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Examine Lawrence's Depiction of the Body in Two or More Texts on the Module.

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Responding to the debilitating effects of war, and the damaging influence of England's industrial world in his novel *Lady Chatterley's Lover* and short fiction 'Odour of Chrysanthemums', D. H. Lawrence's critique of the early twentieth century is fixed in the human failure to recognise the body. His characters are repeatedly conceived as being distanced not only from others but from themselves as they struggle to negotiate a balanced sense of self. Only through the mind's conscious realisation of the body are they able to experience some satisfaction and peace. Whilst Lawrence's brutal depiction of the mining world is used to focalise the alienation between Elizabeth and her husband in 'Chrysanthemums', the war and Clifford's growing obsession with the mechanical in *LCL* is presented as isolating and diminishing Connie. Lawrence's belief that 'we have forgotten ourselves' is tragically realised in these two texts; the process of reconciling body and mind shown to be both painful and positive.[1]

The separation of body and mind is imagined through the connection between landscape and mechanisation in both 'Chrysanthemums' and *LCL.* Lawrence uses mining language to reproduce the landscape in the initial descriptions opening 'Chrysanthemums'. The anonymous human figure briefly remarked to stand 'insignificantly trapped between the jolting black waggons and the hedge' is a peripheral element of a scene which gives primacy to the locomotive tearing its way across the land.[2] Although human life appears to be secondary in this sequence, Anna Grmelova argues that the opening demonstrates a 'complex scene of mutual interconnection between mine, natural life, season and man'.[3] This is because the landscape is speaking for the human, or more specifically, Lawrence's imagery transfigures the land into a damaged human body. The pit-bank has 'flames like red sores licking its ashy sides', producing the notion of a perforated body as the land is rent apart by the mine.[4] The images are powerfully sensory; the sides of the pit-bank are 'lick[ed]', and the 'afternoon's stagnant light' blends smell and sight, creating a grotesque depiction of the mutilated landscape.[5] This idea of threat to the human is further intimated through the juxtaposition of the machines – 'engine[s]' and 'trucks' – and the miners.[6] A pervading sense of deathliness is felt as the 'Miners, single, trailing, and in groups, passed like shadows diverging home'.[7] Lawrence isolates the miners, the form of the sentence reflecting its meaning as several pauses are inserted to create a feeling of division, and he ominously foreshadows the later tragedy as he identifies the men as 'shadows': formless and implicitly connected with death. The landscape not only reflects mechanical oppression of the body, however; life is given to the machines as though they are bodies. The machines mimic bodily processes as 'The little engine *strained* and *groaned*… The winding-engine *pulsed* hurriedly' (italics are mine).[8] The physicality of these details suggests that the machines are imbued with life, even possessing a beating heart. Grmelova's discussion of the 'animation of the mine' is taken further when Elizabeth feels her husband's body as 'He was still warm, for the mine was hot where he had died'.[9] Walter's body becomes infused with the heat of the pit, the mark of industry being all that Elizabeth can feel when she touches him.

This connection between the mechanical and the body has devastating effects in *LCL*. In much the same way that the landscape becomes an extended metaphor for the body in 'Chrysanthemums', the grounds of Wragby Hall bear the marks of war and industrialisation. However, these descriptions are more visceral in their relation to Clifford and his experience of war. The 'big sawn stumps' of the trees, revealing 'their grasping roots, lifeless' have parallels with descriptions of amputation and the soldier's entrails.[10] As John B. Humma has recognised, in *LCL* 'the outer ring is, of course, the modern

