

# “Inside” and “Outside” of the Author and the Work—Looking into *Lady Chatterley’s Lover*

Lizhen Chen

Xiamen University Tan Kah Kee College, Zhangzhou, China

Email: lzchen@jgxy.com

**How to cite this paper:** Chen, L. Z. (2018). “Inside” and “Outside” of the Author and the Work—Looking into *Lady Chatterley’s Lover*. *Advances in Literary Study*, 6, 135-141.

<https://doi.org/10.4236/als.2018.63011>

**Received:** May 11, 2018

**Accepted:** July 10, 2018

**Published:** July 13, 2018

Copyright © 2018 by author and  
Scientific Research Publishing Inc.

This work is licensed under the Creative  
Commons Attribution International  
License (CC BY 4.0).

<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>



Open Access

---

## Abstract

Concerning D. H. Lawrence and his most controversial work *Lady Chatterley’s Lover*, there are in existence various theories. This paper first makes an introduction of D. H. Lawrence and his work *Lady Chatterley’s lover*, and then tries to scrutinize the author and the work in terms of traditional criticism and psychological criticism. The internal facts (“inside”) and external facts (“outside”) of the author and the characters in the work are elaborated, mainly through traditional approach and psychological approach, hence the conclusion is that Lawrence’s works were deeply interweaved with his complex and full-of-controversy life and that readers ought to attach more importance to the author’s life as well as his work.

## Keywords

Lawrence, *Lady Chatterley’s Lover*, Traditional Criticism, Psychological Criticism

---

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1. Brief Introduction of D. H. Lawrence and His Work *Lady Chatterley’s Lover*

D. H. Lawrence is one of the greatest novelists of the early twentieth century, and meanwhile one of the most controversial. He created a large number of works during his life time, covering almost all the literary genres including novels, essays, poetry, works of critical theories etc. Lawrence had an extraordinary ability to convey a sense of specific time and place. Therefore, his novels were usually written in a lyrical, sensuous, often rhapsodic prose style and often reflected his complex personality (Cao, 2015).

His great novel *Lady Chatterley’s Lover* is about the story of Connie Constance Reid. She married Sir Clifford Chatterley in 1917 only to have him

wounded in the war and thus he must be confined to a wheelchair permanently soon afterwards. After a brief affair with Michaelis, the playwright that leaves her unsatisfied, Lady Chatterley enjoys an extremely passionate relationship with Oliver Mellors, the gamekeeper on their estate. The later stages of the novel move onto the issue of her pregnancy by Mellors and her trip to Venice and disguise of the true parentage of the child. The truth is eventually uncovered and the novel ends with a sense of fulfillment for both Lady Chatterley and Mellors, although the situation is never fully resolved. The story and its sentiments suggest that the sexual relationship is the most profound of all and that it may be debased either by treating it lightly or by viewing it with shame.

Being full of controversial swear words and sexually descriptive passages, the novel caused a sensation and was banned in England and the United States until 1959.

## **1.2. Research Background**

Lady Chatterley's lover is always thought as D. H. Lawrence's most controversial work. Concerning both the author and the work, there are in existence various theories, some of which share the same views while some are strongly opposed to each other. In the past few decades there have been three noticeable trends in D. H. Lawrence criticism: an inclination to historicize the writer and draw attention to hitherto overlooked philosophical complexities in his writings; a desire to bring critical theory to bear on the works; and an attempt to revise, problematize, and update the versions of Freudian psychoanalysis that have been applied in readings of the works since Alfred Kuttner's review of *Sons and Lovers* in 1915 (Fiona, 2001). Different critics are apt to adopt different critical approaches. This paper will focus on traditional criticism and psychological criticism.

## **2. Some Basic Concepts and the Approaches Adopted**

### **2.1. The Connotation of "Inside" and "Outside" in the Paper**

In this paper, "inside" and "outside" are two terms to be introduced, respectively referring to the internal facts and the external facts of the author and the characters in the work. As for the case of *Lady Chatterley's lover*, "inside" factors are scrutinized in terms of psychological and mental fluctuation of the author D. H. Lawrence and the main character Connie, based on the psychological analysis; "outside" factors of the author are studied in terms of all the external factors that ever influenced him, including the times he was in, the background where he was raised up, all those he experienced in his life time, mainly based on historical-biographical criticism.

