th century is understood as a discipline incorporating the literary sense of culture as an art form that should be kept apart from the ordinary way of life. Mathew Arnold, one of the central figures in the cultural tradition, sticks to the idea of perfection of culture. Exalting high culture, Arnold deprecates low culture by affiliating it with anarchy in his essay, "Culture and Anarchy" where he defines culture as "having its origin in the love of perfection" (Arnold, 2006, p. 34). Once framing the principal object of culture as the quest for perfection and "spreading the best which has been reached in the world" (Arnold, 2006, p. 120), Arnold emphasizes the role of culture in providing societies with moral guidance. In this respect, Arnold calls working class as "Philistines" whom he criticizes for asserting "its ordinary self not its best self" (Arnold, 2006, p. 78). Arnold's conservative attitude to the concept of culture impedes him to intersect ordinariness with culture because, for him, culture should follow what is the best and perfect. Arnold continues to spurn working class and its claim for having a distinct culture of its own:

> But that vast portion, lastly, of the working class which, raw and half-developed, has long lain half-hidden amidst its poverty and squalor, and is now issuing from its hiding-place to assert an Englishman's heaven-born privilege of doing as he likes, and is beginning to perplex us by marching where it likes, meeting where it likes, bawling what it likes, breaking what it likes,––to this vast residuum we may with great propriety give the name of *Populace* (Arnold, 2006, p. 78, emphasis in the original).

Identifying working class as the Populace, Arnold, as it is clearly discerned in this quotation, is disgruntled with the frivolousness of working classes in declaring their own way of life as a culture and breaking socially and morally constructed codes of Victorian class-consciousness. He thinks that "masses are quite as raw and uncultivated as the French; and so far from their having the idea of public duty and of discipline" (Arnold, 2006, p. 56).

Along with Arnold who aligns culture with perfection and beauty, T. S. Eliot has also an elitist perception of culture and a conservative attitude to the perpetuation of culture. Like Arnold, Eliot assumes that culture makes itself visible in the religion of a society and culture and religion are interlocking pieces of every society. Further, Eliot condemns British society's "ignorance of the relation between culture and religion" and "their bland assumption that religion was a secondary matter" (Eliot, 1976, p. 138). Eliot emphasizes culture as an organic

and a shared system of beliefs which can be understood only by educated minority, and states that:

> Now there are of course higher cultures and lower cultures, and the higher cultures in general are distinguished by differentiation of function, so that you can speak of the less cultured and the more cultured strata of society, and finally, you can speak of individuals as being exceptionally cultured (Eliot, 1976, p.198).

Eliot's description of culture gives way to a hierarchical system of stratification in which individuals are grouped into different cultures and layers of classes. Even though culture is shared by a particular group of people, as Eliot suggests, it can only be effusively understood by the cultural elites of the society. What causes the cultural decline, according to Eliot, is the society's separation from tradition and alienation from religion.

In addition to Eliot's emphasis on the necessity of maintaining the organic unity of culture, F. R. Leavis is another important cultural theorist of the early 20th century, who is preoccupied with the protection of high culture against the attacks of working class culture and identifies culture with literature and art. In *Mass Civilisation and Minority Culture,* F. R. Leavis points out that:

> In any period it is upon a very small minority that the discerning appreciation of art and literature depends: it is (apart from cases of the simple and familiar) only a few who are capable of unprompted, first-hand judgment. They are still a small minority, though, a larger one, who are capable of endorsing such first-hand judgment by genuine personal response (Leavis, 1968, pp. 13-14).

Like Eliot, Leavis underlines the significance of tradition in maintaining the prolongation of the past and present and achieving the highest form of culture that is only available to the intellectually superior group of minority. "Upon this minority", Leavis argues, "depends our power of profiting by the finest human of the past; they keep alive the subtlest and the most perishable parts of tradition" (Leavis, 1968, p. 15). For Leavis, literature is an expression of a culture in moral and aesthetic terms. He deplores the rise of a low culture among the masses of people who react against the moral values of high culture and its standards of perfection. Enunciating his discontent about the diversity of cultures, Leavis stresses that "culture is at crisis" in modern period owing to the unprecedented departure from the tradition and confined structure of culture (Leavis, 1968, p. 15). The "plight of culture", Leavis affirms, emanates from the turbulence of the modern age where "landmarks have shifted, multiplied and crowded upon one another, the distinctions and dividing lines have

blurred away, the boundaries are gone, and the arts and literatures of different countries and periods have flowed together" (Leavis, 1968, p. 31). Leavis argues for the necessity of strict class distinctions to prevent the cultural convergence of high and low classes and sustain the distinguished status of culture, namely the highness of the high culture.