[1] D. H. Lawrence, in *The Letters of D. H. Lawrence*, ed. by Aldous Huxley (London: William Heinemann Ltd., 1932), p.95.
[2] D. H. Lawrence, 'Odour of Chrysanthemums', in *The Prussian Officer and Other Stories*, ed. by John Worthen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), p. 181.
[3] Anna Grmelova, *The Worlds of D. H. Lawrence's Short Fiction* (Prague: The Karolinum Press, 2001), p. 64.
[4] Lawrence, 'Chrysanthemums', p. 181.
[5] Ibid., p. 181.
[6] Ibid., p. 183.
[7] Ibid.
[8] Ibid.
[9] Grmelova, *Worlds*, p. 64; Lawrence, 'Chrysanthemums', p. 196.
[10] D. H. Lawrence, *Lady Chatterley's Lover* (Middlesex: Penguin Books Ltd., 1960), p. 43.

mechanistic society epitomised by Clifford Chatterley's collieries; the pastoral circle is Wragby Wood'.[11] The collieries, alongside Clifford's memories of war, permeate the protective barriers of Wragby as the cutting of trees for the war effort causes 'a breach in the pure seclusion of the wood'.[12] This breach, however, is exposed as being more extensive than the wounding of Wragby. Clifford has internalised the mechanical and rejected the body, with Katie Gramich arguing 'For him the natural is unnatural and vice versa'.[13] Walking with Connie in the wood, 'Clifford *puffed* slowly through into the broad riding', no reference even being made to his motorised chair as the distinction between man and machine is obliterated (italics are mine).[14] Later in the novel, however, the division between the two is worryingly redefined and accentuated to illustrate the breakdown in feeling between Connie and Clifford. Jeff Wallace posits a ''deathly' opposition of machinery and the human in Lawrence' and nowhere is this clearer than in the female personification of Clifford's motor-chair.[15] The machine assumes human qualities, significantly female and attributable to Connie. As Clifford pitilessly forces his chair into gear, 'It struggled and faltered like a sick thing' and 'She gave a sick lurch'.[16] The chair's collapse symbolises Connie's own physical disintegration at the hands of Clifford. When Mellors murmurs "You'll rip her inside out", this is given weight as he brutally draws attention to Clifford's impotence and Connie's lack of fulfilment.[17] The noises the chair produces strikingly jar the reader: 'she coughed and snarled' and 'He got queer noises out of her'.[18] The desperate and strangled sounds emanating from the machine contrast with Connie's expressions of sexual ecstasy in the previous chapter, the close alignment of these two moments demonstrating how Connie's body is both worshipped and symbolically abused.

Lawrence's belief that 'class consciousness [is] only a sign that the old togetherness, the old blood-warmth has collapsed' is suggested in Connie and Mellors' first meeting.[19] Relations between men and women are consciously performative as the body behaves in unnatural ways, in keeping with the demands society makes on maintaining class divisions. They both produce gestures as though their movements have been scripted, with Connie 'ben[ding] her head to him shyly' and Mellors – even being afforded a prop - 'chang[ing] his hat to the left hand and ma[king] her a slight bow, like a gentleman'.[20] Through simile, Mellors becomes 'like a gentleman', a character type conflicting with his natural state, thus indicating the fabrication of his outward identity in this moment. The specificity with which Lawrence narrates their movements provides evidence for Garry Watson's argument that 'our modern civilization is founded on… the suppression of the "instinctive, intuitive body"'.[21] Only through the eyes is the true interest and intrigue of the character revealed, as Mellors 'stared straight into Connie's eyes, with a perfect, fearless, impersonal look' and, later, 'His eyes narrowed a little, with irony, perhaps with impudence'.[22] The effect is penetrative and disrupts the unnatural, mechanical precision of their bodily interaction.

