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Thornfield, Wragby, and Their Discontents: Nature and Civilization in Jane Eyre and Lady Chatterley's Lover

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Thornfield, Wragby, and Their Discontents:
Nature and Civilization in *Jane Eyre* and *Lady Chatterley's Lover*
by
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Submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
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I: Introduction

Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847) and D. H. Lawrence's *Lady Chatterley's Lover* (1928) each tells a story of lovers who together thrive despite the social structures that directly impede their union. Rare is the love story without hardships to endure and obstacles to overcome. Indeed, Constance Chatterley and Oliver Mellors, like Jane Eyre and Edward Rochester, have to overcome limitations presented by their respective societies in order to have their love fulfilled. In both novels, in order for the union of two lovers to succeed, they must escape civilization as it encloses them both physically and psychologically.¹ Thus, *Jane Eyre* and *Lady Chatterley's Lover* portray lovers who depart from civilization in order to inhabit and embrace nature.² These literal and metaphoric movements mirror the psychological development within Jane Eyre and Constance Chatterley that brings them from a state of repression into a state of

¹ For the purposes of this paper, "civilization" is interpreted, per Raymond Williams' *Keywords* (1976), as the "achieved state or condition of organized life" which in the eighteenth century "emphasized social order and refinement, especially in conscious historical or cultural contrast with barbarism" (24). The organizing forces that structure civilization separate from nature will hereby be referred to as societal values – the values upheld by the civilized human society.

² According to Williams "nature" encompasses each of the following: "(i) the essential quality and character of something; (ii) the inherent force which directs the world or human beings or both; (iii) the material world itself, taken as including or not including human beings." (164-165). In contrast with "civilization" as is defined above, "nature is what man has not made" (169). For this paper, the concept of nature will be analyzed in the material sense, as it appears in the novels in the form of gardens and forests, and in the metaphysical sense as it regards to a character's ideas and behavior.

liberated self-expression.³ As such, the novels function as criticisms of civilized society by portraying the love between Jane and Rochester, and Constance and Mellors, as being impermissible within society. By moving out of civilization and into natural spaces, the lovers embrace not only their natural surroundings, but also their natural – “uncivilized” – selves, and thus they are able to fulfill their love.

II: Context

When comparing *Jane Eyre* and *Lady Chatterley’s Lover*, one might struggle to find the affinities between the texts as these are subtle in comparison to each text’s distinguishing characteristics. Separated by almost a century and the first World War, the novels occupy vastly different literary spaces. *Jane Eyre*, firmly situated within the nineteenth century, upholds the literary tradition of Victorian Gothic, while *Lady Chatterley’s Lover*, although not as notably experimental as other works of the twentieth century, is very much invested in Modernist techniques.⁴ Furthermore, the stories captured in the novels, while similar in their romantic content, are often identified as being vastly different.

³ The term “psychology,” referring to “inner feelings” “of the mind” (Williams 188), functions in this paper to locate what will be described as natural or unnatural ideas or states of being within character’s minds.

⁴ Rachel Potter in her article “Obscene Modernism and the Trade in Salacious Books” (2009), argues that ‘modernist writers use obscene images because they want to reveal, and sometimes revel in, the uncomfortable limits of representation’. This is true, in a sense, of Lawrence. However, as will be discussed in depth later in this paper, Lawrence did not intend his novel to offend. His investment in depicting authentic sexual experiences is rooted in honest, albeit, explicit, descriptions.

Jane's story is accented by fairy-tale tropes throughout and culminates in the metaphorical death of a fiery "dragon" and the marriage to her "prince".

Constance Chatterley's and Oliver Mellors' story is devoid of these fantastical elements; however, like *Jane Eyre*, theirs is a story of *honest* love that is at once sexual and romantic. Yet, despite these differences the two novels are united by their advocacy of nature over civilization. One encounters this in the novels through the depictions of the outdoors and other natural spaces as being the primary loci for fostering romantic connections. In inverse relation, social spaces are depicted as centers of mortal and psychological danger. Regarding psychological nature, the novels also depict how the embodiment or internalization of social ideals is detrimental to one's mind and body by showing the injury of characters who most ardently embody civilization's ideals. Thus, all of these representations inform the novels' positions on nature as it stands against civilization.

Virginia Woolf, in her criticism of *Jane Eyre* and *Sons and Lovers*, presents the theoretical foundation on Brontë's and Lawrence's treatment of the natural world as symbolic of a character's psychological nature. Woolf praises Charlotte Brontë and D. H. Lawrence, claiming Lawrence's novels are infused with "moments of greatness" ("How It Strikes..." 356) and Charlotte Brontë's works are "masterpieces" ("A Born Writer" 250). Additionally, Woolf reveals in her essays that both authors rely on depictions of nature that are heavily symbolic. In her essay "*Jane Eyre* and *Wuthering Heights*" (1916), Woolf observes that "both Emily and Charlotte are always invoking the help of nature. They both feel the

need of some more powerful symbol of the vast and slumbering passions in human nature than words or actions can convey” (463). And so, these natural surroundings “are not ornaments applied to decorate a dull page or display the writer’s power of observation” but rather “light up the meaning of the book” (463). Woolf does not make a specific claim about the novel’s “meaning” (463). Instead, by acknowledging the potential for symbolism, she bridges together characters’ psychological natures with the external natural world. Woolf reaches a similar conclusion with Lawrence’s novels and thus provides the foundation for my argument.

For Woolf, Lawrence’s genius was not as immediately evident as Charlotte Brontë’s (“Charlotte Brontë” 31). Her 1920 essay “Postscript or Prelude?” is both a review of Lawrence’s novel *The Lost Girl* and assessment of Lawrence’s capabilities as a writer. Although ultimately “disappointed” by the novel,⁵ Woolf recognizes the promise in Lawrence’s “extraordinary sense of the physical world” (“Postscript...” 271). Like Brontë, Lawrence relies heavily on the natural world’s potential for symbolism. Furthermore, Woolf acknowledges that Lawrence’s idea that sex had a “meaning” was worth exploring (“Postscript...” 271). Like the natural surroundings that “light up the meaning” in a Brontë novel (“*Jane Eyre*...” 463), sex provides additional meaning to Lawrencian works, thereby suggesting the presence of a link between the natural world and the sexual experience of the human body. Woolf articulates this after reading *Sons*

⁵ Woolf “watched for signs of her development ... with the sense that once the shock was received [she] should rise braced and purified” (272) and yet, she is “disappointed” (“Postscript or Prelude?” 273).

and Lovers (1913) in her essay “Notes on D. H. Lawrence” (1947). In it, Woolf reveals her admiration for his literary achievements. She asserts that despite Lawrence’s reputation as “the exponent of some mystical theory of sex” and the “dark cloud of reputation” which rendered his writing “unable to rouse any sharp curiosity” (“Notes...” 79) for many readers, *Sons and Lovers* “emerged with astonishing vividness” (80) in the way that *The Lost Girl* failed.⁶ Recalling the scene when Paul and Miriam dance in the barn, Woolf states that “Their bodies become incandescent, glowing, significant... The magnet that tries to draw together the different particles of which the beautiful and vigorous world... is made is this incandescent body” (“Notes...” 81). The magnetic relationship that Woolf perceives from Lawrence’s novel connects humanity to nature in a way that is similar to what she observed with Brontë. Thus, both novelists are in conversation with each other as both incorporate the relationship between natural settings and characters’ psychological nature in their works.