Quintessentially, the notion of culture that is adopted and carried out by the practices of sophisticated groups of minorities is enforced by the elitist ideologies of Arnold, Eliot, and Leavis who affiliate culture with the tastes and perceptions of the high classes. As Leavis concisely expresses, "culture has always been in minority keeping" (Leavis, 1968, p. 38). Nonetheless, the 20th century has also witnessed the inexorable growth of a working class culture, brought about by the substantial expansion of industrialization and urbanization. D. H. Lawrence, emerging out of this working class culture as a son of a miner, wages a furious war against the upper class intellectuals and their so called high culture in his novel *Lady Chatterley's Lover*.

Representation of High and Low Culture in *Lady Chatterley's Lover*

D. H. Lawrence is an educated working class member who destabilizes the notion of highbrow culture which acclaims higher social standing individuals while degrading working classes. *Lady Chatterley's Lover* is a novel which is replete with the psychological, social, and cultural repercussions of the expeditious advance of industrialization in tandem with the mechanization of lifestyles, and intellectuals' ego-centric preoccupation with high culture. The novel epitomizes Lawrence's denigration of unbreakably rigid social distinctions and snobbery of high classes. As Shiach suggests, "[c]ommercialism and industrialism are seen as dominating not simply economic relations between classes and between individuals, but also familial, sexual and cultural relations between all the characters in the novel" (Shiach, 2001, p. 91). Regardless of the prevailing despondency of the modernist age, Lawrence has an impregnable credence in the prospect of a "cultural regeneration" that will be guaranteed by the rising of a fervent working class who is full of vitality, ambition, and anger in opposition to the pessimism and stoicism of the higher classes and their grievance for the destruction of the old tradition and great civilization (Koh, 2002, p. 189).

Lawrence, at the beginning of his novel, painstakingly accentuates the obsoleteness of the class distinctions that give way to resilient demarcations in the society by privileging a higher form of culture, paired with the life-styles of the upper classes while denying the existence of alternative cultures, associated with the working classes. The social unrest,

stemming from the conflict between the high and low classes is reflected in the demonstration of the colliers, which seems to Connie as "slowly rising to the surface and creating the great ache of unrest, stupor of discontent. The bruise was deep, deep, deep… the bruise of the false inhuman war" (Lawrence, 1959, p. 89). The strike of the coal miners is a salient evidence, showing the discontent of workers who fight for their rights and raise their voices against the oppression of high classes. Connie fears that this social upheaval in the society will inevitably lead into a brute war of cultures and classes. Connie also is conscious of the fact that the escalation of tensions between the working classes and high classes are moving towards the construction of incompatible polarization in British society. She can sense the fact that "it was not a manifestation of energy, it was the bruise of the war that had been in abeyance" (Lawrence, 1959, p. 89). Such a deep fragmantation in the society will not be cured easily and "[i]t would take many years for the living blood of the generations to dissolve the vast black clot of bruised blood, deep inside their souls and bodies" (Lawrence, 1959, p. 89).

In the opening lines of his novel, Lawrence declares that self-indulgent cultural values and calcified social distinctions of the pre-war British society are outmoded and doomed to be terminated: "The cataclysm has happened, we are among the ruins, we start to build up new little habits, to have new little hopes. It is rather hard work: there is now no smooth road into the future: but we go round, or scramble over the obstacles" (Lawrence, 1949, p. 37). In the midst of social and cultural turmoil, mental disorder, and psychological fragmentation, caused by the Great War, Lawrence gives voice to his optimistic evocation for the necessity of a profound social change that will be achieved by the rising working classes and their authentic and unadulterated culture. As Schwarzmann argues, at the time the "news of the Bolshevist revolution in Russia [was] causing additional unrest and controversy about communism in England", Lawrence "calls for a change of priorities of values to bring about a new, more humane society" (Schwarzmann, 2008, p. 95).