The female characters' internal experiences illustrate the separation of body and mind, resulting in a feeling of detachment from the body. The disturbing association between life and death in 'Chrysanthemums' foregrounds this as Elizabeth's tomb-like descriptions of her womb demonstrate an aversion towards her own body. Mara Kalnins affirms that the pregnancy is 'an integral part of [Elizabeth's] sense of dislocation' as the division between her and Walter, as joint creators of 'the child within her [which] was a weight apart from her', is imagined through Elizabeth's womb.[23] The child, as a product of their breakdown, is repeatedly related to ice and coldness, Elizabeth instinctively feeling 'her womb was ice of fear' and 'the child was like ice in her womb'.[24] Earlier in 'Chrysanthemums', Elizabeth's conflict is explored through symbolism. Janice Hubbard Harris recognises how flowers 'are a highly loaded image cluster' and, with their 'funereal smell', stuck in the waist of Elizabeth's apron,

[11] John B. Humma, *Metaphor and Meaning in D. H. Lawrence's Later Novels* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1990), p. 85.
[12] Lawrence, *LCL*, p. 44.
[13] Katie Gramich, 'Stripping Off the "Civilized Body": Lawrence's *nostalgie de la boue* in *Lady Chatterley's Lover'*, in *Writing the Body in D. H. Lawrence: Essays on Language, Representation and Sexuality*, ed. by Paul Poplawski, (Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 2001), p. 157.
[14] Lawrence, *LCL*, p. 43.
[15] Jeff Wallace, *D. H. Lawrence, Science and the Posthuman* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), p. 204.
[16] Lawrence, *LCL*, pp. 194, 196.
[17] Ibid., p. 196.
[18] Ibid., pp. 196, 197.
[19] D. H. Lawrence, 'A Propos of *Lady Chatterley's Lover',* in *Lady Chatterley's Lover,* ed. by Michael Squires (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 332.
[20] Lawrence, *LCL*, p. 48.
[21] Garry Watson, 'D. H. Lawrence and the Abject Body: A Postmodern History', in *Writing the Body in D. H. Lawrence: Essays on Language, Representation and Sexuality*, ed. by Paul Poplawski (Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 2001), p. 6.
[22] Lawrence, *LCL*, p. 48.
[23] Mara Kalnins, 'D. H. Lawrence's 'Odour of Chrysanthemums': The Three Endings', *Studies in Short Fiction,* 13 (1976) 471-79 (p. 477); Lawrence, 'Chrysanthemums', p. 197.
[24] Lawrence, 'Chrysanthemums', pp. 197, 198.

they capture 'her ambivalence toward her coming child'.[25] The flower becomes a symbol of the dying natural world and in attaching it to her person, a link is drawn between the chrysanthemums' 'funereal smell' and the weight in her womb. The oxymoronic treatment of light intensifies this as 'A *pale shadow* was seen floating weirdly on the floor', ominously foreshadowing the shadowy net of death which will envelop them (italics are mine).[26] The parlour where Bates is laid to rest becomes significant as it is an emblem for the female body. Weldon Thornton finds it interesting that Lawrence 'presents Elizabeth as pregnant, in contrast to Walter whom she regards as "impregnable"', yet, in aligning her womb with the parlour and, therefore, Walter with the child of ice, Lawrence breaks down this contrast and demonstrates that she is alienated both from her own body and from her husband's.[27] The air in the room is 'cold and damp' and 'she could not make a fire', indicating this is a space already primed for the containment of death.[28] Moreover, 'there was a cold deathly smell of chrysanthemums in the room' and 'Elizabeth stood looking at [them]', as if in conscious recognition that they would be party to this scene of death.[29]

Connie's inward physical traumatisation is projected on to her outward appearance as a form of body dysmorphia, sustaining the argument made by Watson that 'Lawrence invites us to consider the possibility that the apparently and outwardly healthy body might also be traumatized'.[30] Connie's body is not 'visibly wounded or mutilated'; it is her troubled perspective which creates this damaged image.[31] Through free indirect discourse, access is given to the way her thoughts cleave themselves to her body. Connie's form is conceived through obscuring language, demonstrating the barrier between her mind and her conscious appreciation of the body. The tangible, physical reality of the body is made indistinct as she believes it to have 'gone opaque', suggesting that it is inaccessible and unknowable like an abyss.[32] Images of nature are distorted as her breasts hang 'unripe, a little bitter, without meaning' and she draws attention to the angularity of her body, producing descriptions which jar with images of ripening fruit and soft curves; instead, 'her body was flattening and going a little harsh'.[33] It is Clifford's paradoxical 'defraud[ing]' of her body, his imposition of the civilised self, which causes Connie to lose touch with the physical.[34]