### **2.2. The Approaches Adopted in This Paper**

There are two types of traditional criticism—the historical-biographical and the moral-philosophical. Historical-biographical approach sees a literary work as a reflection of its author's life and times or the life and times of the characters in

the work. Moral-philosophical approach is ascertaining what is taught and what philosophical issues are probed in the work. In this paper, Lawrence's life, character and times are carefully studied and related to the creation of this work, which may be identified as the historical-biographical approach.

Since the traditional criticism is much easier to understand and accept, this paper is going to emphasize on the analysis of the psychological criticism. According to Bernard Paris, it is extremely valuable to bring literature and psychology together. He thinks that the psychologist and the artist often know about the same areas of experience, but they comprehend and present their knowledge in different ways. Each enlarges our awareness and satisfies our need to master reality in a way that the other cannot. Psychological interpretation can afford many profound clues toward solving a work's thematic and symbolic mysteries.

To explain what psychological criticism is, some basic comprehension of psychoanalyticism is demonstrated as follows.

Most human processes are rooted in the unconscious and most human behavior is driven by the libido. A triad of psychic forces termed by Freud as the id, the ego, and the superego, in the healthy, socially adjusted individual, work in a balanced partnership. In a disturbed individual, these forces are not balanced. The id is the reservoir of libido, the primary source of all psychic energy. Its function is to fulfill the pleasure principle. The ego protects the individual. The ego is governed by the reality principle. The superego functions to protect society. The superego is dominated by the morality principle. The id would make us devils, the superego would have us behave as angels and the ego keeps us healthy by maintaining a balance between those two (Freud, 1984).

Using the psychoanalytic theories, psychological critics see the text as if it were a kind of dream. This means that the text hides, represses its real content behind manifest content. Dream work involves condensation, displacement. The interpreter must make his or her way through the literal level to the symbolic import, the meaning the writer cannot say overtly because it would be too painful. As one critic puts it, a psychological criticism notices patterns of language beneath the surface and understands the verbal play as if the text were a patient recalling more than she/he realizes.

Adopting such a critical approach, a critic may: see the text as an expression of the secret, repressed life of its author, explaining the textual features as symbolic of psychological struggles in the writer. Such a critic more often used Freudian theory as a theoretical template. Or they will look not to the author but to characters in the text, applying psychoanalytical theory to explain their hidden motives or psychological makeup. Such a critic might use theoretical templates such as Freudian, Adlerian, Lacanian psychoanalysis, among others.

### **3. Psychological and Historical Analysis of D. H. Lawrence and His Work**

The son of a Nottingham coal miner, Lawrence was a sickly child, devoted to his

refined but domineering mother, who insisted upon his education. The marriage of his parents was thought to be an unhappy one. The differences in Lawrence's parents' backgrounds often led to family conflicts, with his father preferring to spend his wages on drink, to help deaden the pain of working long grueling hours underground, while his mother was more concerned with the children's upbringing, welfare, and education. The conflict between his parents resulted in Lawrence hating his father, possibly blaming him for the poverty and violence that his lifestyle inflicted upon the family. Lawrence's loathing of his father, also probably extended to the mining community in which he grew up, and perhaps to the Eastwood community itself.

As a gifted, educated child, he would not have fitted in well with most of the children from other mining families, and he would probably have been cruelly teased, and bullied, because of his superior talents, which elevated him above the other children. However, Lawrence loved the beautiful countryside surrounding Eastwood very much, and this, combined with the stark contrast of the mining industry, was the inspiration for his early novels. In *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, the love toward nature can be found good expression in Connie's attachment to the woods and those plants and even to the chicks.

Lawrence graduated from the teacher-training course at University College, Nottingham, in 1905 and became a schoolmaster in a London suburb. In 1912, Lawrence met and fell in love with Frieda Weekley. Frieda, who was the wife of Ernest Weekley, a professor at Nottingham University, left her husband, and three children to be with Lawrence. And they traveled to Bavaria, Austria, Germany and Italy, before returning back to England. Lawrence married Frieda at the Kensington's Registrar's Office, in London, on the 13<sup>th</sup> July 1914, shortly after her divorce from Ernest Weekley. Their marriage was stormy and the War years were unhappy for them. During World War I the couple was forced to remain in England; Lawrence's outspoken opposition to the war and Frieda's German birth aroused suspicion that they were spies. In 1919 they left England, returning only for brief visits. Their nomadic existence was spent variously in Ceylon, Australia, the United States, and Mexico. Lawrence died at the age of 45 of tuberculosis, a disease with which he had struggled for years (Lian, 2012).