As a ramification of his distress with the immutable social and cultural categorizations, Lawrence scrupulously congregates these two opposing cultures in his novel and succeeds in dismantling the strict borders of social stratification. The ultimate groundbreaking impact of the novel lies in its resistance to the disintegration in the society by juxtaposing two different cultures which are represented by Wragby Hall and Tevershall village, surrounded by the coal mines. Although, these two areas are geographically side by side with each other, there is hardly any communication between them. Lawrence defines this split with following words:

> There was no communication between Wragby Hall and Tevershall village, none. No caps were touched, no curtseys bobbed. The colliers merely stared; the tradesmen lifted their caps to Connie as to an acquaintance, and nodded awkwardly to Clifford; that was all. Gulf impassable, and a quiet sort of resentment on either side (Lawrence, 1949, p. 48).

The hostility between social classes is reverberated in the collision of high and low cultures, exposed in the intellectual debates of the ruling class members in Wragby Hall. Among these intellectuals are Clifford and his friends: Tommy Dukes, an army officer, Michalis and Charlie May, young Irish writers who "made a large fortune" through their books (Lawrence, 1949, p. 55). Lawrence's paying attention to the amount of money that these intellectuals earn highlights the interrelatedness of high culture with the capitalist systems. Lawrence implies that the moral standards of high culture are governed by the profit making concerns of the capitalist economies. These are the people who are referred by F. R. Leavis as the small minority group, consisting of intellectuals, writers, and philosophers who undertake the responsibility of preserving culture and ensuring the continuation of tradition and civilization. Lawrence attacks this concept of culture that is controlled by the hegemonic power of a small group of ruling class.

Clifford and his identification with the mechanical life of industrialization along with his physical impotency are straightforward indications of the sterility and diluteness of a sense of formalist high culture that remains insufficient to satisfy the spiritual and intuitive needs of individuals. While Clifford is a typical representation of the high culture, Constance is an amalgamation of two cultures. Although she belongs to an upper class family, she is a "country-looking girl" "full of unusual energy" and "seemed just to have come from her native village" (Lawrence, 1949, p. 38). It is, further, stated by Lawrence that Constance and her sister are not forced to receive purely high cultural values and aestheticism of upper class education, on the contrary, "[t]hey were at once cosmopolitan and provincial, with the cosmopolitan provincialism of art that goes with pure social ideals" (Lawrence, 1949, p. 39). Thus, it is not a coincidence for Connie to experience the physical and psychological awakening through a working class member, Mellors. Underneath the pretended boastfulness and superiority of high culture, as Connie apprehends, lies "nothingness" and "hypocrisy of words" (Lawrence, 1949, p. 89). An ongoing conflict between high and low culture contribute to the deepening of segmentation in modern British society about which Connie thinks that "there was only *apartness* and *hopelessness*, as far as all this was concerned. And this was England, the vast bulk of England: as Connie knew, since she had motored from the center of

it" (Lawrence, 1949, p. 206). After getting pregnant with Mellors' baby, Connie has the opportunity to observe a mass transformation of the social life in the modern world and the two worlds represented by Clifford and Mellors. She contemplates on the idea that:

> It [modernism] was producing a new race of mankind, over-conscious in the money and social and political side, on the spontaneous, intuitive side dead,-but dead! Half-corpses, all of them: but with a terrible insistent *consciousness* in the other half... When Connie saw the great lorries full of steel-workers from Sheffield, weird, distorted, smallish beings like men, off for an excursion to Matlock, her bowels fainted and she thought: Ah, God, what has man done to man? What have the leaders of men been doing to their fellow-men? They have reduced them to less than humanness (Lawrence, 1949, p. 205).

Lawrence's empathic identification with the working class culture finds expression in Connie's preponderance on how the working classes are subordinated by the higher classes, turning humans into "half-corpses" (Lawrence, 1949, p. 205). Both the oppressor and the oppressed are transformed into inert machines, serving to the needs of industrialism and capitalism. Even so, the working classes are discerned to preserve their strong sense of class and cultural consciousness which keep them alive and powerful enough to resist domination.