III: Natural and Unnatural Spaces in *Jane Eyre*

Nature and civilization are the diametrically opposing forces that propel the narrative in *Jane Eyre*. Nature in the form of love and desire drives the lovers to each other while societal ideals of civilization impede their union. The novel combats this by portraying natural environments as enabling the lovers' liberation

⁶ Alvina, the titular character of Lawrence’s earlier novel, “seemed the most likely instrument to transmit Mr. Lawrence’s electric shock” (“Postscript...” 272). Woolf’s use of “shock” in this passage refers to the “meaning” (271) Lawrence had for sex, “meaning” that, although not fully developed in *The Lost Girl*, becomes clear in *Sons and Lovers*.

from social constraints and by establishing social institutions as unnatural spaces. This is especially evident during the pivotal moments of Jane's and Rochester's romance set within natural spaces, specifically the woods and gardens outside Thornfield Hall. Notably, this is also the case with the lovers' reunion at Ferndean at the end of the novel. These natural spaces operate in direct opposition to civilization in Lowood, Thornfield, and Marsh End, institutions that are unnatural spaces as a result of the social values they uphold. Lowood Institution, the school Jane attends as a young girl, is immediately revealed as an unnatural space. This is made explicit when Mr. Brocklehurst proclaims that nature goes against the tenants that structure the institution. He admonishes a student for wearing her hair in curls, and when Miss Temple explains that the girl's hair "curls naturally" (60), Brocklehurst responds by stating that they "are not to conform to nature" and that the girl's hair "must be cut off entirely" (60). Thus, the novel reveals the violent intolerance of nature, in the form of organic curls, within civilization, presented in this scenario as a man-made institution. This moment proves to be a quintessential metaphor of the Victorian society that Jane must navigate. This idea that nature is something that one must not simply resist, but rather "cut off entirely" (60), is present within Thornfield Hall and later at Marsh End.

When Jane, now a young woman, leaves Lowood to become the governess of Thornfield Hall, she does so with the hope of escaping its oppressive and unnatural society. Yet, despite her change in scenery and occupation, Jane must endure many of Lowood's unnatural qualities at Thornfield

Hall. Most notably, this includes the psychologically dangerous mandate to internalize one's social status. Throughout her time at Lowood and later during her tenure at Thornfield, Jane maintains a low perception of herself. Indeed, her torment at the hands of her aunt and cousins at Gateshead and the cold establishment of Lowood Institution did not grant her a happy or loving childhood. However, the trauma of her past is not the sole cause. Thornfield Hall perpetuates the psychological dangers that Jane endured as a child. Like her aunt and Mr. Brocklehurst falsely accusing Jane of wickedness (31) and lying (63), Thornfield Hall, as a representation of civilization, imposes a judgement on Jane. Within the walls of Thornfield Hall, Jane's existence is reduced to that of her title: governess. In "A Dialogue of the Self and Soul" (1979), Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar state that there is disorder within the household's social order because the Victorian governess "received strikingly conflicting messages" as she "was and was not a member of the family" and "was and was not a servant" (349). The instability of her position begets psychological danger for Jane because it fosters a false perception. Despite the proximal closeness that her position as a governess in the household allows her, Jane has neither the social class or the wealth required to be a romantic prospect for Rochester.

This paradoxical position holds great influence over Jane's perception of herself. This is seen during the moment in which Mrs. Fairfax informs Jane of the guests that will be visiting, among them being Blanche Ingram, the speculated future Mrs. Rochester. Jane is distressed by this news because it forces her to assess her value against that of Blanche in order to compete for Rochester's

affection. She does this by sketching two portraits: one of herself and one of what she imagines to be Blanche's likeness in accordance to Mrs. Fairfax's positive description of the lady. She titles her self-portrait "Portrait of a Governess, disconnected, poor, and plain" (146) and compares it to the portrait of the well-connected, wealthy, and beautiful Blanche Ingram. Jane is unable to truly see herself as an effective rival because the societal laws limit her value to only wealth and title. She admonishes herself, thinking "is it likely he would waste a serious thought on this indigent and insignificant plebeian?... He is not of your order: keep to your caste" (146-147). The derogatory language Jane uses to describe herself and her situation suggests that she has internalized the idea that she is not worthy of Rochester's love. This self-estimation, however, does not carry over to the natural space outside civilization.

The first prominent instance in which the novel presents the inverse relationship between civilization and nature as *locus* occurs during the moment Jane first meets Rochester in the woods outside Thornfield Hall. One becomes aware of the novel's treatment of nature as a positive space through the depiction of Jane's interaction with it. The reader is privy to Jane's thoughts as she leaves the estate and takes in her surroundings: "...I set out. The ground was hard, the air was still, my road was lonely" (102). This description of how Jane perceives her environment is significant because these simple descriptions serve as deliberate demonstrations that Jane is not only aware of her surroundings, but that she interacts with them and is affected by them. "Hard," "still," and "lonely" each indicate experience through feeling, both physical and

emotional. Thus, the novel's setting is influential in the its course of action. More importantly, the novel structures nature so that it represents a space of *expression* by allowing Jane to interact with it. This is in contrast with civilization which is structured as a space of *oppression* where Jane is forced to abide by social values. The natural setting also functions as a metaphor for change as the wintery landscape symbolizes the cyclical renewal of the seasons, which foreshadows the start of a new phase in Jane's life.⁷ What follows is an indication of distance: "I was a mile from Thornfield" (102). This quantitative description signifies to the reader that Jane is well outside civilization. By presenting an objective amount of distance, the novel thus forces one to consider the implications of this distance between Jane and the socially structured world of Thornfield Hall.

Jane and Rochester's first interaction reveals that the principles of civilization are not present in nature. After injuring himself by falling off his horse, Rochester turns to Jane for assistance, stating that "necessity compels [him] to make [her] useful" (106). Rochester's use of "necessity" subverts the notion of *propriety*, a principle valued in Thornfield Hall, but one not enforced in nature. Jane reacts to this subversion while recalling the event moments after Rochester departs on his horse. She happily states that "My help had been needed and claimed; ... I was pleased to have done something... it was yet an active thing, and I was weary of an existence all passive" (106). For Jane, the incident had

⁷ Josie Billington argues for the reading of the winter season as symbolic of Jane's virgin womanhood and that Rochester, as her future lover, emerges for Jane as the successive spring season (125-6).

been an opportunity to be valued. More importantly, the scene presents the natural world as a space in which an individual like Jane can be liberated from “an existence all passive” (106). This view of her “existence” as “passive” is one that the reader encounters earlier in the novel when Jane remarks “I have recorded in detail the events of my insignificant existence” (77) and is one that stands in stark contrast to the “active” experience she had with Rochester. Given her history of reducing her life to an “existence” as a governess, “passive” and “insignificant,” one can see how a moment of being valuable would be important for Jane.