Here I am going to focus on how the book came out. What is the inspiration for Lawrence? We look close into his life, and then we can find it out. The marginalization of Lawrence's father in the household of his early life is said to have prevented Lawrence from developing to adulthood in the usual way. Where most males move from idealizing the image of the father to criticizing that ideal and then realizing their own independence, Lawrence was left without an idealizable male image. The failure to idealize his father in the pre-oedipal stage resulted in a later series of compensatory, holistic fantasies of ideal father-substitutes: male figures that possess strong leadership potential combined with the nurturing and caring qualities associated with the dominant maternal image. The fantasized ideal in Lawrence's fiction becomes a nurturing maternal bond between males,

and a relation with the female in which spiritual merger is avoided.

Lawrence did not enjoy a very smooth love with any girl until he met Frieda. Things also did not go well after his marriage. Especially when he was tormented by tuberculosis, and meanwhile he gradually, cannot satisfy his wife in sexual relation. Frieda then had an affair with somebody. Lawrence realized it but only had to accept the truth, desperately. It is in this very period that Lawrence created the great novel, had his wife as the original image and his first reader.

All his opera-like life left its trace in Lawrence's works. We find that almost all his works are set in the background of the mine areas and the villages surrounding Nottinghamshire of England, in a time that industrialization and mechanization are the dominate factor that affected society. Human beings fell into the victims of social changes—becoming dehumanizing day by day. Lawrence believes that it is the blind competition of those capitalists and their exploitation toward workers that speed up the evolution of the industrialized society and the alienation of humans.

Lawrence believed that industrialized Western culture was dehumanizing because it emphasized intellectual attributes to the exclusion of natural or physical instincts. He thought, however, that this culture was in decline and that humanity would soon evolve into a new awareness of itself as being a part of nature. One aspect of this “blood consciousness” would be an acceptance of the need for sexual fulfillment.

In this book, Lawrence conveyed his thoughts through Connie's thoughts, “Connie thought, how extremely like all the rest of the classes the lower classes sounded... There was only one class nowadays: moneyboys. The moneyboys and the moneygirls, the only difference was how much you'd got, and how much you wanted” (Chapter 9). It is the reality he saw in his times. Clifford represents a typically rich upper class of the times, who was lifeless, cruel, inhumane, only looking to his interests. Although he had to be kept in a wheelchair, he was always trying to keep, to possess everything in his hand.

“Now she (Connie) came every day to the hens, they were the only things in the world that warmed her heart. Clifford's protestations made her go cold from head to foot. Mrs. Bolton' voice made her go cold, and the sound of the businessmen who came. An occasional letter from Michaelis affected her with the same sense of chill. She felt she would surely die if it lasted much longer” (Chapter 10). It is the cold life of Connie! When she touched the chick for the first time, her tears fell. Because her own world was so cold, and lifeless, when the chick touched her hand, she felt the life springing.

In this book, Connie asked herself again and again, was it real? Was real? It is human looking into his own. Where am I? In the puzzling world, man struggles with his unborn needs and fulfillment. New unfoldings struggle up in torment in him, as buds struggle forth the midst of a plant. Any man of real individuality tries to know and to understand what is happening even in himself, as he goes along. This struggle for verbal consciousness should not be left out in art.

For Lawrence, giving birth to the nascent self engenders the creative process that issues in artwork or novel. But working from unconscious feeling and inchoate vision to fully formed expression is a painful labor. The drive to clarify and overcome resistance depends on the depth of feeling and the sense of its truth; the will to form then shapes vision from sensation and memory, developing a pattern of ideas from the mutual affinities or disaffinities of spontaneously arising images.