Lawrence confutes the idea of culture that emerges out of minority elites to be disseminated through literature, art, and education, and tries incessantly to show that culture is present in all forms of everyday life and in all classes including the working class. Culture, therefore, does not embody a very small social group of minorities who assume the role of being protectors of culture against the ordinariness and inferiority of the lower classes. In contrast to the ostensible attitudes and emotional detachment of Clifford, Mellors represents a culture of tenderness, affection, genuine concern of individual. More specifically, Connie's relationship to Clifford is determined by superficial formalities and barren dialogues while her relationship to Mellors, from the very beginning of their meeting, seems to be "curiously soothing, comforting" as he "was kind to the female in her, which no man had ever been" (Lawrence, 1949, p. 169). Hence, through the characters of Clifford and Mellors, Lawrence aims to manifest the hegemonic impositions, ostentatious norms and hollow morals of high culture. The difference between these two classes is more clearly discerned in Clifford's considering himself as "better bred than Connie" and his nervousness "of middle and lower class humanity" (Lawrence, 1949, p. 43). So, humanity is the term, used by Lawrence to describe low culture while Clifford and his aristocratic lifestyle are characterized by "mechanical cleanness and the mechanical order!" (Lawrence, 1949, p. 51). The clash of high

and low culture is imputed throughout *Lady Chatterley's Lover* with the hostility between Clifford and Mellors. As Schwarzmann underpins "Mellors is also aware of the struggle between the upper and the lower classes. He hates people with power such as aristocrats and the way they dominate the lives of lower-class workers" (Schwarzmann, 2008, p. 85).

Furthermore, Lawrence in his novel destabilizes the notion of a literary culture that is required for the development of civilization and shared by the theorists like Arnold, Leavis and Eliot. Lawrence unsettles the traditionally accepted concepts about the perfectness and immunity of high culture which represents an absolute power of authority, subordinating working classes and marginalizing their ordinary way of life as the low culture which should not even be considered as a culture. This must be the reason why F. R. Leavis who appreciates Lawrence as "one of the greatest novelist of the English tradition" excludes the analysis of *Lady Chatterley's Lover* in his book *D. H. Lawrence: Novelist* (Leavis, 1955, p. 18). He disregards analyzing *Lady Chatterley's Lover* about which he writes that: "There is no need to discuss the book in detail; it is the least complex of all Lawrence's novels and it is the only one that I find difficult to read through" (Leavis, 1955, p. 69).

The underlying reason of Leavis' considering Lawrence's novel as the least complex, and at the same time, difficult to read is that Lawrence develops a completely oppositional view of culture that is not associated with high classes. It differs from the views of Leavis, Arnold, and Eliot in the way that Lawrence deconstructs the unassailable image of high culture, aligned with the shallow moral values of upper classes who are keen on producing an artistic culture by a typewriter and a paper, which does not reflect the real interests of people. Lawrence brings forth the working class culture and the everyday experiences of workers as more humane, tender, passionate, and dynamic form of culture that keeps an ongoing contact and intimacy among individuals rather than constructing irreconcilable divisions between societies.

It is noteworthy that only after the 1950s, thanks to the cultural studies theorists who come from the working class background like Raymond Williams, the ordinary life of lower class people has come to be accepted as culture. Raymond Williams, who testifies on "behalf of the novel" when it is put on obscenity trial, is also a socialist theorist who has an undeniably significant contribution in settling the foundations of cultural studies and removing culture from its privileged position by defending the ordinariness of culture

(Edwards, 1999, p. 8). In his essay "Culture is Ordinary" (1958), Williams comments on two aspects of culture and points out that:

> We use the word culture in these two senses: to mean a whole way of life-the common meanings: to mean the arts and learning- the special processes of discovery and creative effort. Some writers reserve the word for one or other of the senses; I insist on both, and on the significance of their conjunction... Culture is ordinary in every society and in every mind (Williams, 2014, p. 3).