The moment of Jane and Rochester’s betrothal is the novel’s most powerful portrayal of their love being enabled by the natural world. The lovers confess their love for each other in the flowering orchard outside Thornfield Hall. The setting is described as “Eden-like... full of trees, it bloomed with flowers...” (223). By equating the space with Eden, the novel allows the reader to attribute this natural space with the same qualities present in the mythical space, qualities that include not only aesthetic beauty but also freedom from civilization and social values. The lovers’ budding relationship is in direct correlation with the spring season occurring in nature (Billington 126). Like the woods that surrounded them when they first met, the orchard and gardens outside Thornfield become a place of liberation for the lovers as it is in these natural spaces that they express their love for one another. Rochester eventually joins Jane “in the laurel walk” (224).

It is there that Jane famously confesses her love for Rochester and establishes herself as his equal:

“...if God had gifted me with some beauty and much wealth, I should have made it as hard for you to leave me, as it is now for me to leave you. I am not talking to you now through the medium of custom, conventionalities, nor even of mortal flesh; —it is my spirit that addresses your spirit; ... equal,—as we are!” (227)

Within the first sentence of this passage, Jane alludes to things which render her socially deficient and therefore ineligible to marry Rochester.⁸ However, she rejects this idea when she presents herself, not through the societal lenses of “custom” and “conventionalities,” but as she is. This reference to her existence signifies Jane's acknowledgment that she is innately worthy simply by virtue of existing, which is a psychological departure from her prior perception of herself as insignificant.

This pivotal moment in the novel solidifies the lovers' feelings for each other at the same time that it reveals their shared sense of equality in a natural context as opposed to a social one. By claiming that it is her “spirit” addressing Rochester's “spirit,” Jane presents herself in relation to Rochester as his equal, as neither's “spirit” is capable of influencing the other's by means of title, rank, or wealth. Rochester returns the sentiment by repeating “As we are!” (227) and claiming that he loves her as his “own flesh” (229). Although Jane explicitly dismisses the notion of flesh in her proclamation, this is the second time in the

⁸ Although beauty is a quality that is also valued in nature, possessing it is not enough to garner someone social value in the same way that wealth is able. Because it is presented in conjunction with “wealth,” the reader is able to conclude that even if Jane were described to possess beauty equal to that of Blanche Ingham, it would not be enough to grant her eligibility to marry a man like Edward Rochester.

novel that Rochester anchors his feelings for Jane within his body and thus imbues them with sexual love. When Jane discloses her intentions of moving to Ireland, Rochester responds to this, admitting to feeling a bodily connection to Jane – “I sometimes have a queer feeling with regard to you—it is as if I had a string somewhere under my left ribs, tightly and inextricably knotted to a similar string situated in the corresponding quarter of your little frame...” (226). Through this metaphoric description, Rochester anchors his feeling for Jane within his body and thus allows it to be read as an expression of erotic desire. Rochester continues the metaphor by claiming that if this unifying thread were to break, he “should take to bleeding inwardly” (226). One can read this as simply signifying the intense passion he feels for Jane. However, one must also consider the decision to describe this consequence as being a physical response and not an emotional one because it creates an additional layer of physicality which further substantiates the erotic notions of his desire. Thus, his description of his feeling is a metaphoric sexual embrace. This ought not be interpreted as diminishing the value of the spiritual love that both lovers feel for each other. Instead, it simply indicates that sexual love is very much present between them. Like their mutual establishment of equality, expression of sexual love adheres to natural values.

Jane accepts Rochester’s proposal and as a result renounces the social constraints that are forced on her and cause her to see herself as unworthy. As their engagement establishes a new social value for Jane, Thornfield Hall – no longer posing a psychological danger – emerges a mortal danger. A sense of the estate posing a mortal danger to Jane and Rochester surfaces in the form of

menacing laughs that Jane hears but cannot properly identify (135), a mysterious fire that emerges in Rochester's bedroom while everyone is sleeping (135), the mysterious injuring of Mr. Mason, and a vision of a "Vampyre" tearing Jane's wedding veil in the night (255). The source of these horrors is revealed on the day the lovers are to be married. Bertha Mason, Rochester's wife who has been kept in the attic for at least the entirety of Jane's time at Thornfield Hall, has been the cause of all the misfortunes that have befallen the residents of the estate. One thus can see that the unnatural social qualities of Thornfield Hall extend to Bertha herself.

Bertha symbolically perpetuates the unnatural qualities of the civilization in Thornfield Hall through her behavior and through her role as Mrs. Rochester. One can perceive Bertha's madness as unnatural purely on the basis of being madness; however, doing so eliminates room to interpret the causes of her mad behavior. It is customary to read Bertha Mason as Jane's psychological double, a human embodiment of the rage and frustration of nineteenth century women that is the obverse of Jane's calm and controlled demeanor. By stating that "[w]hat Bertha now *does*... is what Jane secretly wants to do" ("A Dialogue..." 361), Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar establish that Bertha acts out the frustration and rage that Jane feels. This reading places Jane and Bertha as opposites in the sense that it defines Bertha as active (one that "*does*") and Jane as inactive (one that "*wants to do*"). This binary is problematic because it implies that Jane represses her rage and frustration. This implication contradicts the novels many portrayals of Jane's expressed discontent and rebellion against the forces that

oppress her. Peter Grudin provides an alternative reading for Bertha's mad behavior, arguing in his article "Jane and the Other Mrs. Rochester" (1977) that Bertha is presented as one "who has leapt rather than fallen" indicating the "tyranny of passion over intellect" (Grudin 148). Thus, Bertha's madness is the consequence of her abandonment to sexual excess. Grudin's reading, combined with Gilbert and Gubar's claim that both women are inversely related, structures a new reading of Bertha and Jane that the novel ardently supports. With regard to nature, Bertha's behavior is unnatural because it is exercised to excess: passion overtakes intellect, the body surpasses the mind. The inverse of this for Jane does not amount to having a mind that surpasses the body, but rather to maintaining natural equilibrium of both. The inverse of excess is not absence but sufficiency. The novel supports this conclusion through its depictions of Jane's desire for Rochester.

Jane does not present an elaborate sexual history as Rochester does, and although in comparison she might appear prudish, the novel presents her as one who exercises sexual desire. She articulates her desire for Rochester to the reader when admiring him across the room: "My eyes were drawn involuntarily to his face; ... I looked and had an acute pleasure in looking" (158). She expresses this desire for Rochester once more when recounting erotic dreams. During her time away from Thornfield, Jane repeatedly dreams about Rochester and her recount of them reveals her erotic love for him. She describes these dreams as "many-colored, agitated, full of the ideal, the stirring, the stormy... charged with adventure, with agitating risk" (327) and thus, by noting the sensations produced,

Jane reveals the dreams' sensual nature. Jane's dreams then become increasingly more erotic: "I still again and again met Mr. Rochester at some exciting crisis; and then the sense of being in his arms...with all its first force and fire" (327). This passage is significant in its immense erotic charge which solidifies the novel's depiction of Jane as an individual who experiences sexual desire.