Lawrence always attunes his style closely to rhythms of life, which we can see in an erotic passage of this book, where similes (“she was like the sea”), metaphors (“she was ocean rolling its dark, dumb mass”), repetition (“she was deeper and deeper and deeper disclosed”), parallelism, and “linguistic incantation” create surging orgasmic rhythms, culminating in a short ecstatic statement of ritual transformation: “She was gone, she was not, and she was born: a woman”. His prose rhythms arc at once poetic and ontological, a language of body and spirit. Lawrence’s animistic imagery dramatizes the way that erotic feeling transforms perception. As Connie Chatterley “[runs] home in the twilight”, the landscape comes to life like a sensuous body: “the trees in the park seemed bulging and surging... and the heave of the slope to the house was alive”.

Lawrence’s use of religious imagery and his obvious desire to change readers’ lives have allowed critics to cast him as a prophet of sex. He certainly believed that his writing had an evangelical purpose: “I think, do you know, I have inside me a sort of answer to the want of today: to the real, deep want of the English people, not to just what they fancy they want” (Lawrence, 2005). Much of this “want” was sexual: “And I am so sure that only through a readjustment between men and women, and a making free and healthy of the sex, will [England] get out of her present atrophy”. Such statements strengthen the critical tendency to conflate Lawrence’s representation of non-empirical experience with religion.

#### 4. Conclusion

Everything in the world has its own origin. How did the work come out? Heidegger argues that we must examine the creative process in order to understand the work of art. In his work *The Origin of the Work of Art*, Heidegger says that [the] work’s createdness... can obviously be grasped only in the process of creation and that we must... go into the activity of the artist in order to arrive at the origin of the work of art. By closely looking into the “inside” and “outside” of the author and the work, we come to the notion that the work is the combination of the author’s psychology and all the external factors that ever influenced him, including the times he was in, the background where he was raised up, and all things he experienced in his life time.

As some critic’s theory suggests, the question of creativity can lead us to focus on the psychology of the author. Such a focus might suggest that a text helps to explain the life and concerns of an author and vice versa. Lawrence’s art thrives on such play as it enacts contradictory fantasies and competing voices and posi-

tions within the writer's self. Lawrence involves the reader in various tensions of psychic and relational life, tensions between inner and outer, self and other, narcissistic fantasy and the acceptance of limits. As we enter into the text's play of shifting psychic positions, we experience the inherent fluidity of psychic life and the potential for change.

Many critics evoke the notion that creativity is intertwined with repression and pain. We may look at the paintings of Van Gogh as a recording of his descent into madness. The processes of "condensation" and "displacement" are both described by Freud in *The Interpretation of Dreams*: thoughts and images in dreams may have more than one meaning, Freud says, and one thought or image may be transferred onto another one, possibly because the mind finds the second thought or image more acceptable than the first one. Freud labels the former process "condensation" and the latter one "displacement". Freud devised these terms for his work on the unconscious and the dream process, but the terms also enter into discussions of the artist and her work, since many critics agree with Freud's opinion that the unconscious is the main site of the creative process, as well as the dream process (Frederick, 1977).

For Lawrence, the creative process is never a substitute for life; it stems from an overflow of energy and curiosity that contribute to further self-development and awareness. His account of the creative process is manifestly based on his own experience as a writer; it involves the whole being, combining spontaneity with effort, emotion with idea. Thus, a conclusion could be drawn that Lawrence's works are not his life, but they do come from his life. Look to his life, and then you will learn his work better. Study his works, you will understand the author better.

## References

- Cao, Q. W. (2015). *An Interpretation of D. H. Lawrence's Views on Nature*. Hangzhou: Zhejiang Gongshang University.
- Fiona, B. (2001). *Lawrence and Psychoanalysis. The Cambridge Companion to D. H. Lawrence*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Frederick, J. H. (1977). *Freudianism and the Literary Mind*. Santa Barbara: Greenwood Press.
- Freud, S. (1984). *The Ego and The Id, On Meta-psychology: The Theory of Psychoanalysis*. London: Penguin Books Ltd.
- Lawrence, D. H. (2005). *Lady Chatterley's Lover*. Ware: Wordsworth Editions Ltd.
- Lian, C. (2012). *A Study on the Balanced Female Images in D. H. Lawrence's Novels*. Beijing: Beijing Jiaotong University.