Williams defines culture as a whole way of life, and thus, subverts the artistic concept of culture that is accessible only to a small prosperous group. Proclaiming that culture is a product of all people whose experiences are shaped by their social environment and political concerns, Williams confirms the inefficacy of separating culture from politics. Accordingly, not only the high culture but also the political perspectives of high classes are under a severe castigation in Lawrence's novel. Being a member of the ruling class, Clifford sturdily believes in the necessity of an authorial ruling power to dominate the working classes. For him: "the masses were always the same and will always be same…It is the masses: they are the unchangeable" (Lawrence, 1949, p. 239). According to Clifford, the working-classes are too simple-minded to rule over themselves, therefore, it is the duty of the upper-classes to rule over them. "The masses have been ruled since time began, and, till time ends, ruled they will have to be. It is sheer hypocrisy and farce to say they can rule themselves" (Lawrence, 1949, p. 239). The workers in the minds of ruling classes and aristocratic intellectuals are important not as individuals but as functions who provide the maintenance of the system. In Clifford's own words, "[t]he individual hardly matters. It is a question of which function you are brought up to and adapted to. It is not the individuals that make an aristocracy: it is the functioning of the aristocratic whole" (Lawrence, 1949, p. 240). Clifford's disparaging attitude to the personal experiences of individuals is in complete opposition to Raymond Williams' concept of a society that is "made and remade in every individual mind" by way of shared cultural meanings and ways of life (Williams, 2014, p. 2). What is ventured by Williams' ideology of a commonplace culture is to disentangle culture from its elitist connotations since culture is not a solid, uniform concept that can be associated with a particular group, society, or class. Rather than being a mark of a social class, education, or civilized manners, culture is a more diversified and heterogeneous term which does not erase individual experiences or particularities of all social classes. Accordingly, Clifford uses the standardizing word "masses" for the ordinary people and claims that "the masses are

unalterable. It is one of the most momentous facts of social science" (Lawrence, 1949, p. 239). However, as Williams puts forward, delineating common people as masses is the political strategy of the industrial economies in order to create polarization in society. He asserts that:

> [T]here are in fact no masses, but only ways of seeing people as masses…people are physically massed, in the industrial towns, and a new class structure (the names of our social classes, and the word 'class' itself in this sense, date only from the Industrial Revolution) was practically imposed (Williams, 2014, p. 10).

In contrast to Clifford's endless yearning to enslave the workers, his wife Connie tries to understand them. Her relationship with Mellors enables her to have a closer insight on the lifestyle of ordinary people. What she has discovered is more than a mere recovery of her sexual desires, but an engagement with working class culture, so called, low culture which is not low but a reflection of shared meanings and mutual understandings. Connie manages to overcome the class barriers through her love affair with Mellors, turning it into a mutual interaction of two individuals. The union of two lovers from opposing classes reveals Lawrence's aspiration for a classless society, and in this respect, the novel achieves to erase the gap between the bottom and the top of the society by bringing Connie and Mellors together.

Lawrence's criticism not only focuses on industrialization's reducing humans into machine-like apparatuses, but also on the industrial economy, that is capitalism and its consumerist policies. One of the most pernicious effects of capitalism is forcing individuals into a competition with each other with the promise of success, fame and money, which are called as "bitch goddess" in the novel (Lawrence, 1949, p. 90). For Connie it is men's "prostitution to the bitch-goddess" (Lawrence, 1949, p. 90), including her own husband: "Clifford's cool and contactless assurance that he belonged to the ruling class didn't prevent his tongue lolling out of his mouth, as he panted after the bitch-goddess" (Lawrence, 1949, p. 113). Clifford as an utterly fanatical spokesman of industrialization does not come to the realization of its detrimental outcomes until chapter nine where his thoughts are explored as such:

> He realized now that the bitch-goddess of Success had two main appetites: one for flattery, adulation, stroking and tickling such as writers and artists gave her; but the other a grimmer appetite for meat and bones. And the meat and the bones for the bitch-goddess were provided by the men who made money in industry (Lawrence, 1949, pp. 152-153).

Strikingly, Lawrence, in this quotation, unravels the sullied face of the upper social class and its ethical deficiency. Behind its pretentious claim for excellence, high culture is enmeshed with immorality and corruption. What determines the principles of appreciation in art is predominantly in the hands of a limited number of intellectuals, as "the group of the flatterers, those who offered her amusement, stories, films, plays" (Lawrence, 1949, p. 153). Questioning the controversial ethical and moral standards of high culture, Lawrence illustrates how the idea of culture is composed and held within the monopoly of a small group of people who have the money, and therefore, have the pretext to define and promote what is good and bad. The intricate relationship between culture and social class is succinctly elucidated by Lawrence who argues that what is elevated as high culture is exposed to be an artificially composed, disingenuous art, promoted by a small, privileged group of economic and political actors. In the same vein, Raymond Williams also underscores the idea that the traditional culture of England is succeeded by a "modern, organized, industrial state, whose characteristic institutions deliberately cheapen our natural human responses, making art and literature into desperate survivors and witnesses, while a new mechanized vulgarity sweeps into the centers of power" (Williams, 2014, p. 8).