Unlike Bertha's sexual desire that is said to undergo excessive expression, Jane's expressions of desire undergo *sublimation*.⁹ It is important to note this distinction between sublimation, the act of diverting desire, and repression, the act of suppressing desire. Sublimation of desire occurs for Jane as a result of her sketching Rochester's likeness while she is visiting her aunt's deathbed. She describes the experience, by stating that "One morning I fell to sketching a face: what sort of a face it was to be, I did not care or know" (210). Having completed her sketch, she "smiled at the speaking likeness" because "it was, in fact, a very faithful representation of Mr. Rochester" (210). In this moment, Jane is in an unnatural space that does not permit her to freely express her natural desires. By sublimating and therefore successfully maneuvering her passions, Jane maintains a natural balance of body and mind.

⁹ In *Civilization and its Discontents* (1930), Freud concludes that in order to cope with the inevitable pain and disappointment of life, one must rely on "displacements of libido" (26) to provide "substitute satisfaction" (22) for desire (for the purposes of this paper, libido will be interpreted as desire) which cannot be fulfilled by direct means. He equates the displacements of libido as the "sublimation of instincts" (26) which is achieved through by "shifting the instinctual aims in such a way that they cannot come up against frustration from the external world" (26).

Bertha also functions as symbol of the flaws of socially-sanctioned marriage. What is typically considered to celebrate mutual love is mocked in the novel through its representation of marriage as rooted in social values. According to Rochester, his marriage to Bertha is the result of a scheme created by his brother and father who prompted the union with the primary intention of garnering their family great wealth (273-4). Rochester considers himself trapped in the marriage because Bertha's madness is sufficient to make her an unfit wife, yet insufficient to entitle him to an annulment that would give him liberty to marry another: "I knew that while she lived I could never be the husband of another and better wife...I was hopeless" (275).¹⁰ Neither Bertha's madness nor the spouses' mutual animosity for each other is enough to warrant annulment within their civilized society. As the living Mrs. Rochester, Bertha directly precludes the lovers from getting married, revealing civilization's condemnation of their love.

St. John Rivers serves a function similar to Bertha's in the novel through his display of unnatural behavior and his endorsement of unnatural marriage. Introduced as a very austere and religiously devout man, St. John Rivers emerges as a potential romantic prospect for Jane. However, unlike Rochester who stood for love and natural feelings, St. John does not permit romance or desire in his life. Jane describes St. John gazing at the sketch that she made of Rosamond Oliver, the young woman for whom he harbors feelings, stating that

¹⁰ The Fourth Norton Critical Edition of *Jane Eyre* notes that "Divorces were extremely difficult to obtain during this time, and separations by private deed required consent — something an insane person could not give — by both parties" (275).

“the longer he looked, the firmer he held it, the more he seemed to covet it” (322). When Jane inquires about his intentions toward Rosamond, St. John responds that he has “so assiduously sown the seeds...of self-denying plans” (333). Although not manifested as violent madness, St. John’s behavior is comparable to Bertha’s in that it is unnatural. While Bertha *expresses* in excess, St. John *represses* believing that it is necessary to do so in order to “rise higher” (335). A confessed highly “ambitious” man (335), St. John upholds the social value of class. This becomes problematic when he attempts to force these values onto Jane when he proposes marriage to her. Grounding his proposal on the notion of religious duty, St. John insists that Jane marry him and live as a “missionary’s wife” (359). Although she is romantically inexperienced, Jane demonstrates a strong capacity to feel and love. Staying true to her nature, Jane ardently rejects St. John’s request that she marry not out of love but out of fulfillment of his vocation as a missionary. “A missionary’s wife you must—shall be...I claim you—not for my pleasure, but for my Sovereign’s service” (359). According to L. R. Leavis, St. John values “inhuman and mechanical self-discipline” and “demands others’ subservience by invoking a higher code,” and thus demonstrates his unfitness as Jane’s husband (489). Looking beyond his dismissal of sentiment and desire (which goes against Jane’s nature), St. John’s sheer attempt to assert dominance over Jane further disqualifies him as a matrimonial match as it is clear to the reader that Jane values her autonomy. Jane’s assertion of herself against St. John’s proposal occurs in “the wild trek of the glen” among the “turf and flower” (Brontë 357). Like in previous interactions

between Jane and Rochester, the natural world provides a space for liberation.

Despite St. John's attempt to "claim" Jane, she remains dutiful to herself.

Furthermore, during her assertion of love for Rochester, Jane affirms her feelings by rhetorically asking "Do you think I am an automaton? --- a machine without feelings?" (227), a question which must be answered in the negative because Jane is in fact both a woman of great feeling and one who adheres to her what Leavis refers to as "natural instincts" (489). Jane's persistent rejection of these unnatural values illustrates how the novel advocates nature over civilization,

Nature plays an important role in the lovers' reunion at the end of the novel. Having learned of Thornfield Hall's destruction by fire and of Bertha's suicide, Jane arrives at Ferndean, "a manor-house on a farm" (382), in search of her beloved. Ferndean is a replacement of Thornfield Hall and fortunately for Jane and Rochester, the social values that burdened the lovers while they lived in Thornfield are not present in Ferndean. The novel does much to portray the differences between the two places. As Jane approaches the house, "deep buried in a wood" (382), she describes it in relation to the natural elements that surround it: "Even when within a very short distance of the manor-house, you could see nothing of it, so thick and dark grew the timber of the gloomy wood about it. ... all was interwoven stem, columnar trunk, dense summer foliage..." (383). By presenting the house as being physically integrated with the woods that surround it, the novel structures it as a place that is one with its natural surroundings; thus the reader can attribute to Ferndean the liberating qualities of natural spaces presented earlier in the novel, as though Ferndean were an

extension of nature itself. The names of the two places Jane and Rochester inhabit together function as nature metaphors as each is comprised of dual botanical terms: “thorn” “field” and “fern” “dean.” Whereas “field” and “dean” are similar in their denotation of natural places, “thorn” and “fern” signify the difference between the estates.¹¹ The lovers’ painful experiences at Thornfield Hall are aligned with the pain that is signified by “thorn” in the estate's name. The qualities that “fern” imbues to Ferndean can be extracted from a conversation between Jane and Rochester. Remarking on his injuries from the Thornfield fire, Rochester describes himself as ruined; Jane responds with the following: “You are no ruin, sir—... you are green and vigorous. Plants will grow about your roots...” (395). The fertility and abundance signified by Jane's language foreshadow the lovers' future at Ferndean. As the novel approaches its conclusion, Jane addresses the reader for a final time to tell of her marriage to Rochester, the restoration of his sight, and the birth of their child. No longer beholden to the unnatural ideals of civilization represented in Thornfield, Jane and Rochester’s love thrives at Ferndean.

IV: Intrigue and Criticism: Lawrence and Charlotte Brontë

That the Brontës held great influence over D. H. Lawrence, there is no doubt. In 1908, Lawrence went as far as to cite *Shirley* (1849) and *Jane Eyre* (1847) as two of his “favorite English books” in a letter to his friend Blanche

¹¹ According to the Oxford English Dictionary, “dean” signifies a narrow wooden valley (dean | dene, n.2).

Jennings (*Letters* 88). In her book *Lawrence Among the Women* (1991), Carol Siegel claims that “Lawrence’s construction of a world begins, in *The White Peacock*, with the reconstruction of the major themes in *Wuthering Heights*,” and that even though he “rarely mentioned *Wuthering Heights* directly,” Lawrence “reveals his admiration for Brontë” in his own works (55-6). Of course, these are all comments directed to Emily and not Charlotte; however, it seems likely that *Jane Eyre* was on Lawrence’s mind at the time he was writing *The White Peacock* (Buckley 90).¹²

As Lawrence continued to write novels, the thematic similarities between his writing and Charlotte Brontë’s fiction begin to emerge. In her essay on the two writers, Alisson Hoddinott remarks that “it is surprising that the line of influence that runs from Charlotte Brontë to D. H. Lawrence has not been commented on more frequently” (4). Indeed, she continues, both Brontë and Lawrence deplored “the subordination of human feelings to the machine” (4) and protested “against the social consequences of the Industrial Revolution” (4). Yet, despite their aligned views on industrialization and its consequences on human experience, and despite his claim that *Jane Eyre* was a “favorite” of his, Lawrence was famously critical of Brontë’s novel.

¹² Lawrence wrote to Blanche Jennings discussing *Jane Eyre* only three years prior.

In Lawrence's 1929 essay, "Pornography and Obscenity," written during a time when the author was frequently defending his position on sex in literature and society,¹³ he wages his famous criticism *Jane Eyre*:

I find *Jane Eyre* verging towards pornography . . . the strongest instincts have collapsed, and sex has become something slightly obscene, to be wallowed in. . . . Mr. Rochester's sex passion is not 'respectable' till Mr. Rochester is burned, blinded, disfigured and reduced to helpless dependence, then, thoroughly humbled and humiliated, it may be merely permitted. (71)

Lawrence's assumption that Rochester's wounding at the end of the novel is symbolic of a kind of corporal punishment for having lived a life full of "sex passion" can be argued; however, this is not the connection that links Brontë's work to pornography.

In an attempt to articulate what exactly defines "pornography," a word often used to describe Lawrencian love scenes, Lawrence concludes that "It isn't a question of sex appeal. . . nor even a question of deliberate intention on the part of the author or artist to arouse sexual excitement" (68). Instead, according to Lawrence, "Pornography is the attempt to insult sex, to do dirt on it" and "to have disgusting contempt of it" (69-70). With this in mind, Lawrence makes his case against *Jane Eyre*. He perceives that the novel has a "desire to spite the sexual feeling, to humiliate it and degrade it," and as a result, "the element of pornography enters" (71). Although the concluding chapter to *Jane Eyre* reveals that Rochester regains his sight and, one can assume, the opportunity to become

¹³ Between 1928 and 1930, Lawrence wrote many critical essays on sex and society, among them "Sex versus Loveliness" (1928), "Pornography and Obscenity" (1929), "A Propos of *Lady Chatterley's Lover*" (1930), and "Enslaved by Civilization" (1930).

less dependent on Jane, Lawrence is bothered by the implied impermissibility of sex within society.

V: Natural and Unnatural Spaces in *Lady Chatterley's Lover*

Like *Jane Eyre*, *Lady Chatterley's Lover* (1928) is invested in portraying nature as a liberated space that is free from the social values that are imposed in civilization, figured in the novel as Wragby Hall, the Chatterley's estate. The dichotomy nature and society or civilization is established in the novel's opening lines. The narrative begins with a proclamation of tragedy and catastrophe: "Ours is essentially a tragic age... The cataclysm has happened, we are among the ruins... We've got to live, no matter how many skies have fallen" (5). The novel's interrogation of its current moment takes place against a backdrop of the horrors of World War I. The apocalyptic imagery referencing the tragic destruction that resulted from the war is evidence of the novel's framing of society as unnatural. Furthermore, the novel's insistence that "We've got to live..." (5) – as though in spite of society – suggests that the present society is one of death. Moreover, the notion of living floats in stark contrast to the deathly images that are mentioned in the passage. This contrast allows the reader to draw the following conclusion: if death is tied to the unnatural world, then life must be found in the natural world. Thus, Lawrence establishes his position on civilization being antithetical to the nature.

As in *Jane Eyre*, *Lady Chatterley's Lover* conveys the nature/civilization dichotomy through the narrative's distinct settings. Like the woods outside

Thornfield, those outside Wragby Hall serve as natural spaces, separate from the confines of society, where the lovers are able to express their love freely. It is in the woods that Constance and Mellors foster their love and tenderness for each other. Inversely, the novel depicts Wragby Hall as representative of civilization and therefore an unnatural space full of human disconnect, coldness, and deathly sentiment. All of these qualities comprise the impetus behind Constance's repeated visits to the woods; these visits are an attempt to escape her life at Wragby Hall.¹⁴ Yet, a key distinction between Brontë's Thornfield and Lawrence's Wragby Hall is that Wragby is sustained by the flow of wealth that results from the mines and miners employed by Clifford Chatterley. Indeed, Wragby Hall's unnaturalness is shored up by the economics of the estate; the industry of mining is founded on men behaving like machines, a concept that Lawrence keenly opposed. Industrialization takes a more prominent role in *Lady Chatterley's Lover* than it did in *Jane Eyre*. In "The Social Thinking of D. H. Lawrence" (1958), Raymond Williams discusses Lawrence's "general condemnation of industrialization," stating that the "industrial problem arises from the base forcing of all human energy into a competition of mere acquisition" (66). What industrialization translates to, for Lawrence, is an exchanging of nature, as implied by "human energy," for material goods, what is implied with "mere acquisition." Thus, the artifice of civilization, present in *Jane Eyre* as social forces, take on an additional "sheer mechanical materialism" (66) in *Lady Chatterley's Lover*.

¹⁴ "She fled as much as possible to the wood" (Lawrence, *Lady Chatterley* 112).