Although Clifford directs his impetus unswervingly to become a "first-class modern writer" (Lawrence, 1949, p. 56), Connie's father unhesitatingly asserts that "it's smart, but there's nothing in it. It won't last!" (Lawrence, 1949, p. 51). Connie's father draws attention to fact that the success of an art work, measured against the money that it makes, will not be durable because the literature that is produced by high cultured intellectuals may be smart but not loaded with meaning and depth. Connie understands the superficiality of high culture which aims at gaining financial profit rather than creating art. To Connie, "Clifford seemed to care very much whether his stories were considered first-class literature or not. Strictly, she didn't care. Nothing in it! Said her father. Twelve hundred pound a year! Was the retort simple and final" (Lawrence, 1949, p. 103).

Michaelis is another character who is a member of an upper class in the novel. He is a young Irish man who has "made a large fortune by his plays" (Lawrence, 1949, p. 55). He is a melancholic writer who expresses his sense of nothingness in his writings and severely criticizes an artist's need to be popular in order to earn money which, he thinks, destroys art. He claims that: "There is nothing in popularity. There is nothing in the public, if it comes to that. There is nothing really in my plays to *make* them popular" (Lawrence, 1949, p. 58, emphasis in the original). Although he insistently disdains the upper class snobbery, it is also

bluntly stated in the novel that he never travels without his "chauffeur and a manservant" in his "neat car" as a manifestation of his solipsistic obsession with a luxurious life (Lawrence, 1949, p. 56). It is quite noteworthy that Michaelis' statement about the emptiness of art that is concerned with reputation and popularity is not in tune with the lavishness of his own lifestyle. During his short-term love affair with Connie, Michaelis blames Connie for his own impotency in their sexual intercourse. Although, at first he seems to be quite a "gentle lover, very gentle with the women" (Lawrence, 1949, p. 61), it is only a revelation of his hypocrisy of high-classes, and the high cultural fetish of fame and boastfulness. It does not take too long for Connie to understand that: "It was part of his very being that he must break off any connection, and be loose, isolated, absolutely lone dog again" (Lawrence, 1949, p. 67). Michaelis' unreliable personality is specifically used by Lawrence to reveal the inherent corruptness behind the perceptibly perfect moral values of high culture, embodied by upper classes.

Clifford's notion of family is another significant example which reveals the delusive outlook of the high culture, disguising pretension and misconduct under its perfect appearance. Although Clifford believes in the sacredness of marriage as an institution, he does not refrain from advising his wife to get pregnant from another man. For Clifford, the child is the only function which will provide the continuation of his own "decadent culture" (Delany, 1990, p. 87). The child will become a commodity for Clifford and will be the part of an upper class family:

> 'It would almost be a good thing if you had a child by another man' he said. '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, and it would carry on. Don't you think it's worth considering?' (Lawrence, 1949, p. 81).

Clifford's encouraging his wife to have an illicit affair with other men shows Lawrence's attempt to lay bare the immoral nature and corrupt values of high class culture. High culture is discerned by its "pettiness and vulgarity of manner extremely distasteful" (Lawrence, 1949, p. 193), on the contrary, the culture of working classes is characterized by its veracity and genuineness, as Lawrence underpins, "among common people there was no pretense" (Lawrence, 1949, p. 193). The sincerity, integrity, and truthfulness are common features of working class culture. Fostering high culture, therefore, means destroying the commonly shared practices of everyday life by ensuring that, as Williams stresses, "a new mechanized vulgarity sweeps into the centers of power" (Williams, 2014, p. 8). This sense of

a mechanized vulgarity is reflected in the novel through Clifford and his friends' argument on sex. Clifford and his artist friends' intellectual debates about the idea of sex show the barrenness of their talks and their culture. They discuss the word sex, but soon come to the realization that they fail in associating the word sex with the concept it signifies. Because these words have been stripped of their meanings and lost their connection with the real life experience. It is important to note that meaning does not reside in language but in its "symbolic" use in expressing the actual experience of it (Kiely, 1990, p. 90). Michael Bell in his book on D. H. Lawrence states that:

> If we are to say that sexual feeling cannot be put into words we have to be careful not to confuse this impossibility with the inevitable condition of language at large that it is always a symbolic form on a different plane from its object... Indeed, it is precisely because language is a symbolic form that it can re-create inter-subjectively the quality of an inner experience more effectively than it can give you an external object such as a tree (Bell, 1992, p. 217).