Life within Wragby Hall is unnatural. Constance, introduced as a sexual woman with a history of adultery, is at odds with her husband, Clifford, who tells her that sex means nothing to him (45). There is “nothing between [Constance and her husband]”; “she never even touched him ... he never touched her... they were so utterly out of touch” (112). Constance’s unfulfilling relationship with her husband leads her to pursue romantic relationships outside of her marriage in an attempt to recover this part of life that is denied to her. Prior to meeting Mellors, Constance has an unfulfilling sexual affair with Michaelis, a successful Irish playwright. Because class structure is valued in civilized spaces like Wragby Hall, one must consider the implications of Michaelis’ social position. Although not upper class like the Chatterleys, Michaelis’ success as an artist awards him a spot in that world. The opposite is seen in *Jane Eyre* where Jane, an impoverished governess, does not fit within Rochester’s social world until the end when their positions are equalized as the result of him losing most of his wealth in the fire and her inheriting her fortune. Unfortunately for Constance, even when abiding with the social values, she fails to find romantic fulfillment with Michaelis. The cause of this failure lies in the unnatural ideas that Michaelis harbors. Because Constance adheres to natural principles and rejects the unnatural classist principles of Wragby Hall, one can conclude that she has the potential to be fulfilled in nature. Michaelis, however, adheres to class distinctions: “he pined to be where he didn't belong—among the English upper classes” (22). This dependence on social class as constitutive of success is at the core of their incompatibility and is the reason for failure.

No longer in a relationship with Michaelis, Constance begins to feel as though her existence will become “nothingness” (55). Still disconnected from her husband, she repeatedly mentions feeling “cold from head to foot” (113). Additionally, Mrs. Bolton, whose voice “made her go cold,” and Michaelis, whose letters afflicted her with “the same sense of chill,” affect her in a similar way (113). Thus, Constance “felt she would surely die if it lasted much longer...” (113). Constance perceives that her life at Wragby Hall is detrimental to her well-being much in the same way that Thornfield Hall was a threat to Jane. And yet as Lady Chatterley, Constance does not face the psychological danger that Jane, as household staff, faced at Thornfield. Moreover, there is no mad-woman in the Wragby attic; however, Constance feels a sense of claustrophobia and anxiety.

In accordance with the opening line's insistence that one has “got to live...” (5), Constance seeks within nature the warmth and connection she is denied in Wragby Hall, and she forms an emotional bond with the hens outside Mellors' cottage. She “came every day to the hens” for “they were the only things in the world that warmed her heart (112). This bond is significant because, as John Humma states in his essay “The Interpenetrating Metaphor” (1983), the metaphors in the novel that “link bird, beast, and flower...with hero and heroine... organically emblemize [the lovers'] sexual-spiritual union” (78). This “interpenetrating” metaphor signifies not only their connection to each other, but also their connection to nature in both its material and psychological forms. Therefore, by stating that for Constance, “[o]nly the hens... were warm...” (113-14), the novel demonstrates that Constance belongs in nature. This description

forms a deliberate contrast to the “cold” (112) that permeates Wragby Hall and as a result, the novel presents nature in opposition to civilization and makes it a space that fosters connection, warmth, and life.

During one of her ventures into the woods, Constance and Mellors become lovers. In the moments leading up to their union, Mellors, seeing a tear fall from Constance’s face, undergoes what is described as a transformative experience: “...he was aware of the old flame...that he hoped was quiescent forever. ...compassion flamed in his bowels for her” (115). According to Calvin Bedient, it is in this “moment of passionate tenderness,” that “compassion and passion become subtle translations of each other” (409). In this moment, as Mark Spilka writes, Lawrence communicates “the change of being” in Constance and Mellors (186). Constance “wakes to passion, beauty, and human warmth... and [Mellors] himself returns, from lonely isolation to warmhearted love” (Ibid., 190). It is important to note, however, that these sensual depictions of profound sexual experience do not reflect an opinion that sex is somehow the solution to the dehumanizing mechanization brought on by industrialization. Raymond Williams explains Lawrence’s position on sex with regard to industrialism thusly: “It is not that sexual experience is ‘the answer’ to industrialism. ...The real meaning of sex ...is that it ‘involves the whole of a human being,’” not simply in the physical sense, but in the psychological sense as well (“The Social Thinking of D.H. Lawrence” 70). Lawrence stresses the “compassion” and “tenderness” that Constance and Mellors exchange, and these sentiments, along with the natural expression of sexual love, are what culminate in “the source of all life...and the

source of all living" (ibid.,70). The lovers reflect on the experience and define it simply as "life" and "love" (118). Thus, contrary to Constance feeling as though she is "being crushed to death..." in Wragby Hall (112), the novel emphasizes nature's emblematic connection to love and life. This comparison of life and death in relation to nature and civilization, respectively, echoes the sentiment Lawrence expresses with regard to industrialization: "The country is so lovely; the man-made England is so vile.... The human soul needs actual beauty even more than bread" (Williams, "The Social Thinking..." 66).

Constance's connection to the natural world deepens as her relationship with Mellors develops. Because all prior romantic and sexual expression occurs within the gamekeeper's cottage, a place that is indeed separate from Wragby Hall but not entirely natural, it is of no coincidence that their most significant sexual interaction occurs when they are completely immersed in nature and openly among the "dense fir-trees" (133). Having been led "through the wall of prickly trees ... [Constance] had to lie down there under the boughs of the tree, like an animal..." (133). The novel spares no opportunity to describe the natural surroundings, a technique which emphasizes the notion that the setting is significant to one's interpretation of the event. This moment marks the height of love and intimacy between them and their closeness to the nature that surrounds them. In the literal sense, the lovers are physically integrated with the flora of the woods.¹⁵ Furthermore, the simile "like an animal" (133), used to describe

¹⁵ It is during this embrace that they first "come-off together" (134). Their climax signifies a degree of closeness which neither of them obtained with their spouses.

Constance, signifies a complete removal of socialization, not in a sense of degradation, but in a sense of liberation that thus allows her to connect with Mellors in a way she could never have connected with her husband.

The woods outside Wragby Hall become a kind of paradise for the lovers. The novel never presents any risk of the lovers being caught. Constance is able to enter and exit the woods to see her beloved with a complete sense of safety and permissibility, even when she does so in the middle of the night. The inverse, however, does not produce the same results. The single time that Mellors wishes to get close to Wragby Hall in an attempt to be close to Constance, he is immediately seen and identified as “Lady Chatterley's lover” (145) by Mrs. Bolton. Thus, the novel portrays Mellors’ movement across the threshold that separates the natural and unnatural worlds as transgressive against the social values maintained in Wragby Hall.

Like *Jane Eyre*, *Lady Chatterley's Lover* challenges socially-sanctioned marriage. Social class is a structuring value in Wragby Hall, as it is in Thornfield Hall. Like Rochester, Constance and Mellors are forced to endure the confines of their failed marriages. The novel’s criticism of these marriages emerges with close analysis of the lover’s spouses: Clifford Chatterley and Bertha Coutts. As Lord Chatterley, Clifford is the patriarchal head of Wragby Hall and furthermore, the most problematically *civilized* character in the novel. The novel immediately reveals that he returns from the war with a paralyzing injury. Describing him as a “crippled” (5) “hurt thing” (15), the novel denies Clifford sympathy. The obvious rift in Constance and her husband Clifford’s relationship lies in their physical

incompatibility. The resulting paralysis caused by Clifford's war wound renders him impotent, and Constance's sexual fulfillment becomes impossible with her husband. Clifford's physical state, however, is not the sole cause of their romantic failure. The novel establishes that prior to the war, "the sex part did not mean much to [Clifford]" and that he and Constance were as "intimate as two people who stand together on a sinking ship" (12). The choice to denote sexual intimacy as simply "the sex part" communicates linguistically Clifford's disinterest and dismissal of it. The sense of desperation and lack of thoughtfulness evoked in the sinking-ship simile allows one to conclude that their relationship lacks foundation. For a woman like Constance Chatterley, who values intimacy and sexual fulfillment, the nature of Clifford's condition and apathetic outlook destabilizes their marriage past the point of redemption.

Constance and Clifford's relationship also suffers from a philosophical incompatibility similar to the relation between Jane Eyre and St. John Rivers. Committed to a life of self-denial, St. John embodies civilization, while Jane, who is committed to love and feelings, embodies nature. Similarly, Clifford proves to embody civilization while Constance, like Mellors, embodies nature. This becomes apparent in their discrete views of the miners of Tevershall. Constance, rejecting the social notion of class, wishes she could connect with the miners. Clifford, contrary to his wife's sentiment, regards them as "objects rather than men, parts of the pit rather than parts of life, crude raw phenomena rather than human beings" (15). This refusal to see the humanity of people in the working classes deeply troubles Constance and pushes her further away from

her husband. More importantly, as Raymond Williams also has shown, Clifford becomes an irredeemable figure through his “condemning of the workers to ugliness...” (“The Social Thinking...” 66). Regarding Oliver Mellors, Clifford condemns him beyond “ugliness” when he orders Mellors to push his mechanized chair after it has become stuck in the mud. One could interpret this image of Clifford's motorized chair becoming immobile in nature as an indication of nature overpowering modern mechanization; however, the scene also reveals Clifford's capacity to harm those who work for him. As Mellors' employer, Clifford wields ownership and power that he exerts despite the threat of physical harm to his employee.

The treatment of St. John Rivers' and Clifford Chatterley's fates fit the novels' contempt for the civilization each man inhabits. Both men are shown to be excessively ambitious to either rise socially or accrue more wealth at the cost of another's humanity. St. John Rivers, focused on the success as a missionary, commands that Jane marry him in an attempt to improve his station. Clifford Chatterley, as owner of the Tevershall Mines, profits from the mechanization of human beings. The final lines of *Jane Eyre* reveal that St. John, despite his unnatural devotion to social structure, died a young man. Clifford Chatterley is not punished in death; rather, his demise is revealed when Constance informs him of her love for Mellors. Furthermore, *Lady Chatterley's Lover's* treatment of Clifford at the end of the novel bears striking similarity to *Jane Eyre's* treatment of Rochester, as Lawrence describes it in “Pornography and Obscenity.” In that essay, Lawrence criticizes the novel's maiming and humiliating of Rochester as

he perceives it to symbolize Rochester's punishment for his sexual history. Knowing Lawrence's stance on sex as a mechanism for human connection, one can understand why he would find this notion problematic. Yet, Lawrence applies the same "punishment" – maiming and humiliation – to Clifford Chatterley. For Lawrence, Rochester does not merit such punishment. Clifford, however, does. In his book, *The Realistic Imagination* (1981), George Levine concludes that the "monster" in *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, like in *Jane Eyre*, "is not the irrational life-energy hidden in the woods beyond society, but society itself. The possibility of redemption lies in those woods, where society fears the monster lurked. All the time, Lawrence implies, [society] was itself the monster" (325).

Mellors' failure to find love within his social class is seen through his failed marriage with his first wife. It must be noted that the impeding first wives for lovers in both novels share the same name. It is speculated that Lawrence's Bertha is so named after one of England's principle guns in the war – "Big Bertha" ("Soldier's Heart..." 438). This namesake struggles to align with the novel's description of Mellor's wife's character: "...she treated me with insolence. And she got so's she'd never have me when I wanted her: never. Always put me off, brutal as you like" (201). Indeed, Bertha and Mellors' sexual incompatibility exacerbates their mutual animosity, and this can be interpreted as a destructive force. However, Brontë's Bertha Mason is a more appropriate origin for Bertha Coutts. Like Bertha Mason, Bertha Coutts inhibits Mellors from marrying his beloved and initiates the series of events that separate them. More importantly, both women are united in their depictions of unnatural behavior. Bertha Mason's

mad behavior is established to be the result of unnatural sexual expression, as is Bertha Coutts’.

VI: Body and Mind as Natural Spaces

Lawrence wrote "A Propos of *Lady Chatterley's Lover*" (1930) in response to the controversy and backlash that surrounded his novel. Fixation on the sexuality depicted in the novel, despite Lawrence’s heavy use of metaphor to convey sex as an authentic and poetic experience, caused the novel to be regarded as obscene, and yet Lawrence never advocates for sex or vulgarity for their own sake. Lawrence claims that he “put forth this novel as an honest, healthy book” (307); it is this honesty, in the form of abundant and extensive descriptions of sex between Constance and Mellors, that scandalized most readers. And it is the presence of this scandal and ultimate rejection of the work that, for Lawrence, reveals the “tragic” nature of the age referenced in the novel’s opening line. By describing the novel as such, Lawrence begins to articulate his position against the novel’s critics. If the book is indeed “healthy” and “honest” then the rejection of it must be *unhealthy* and *dishonest*; this is Lawrence’s opinion of society’s relationship with sex.

He continues his defense by stating that readers were shocked to see the words but that they “never shocked the mind at all” (“A Propos...” 307).¹⁶

Through this assertion, Lawrence highlights a difference in perception between what is observed externally and what is experienced internally. Thus, he begins

¹⁶ Lawrence makes this point by stating that the words “shocked the eye” (“A Propos...”307).

to hint at the problem of one's mind being disconnected from one's body – a problem he perceives to be afflicting his contemporary society. He states that relief ensues once a person realizes that they “never really were [shocked]” to begin with (307). His notion of one being relieved by the realization that sex does not and ought not “shock” suggests that sex, and by extension sexual openness as is portrayed in the novel, is in fact aligned with human nature. His claim that “the puritan hush! hush!” – prudish appropriation of desire – “produces the sexual moron” (310) supports this claim if one takes his use of “moron” to signify mental defect and underdevelopment.¹⁷ Furthermore, by claiming that prudery begets abnormality, Lawrence suggests that it is *unnatural*.

Lawrence identifies the cause of this unnatural disconnect of body and mind, stating that “Culture and civilization have taught us to separate the word from the deed. ... we should act accordingly to our thoughts, and think accordingly to our acts” (307-8). Society, what one can conclude “culture and civilization” to signify, according to Lawrence, is responsible for the unnatural separation of one's body, what manifests action, and one' mind, what manifests thoughts. The idea that separation is unnatural is emphasized by Lawrence's use of “should” as it implies that one has an obligation or a duty to behave in accordance to their thoughts. He continues to explain that “The two conditions, of thought and action... should be related in harmony” (307-8). Lawrence's use of

¹⁷ This interpretation is informed by the early twentieth century definition presented the Oxford English Dictionary (moron, n.2 and adj.).