Lawrence combines the indisposition of language to express the sincerity of everyday experiences of humans with the incapability of the upper class and high culture in conveying the emotional experiences of individuals. Lawrence's notion of the sterility of the high culture is inferred in the scholarly discussion of Clifford and his friends about the idea of sex. Tommy Dukes, who belongs to the intellectual circle of Wragby Hall, associates sex with an exchange of ideas and notes that: "Sex might be a sort of normal, physical conversation between a man and a woman" (Lawrence, 1949, p. 70). Similarly, Clifford who is described as the "most modern of modern voices" does not believe in the significance of sex to construct a stable marriage bound between couples (Lawrence, 1949, p. 89). It is an important detail that even before the war which has left him crippled, Clifford thinks that "sex was merely an accident, or an adjunct, one of the curious obsolete, organic processes which persisted in its own clumsiness, but was not really necessary" (Lawrence, 1949, p. 46). Both Clifford and Tommy Dukes have a propensity to minimize sexuality into a mechanical performance and a trivial act by denying its emotional and spiritual aspects. These high cultured people, who discuss the idea of sex, seem to be quite passionate in showing their intellectual aptitude to have a perfect knowledge about everything. However, Lawrence hints at the fact that such a profound philosophy of sex as claimed by Clifford and Tommy Dukes is only a revelation of the dysfunctional model of high culture which is totally disconnected from the everyday experiences of people. More plainly, their talk seems so cold and detached that the language they use remains insufficient to convey the tenderness of love and the emotional side of the

sex. They even consider that talk of sex is interchangeable with sex itself as Tommy Dukes claims: "that sex is just another form of talk, where you act the words instead of saying them" (Lawrence, 1949, p. 70). Lawrence despises high culture for its perverted conviction of sexuality, displaying the collapse of humanity, individuality, and morality. For that reason, "their mental consciousness of sex" cannot be materialized by the actual performance of sex by those characters who are the safeguards of the high culture (Stoll, 1970, p. 226). So, the cherished and sanctified sexual closeness of Connie and Mellors is contradicted with the empty and banal talks of Clifford, Tommy Dukes and Michaelis on the subject of sex, revealing the barrenness of high culture which is stimulated by materialism, feigned perfection, and exaggeration. Lawrence strives to show that high culture and its worthless discourse are inadequate in conveying the meaning of life as they turn individuals into instruments by ignoring their humanity. It is not the individuals who fabricate social classes but their functions and roles in societies that give order into the world. As Clifford says: "It is not the individuals that make an aristocracy: it is the functioning of the aristocratic whole. And it is the functioning of the whole mass that makes the common man what he is" (Lawrence, 1949, p. 240).

Repudiating this minimizing attitude of high culture into individuality of human beings, Lawrence employs a great deal of obscene language in his novel as a declaration of revolution against the high culture. William K. Buckley comments on the abundance of four-letter letter words which are full of vitality and eagerness in contrast with the deadliness of boring sex talk of the upper class intellectuals:

> From the beginning to end in this novel, there is tension between a dead talk that uses words people seem to have given up on, and alive, intimate sex. In all important scenes, especially in those scenes between Connie and Mellors, Lawrence reinforces the idea that new feelings must find a language that fights against the deadliness of modern, mental life (Buckley, 1993, p. 29).

Although Lawrence is harshly criticized for using obscene words, the use of these words enables him to undermine the allegedly moral perfection of high culture which adopts a mechanical perception of sex, denying the role of human soul in it. Confronting his readers with the abundance of offensive words, Lawrence deconstructs the traditionally accepted norms and taboos about the confidentiality of sexual intimacy and discloses the sacredness of sexual experience. In contrast to the sterility of high culture, represented by the flimsy discourse of the elites in Wragby Hall, Mellors has the ability to express tenderness of

sexuality with his persistent use of dialect and four-letter words. He is not simply an angry young man who sternly opposes and hates ruling classes but he is also quite accomplished in both broken and standard English and has enough intellectual competence to discuss his ideas. Connie surprisingly discovers in his room that "[t]here were books about bolshevist Russia, books of travel, a volume about the atom and the electron, another about the composition of the earth's core, and the causes of earthquakes: then a few novels: then three books on India" (Lawrence, 1949, p. 273). As a man of an educated working class, Mellors can foresee how humanity is destroyed swiftly by industrialization and its fostering materialism under the pretext of high culture. He thinks that every individual is an inseparable part of this system and has an equal share in destroying human values. He argues that "intellectuals, artists, government, industrialists and workers all frantically killing off the last human feeling, the last bit of their intuition, the last healthy instinct" and replacing them with insensitive and mechanized humans who are drained of their individuality and spirituality (Lawrence, 1949, p. 279). Mellors, further, offers Connie to leave aside their financial troubles for gaining more money and begin to live their humanity without worrying about the problems that turn them into "labor-insects, and all their manhood taken away, all their real life" (Lawrence, 1949, p. 282):

> Let's live for summat else. Let's not live ter make money, neither for us-selves nor for anybody else. Now we're forced to. We're forced to make a bit for us-selves, an' a fair lot for th' bosses. Let's stop it! Bit by bit, let's stop it. We needn't rant an' rave. Bit by bit, let's drop the whole industrial life, an' go back. The least little bit o' money'll do (Lawrence, 1949, p. 280).

Mellors tries to convince Connie that they should not be enslaved by the capitalist system which incessantly compels them to earn more money. Mellors thinks that only way to preserve his dignity and his personality is to evade the social, cultural, and political impositions of industrial economies that are predicated upon creating unbridgeable social and cultural divisions, labeling people according to their classes. Mellors is quite aware of the manipulative power of the capitalist system which is directed at founding a control mechanism over people by contriving cultural dichotomies of high/low culture and upper/lower classes. As Raymond Williams also argues, the overbearing minorities and their capitalist economies indulge in building "the new slavery and prostitution of selling personalities" along with "the apparent division of our culture into, on the one hand, a remote and self-gracious sophistication, on the other hand a doped mass" (Lawrence, 1949, p. 17).

From this perspective, Mellors does not want to be part of this capitalist system which destroys his spiritual existence and deprives him of a unique individual identity

Conclusion

Reading D. H. Lawrence's *Lady Chatterley's Lover* from the critical perspective of cultural studies with respect to the notions of high and low culture, put forward by Arnold, Eliot, Leavis and Williams, holds a mirror to the polarization of the post-war Britain in which the aggravated form of industrialization treats every single member of the society as the mechanical instruments of the capitalist economy's production system and forcefully prompts the erosion of individuality by transforming humans into masses and denying their subjective experiences. 20th century as the pinnacle of modernism and industrialization is also the period in which the humanity of individuals is wiped out by the brutal production system of capitalism which is inclined towards perceiving humans as the inextricable functions of the economic system. In this regard, Lawrence does not only present the clash of high and low cultures, represented by Wragby Hall and Tevershall but also unveils the degenerated moral standards of Clifford and his highbrow friends who prefer to see working classes not as humans but as masses who are incapable of ruling themselves. To this end, Lawrence, all throughout *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, incorporates an entirely opposite view of culture that is fostered by Arnold, T. S. Eliot, and F. R. Leavis who ascribe high class manners, thoughts, and educational privileges into the concept of culture. In defiance of the concept of high culture that is enforced by high classes as an epitome of moral perfection, Lawrence unmasks the degenerated world, corrupt and loose values of high culture, concealed beneath its flamboyant appearance. In opposition to the decadent ethics of high class culture, the ordinary people's unspoiled cultural values, the so-called low culture, is approbated by Lawrence in *Lady Chatterley's Lover* in which class distinctions are volatilized through Connie and Mellors' relationship, the essence of which is hinged upon tenderness, passion, and kindness. It should also be steadfastly underscored that Lawrence's aligning culture with the ordinary life style of working classes is a revolutionary attempt of reconfiguring the concept of culture which will only be introduced by Raymond Williams in 1958 with his declaration of the ordinariness of culture, almost thirty years after Lawrence' *Lady Chatterley's Lover*.

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