“harmony” evokes the positive notions of balance and unity that he established earlier in the essay when he described his novel as “honest” and “healthy” (307).

To achieve this harmonious balance of body and mind, Lawrence insists that one must have “thoughtful consciousness of the body’s sensations and experiences, and these sensations and experiences themselves” and that this is possible to obtain by “being able to use the so-called obscene words, because these are a natural part of the mind’s consciousness of the body” (307). This passage is significant in that it demonstrates that the language Lawrence used in his novel is necessary in order to effectively and authentically depict sexual experience. Responding to the accusations of obscenity, he claims that obscenity occurs when “the mind despises and fears the body, and the body hates and resists the mind” (309). Lawrence’s objective for writing the novel was to convey truth— to not simply depict sex but to capture the experience of sex authentically. He states that the “real point” of the novel is to enable readers to “*think* sex fully, completely, honestly, and cleanly” (308). With this Lawrence highlights the importance of mind-body harmony.

For Constance and Mellors, sexual discourse is at times playful. They devise names with which to personify their respective sexual organs: “John Thomas” and “Lady Jane” for penis and vagina. According to Stephen Kern, Lawrence believed that sex slang like this is necessary because, “although those words do not capture all the conflicting associations of sex, they express essential aspects that no other words convey” (137). Thus, one can conclude that Lawrence uses metaphor and slang not to silence or obscure facts, but

rather with the intention of conveying a deeper truth. Returning to the notion of “shock” produced by the novel, for many years, *Lady Chatterley’s Lover* was considered too obscene to publish. Lawrence addresses this in his essay, stating that we must be able to use “the so-called obscene words,” because they “are a natural part of the mind’s consciousness of the body” (“A Propos...” 309). As Stephen Kern argues, Lawrence’s abandonment of linguistic respectability is done with an attempt to restore that part of erotic love which “had been killed by the refinements of polite language” (137). “Obscenity,” writes Lawrence, “only comes in when the mind despises and fears the body, and the body hates and resists the mind” (“A Propos...” 309). Lawrence believes that as human beings, our minds and bodies must be perpetually connected – one must not reject the other. Connie Chatterley and Oliver Mellors’ relationship allows them to foster this unity within themselves. Moreover, Charlotte Brontë depicts this idea of unity of body and mind in *Jane Eyre*. Bodily rejection of the mind is depicted as madness in the character of Bertha Mason, and the mind’s rejection of the body is depicted as extreme self-denial in St. John Rivers.

Lawrence’s fictional and nonfictional works alike contain evidence of the author’s contempt for civilization. In each of his most acclaimed novels — *Sons and Lovers* (1913), *Women in Love* (1920), *The Plumed Serpent* (1926), and *Lady Chatterley’s Lover* — civilization is depicted as ushering in mechanization that attempts to supplant the natural world. Brian Shaffer’s *The Blinding Torch: Civilization in Literature* (1993) analyzes how, for Lawrence, “gemeinschaft gives

way to gesellschaft”¹⁸ most clearly in *Women in Love* (8). “Gerald’s treatment of his workers as ‘mere mechanical instruments’ in order to maximize profits and speed modernization...is shown to lean to an alienated, disaffected labor force” (8). This idea appears elsewhere in *Lady Chatterley’s Lover* in a conversation between Constance and Clifford Chatterley, when Clifford discloses that he regards the miners as “objects rather than men” (15). The alienation produced by mechanistic society is precisely what Lawrence attempts to combat by reestablishing sex and “natural instinct” as fundamental for human connection.

Lawrence’s idea of natural instinct being incompatible with civilization is most explicitly apparent in his essay “Enslaved by Civilization” (1930). “The one thing men have not learned to do,” Lawrence begins, “is stick up for their own instinctive feelings, against the things they are taught” (578). Lawrence claims that the process begins at an early age: “Little boys are trundled off to school at the age of five, and immediately the game begins, the game of enslaving the small chap” (578). According to Brian Shaffer, this system is civilization’s attempt to “quell individual feeling in the service of national order and good citizenship,” a goal that is attained with the formation of the “good” boy (9). Lawrence defines that “goodness” in this context as meaning “... not having a soul [or] a feeling to call your own” (“Enslaved by Civilization” 580). Thus, as Shaffer also argues, civilization is for Lawrence virtually synonymous with social conformity and with the enslavement of the spirit (9). Lawrence uses the enslavement metaphor

¹⁸ According to the Oxford English Dictionary, *gemeinschaft* and *gesellschaft* are the terms established by for dichotomous (personal versus impersonal) sociological ties established (*Gemeinschaft*, n.; *gesellschaft*, n.).

throughout the essay, substituting it only once with “automaton” to describe what one becomes at the hands of civilization (“Enslaved by Civilization” 579).

VII: Conclusion: How Jane Eyre Became Lady Chatterley

Charlotte Brontë did not write philosophical essays in defense of sex and nature like Lawrence. Her criticism of civilization must be extracted from her novels, and this criticism is abundant in *Jane Eyre*. It appears that Lawrence was perceptive of this. His use of “automaton” and “soul” in “Enslaved by Civilization” resonates with Jane’s declaration of her equality and love for Rochester. Lawrence and Brontë utilize the same language to articulate the need to assert oneself as an individual and reject the forces that render one “a machine without feelings” (Brontë 227). More significantly, both authors succeed in advocating nature over civilization in their novels. When Jane enters the world of Thornfield Hall, she is accompanied by the socially-imposed perception of her value and position in society. By the end of the novel, Jane and Rochester, equals in each other’s eyes, retreat to the woods to fulfill their love and happiness. Upon entering her relationship with Mellors, Constance feels disconnected from humanity and from her sexuality. The love between her and Mellors thrives in the woods outside Wragby Hall and culminates with them reaching profound intimacy and romantic fulfillment whilst surrounded by the “dense fir-trees” (133), a scene that John Humma argues is “the true ending of the novel” (85). My own analysis reveals how both novels make exceptional use of the nature metaphors and utilize the natural (or unnatural) qualities of each setting to drive their criticism of

civilization. This, along with the additional thematic similarities discussed prior, reveal the potential to view the relationship between *Lady Chatterley's Lover* and *Jane Eyre* as revisionary.

Given the undeniable influence Charlotte Brontë held over Lawrence, as well as his references to *Jane Eyre* in his nonfiction and letters, one can conjecture that *Lady Chatterley's Lover* is the result of an attempt to rewrite *Jane Eyre*. However, Lawrence's open criticism of the novel in fact suggests that his intention was to revise the existing work. As previously stated, Lawrence's primary concern with *Jane Eyre* dealt with the novel's punitive treatment of Rochester's sexual past ("Pornography and Obscenity" 71).¹⁹ Therefore, it is entirely appropriate that he would correct this perceived condemnation of "sex passion" (71) by writing a novel that celebrates vital sexual experience and the natural spaces that enable it.

¹⁹ As previously discussed, any indication that the novel attempts to punish Rochester is outweighed by the novel's ending which inarguably rewards both Jane and Rochester.

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