In *LCL* and 'Chrysanthemums', the distance between body and mind is reduced as the characters' undergo a process of self-realisation. In 'Chrysanthemums', however, this is depicted as having a more tragic outcome, with Elizabeth discovering that in life, as well as in death, Walter is estranged from her. Barbara A. Schapiro proposes that 'self-realization is possible only in relation to a fully recognized other', with the final scene expressing 'a devastating failure of mutual recognition'.[35] Instead of reading the last scene as Elizabeth's 'failure', it can be seen as a vital recognition of the gulf between herself and Walter. Emphasis must be given to her conscious appreciation of their division in darkness as she realises 'they had met in the dark and had fought in the dark, not knowing whom they met nor whom they fought. And now she saw, and turned silent in seeing'.[36] Diverging from the prevailing critical opinion that the final scene is 'virtually epiphanic', Thornton argues that 'death has allowed Elizabeth to indulge in a simplification that life would never have permitted'.[37] His belief that this perspective is simplifying, however, is undermined by the narrative shift from dialogue and external action, to interior monologue as Elizabeth's mind is personified and made active. She realises that Walter her husband, and Walter as a man, are two separate beings, her mind declaring "I have been fighting a husband who did not exist. *He* existed all the time".[38] Harris explains that 'a new mode – foreign in spirit interrupts [the story's] rhythms' as Elizabeth is drawn in by her internal state, revealing how 'her *soul* died in her for fear' and 'her *heart* [was] bursting with grief' (italics are mine).[39] In comparison with her attempts to convey external shows of emotion, Elizabeth here is truly confronting her grief and beginning to understand her own body through 'a fully recognized other': Walter. Moreover, this 'new mode' is brought into effect by what Kalnins describes as 'unnatural formulations' of writing, the syntax in 'her soul died in her for fear' becoming problematic as Lawrence attempts to capture

[25] Janice Hubbard Harris, *The Short Fiction of D. H. Lawrence* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1984), p. 28.
[26] Lawrence, 'Chrysanthemums', p. 186.
[27] Weldon Thornton, *D. H. Lawrence: A Study of the Short Fiction* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1993), p. 33.
[28] Lawrence, 'Chrysanthemums', p. 193.
[29] Ibid., p. 194.
[30] Watson, 'Abject Body', p. 7.
[31] Ibid., p. 7.
[32] Lawrence, *LCL*, p. 72.
[33] Ibid., p. 72.
[34] Ibid., p. 73.
[35] Barbara A. Schapiro, *D. H. Lawrence and the Paradoxes of Psychic Life* (New York: SUNY Press, 1999), pp.55, 57.
[36] Lawrence, 'Chrysanthemums', p. 198.
[37] Thornton, *A Study,* pp. 29, 34.
[38] Lawrence, 'Chrysanthemums', p.198.
[39] Harris, *Short Fiction*, p. 36; Lawrence, 'Chrysanthemums', p. 198.

Elizabeth's changing state.[40] Although she dwells upon Walter's body and accepts 'This dead man had nothing to do with them', it is the internal realisation of their existence as separate beings which finally brings Elizabeth some resolution.[41]

The coming together of body and mind in *LCL* is depicted as a painful, cumulative process through the sexual encounters of Connie and Mellors. He 'is to be her executioner as well as her saviour', according to Humma; thus, while the achievement of sexual fulfilment is something to aspire to, it does not have a simple trajectory.[42] This is evident when Connie voyeuristically spies upon Mellor's naked body as her social self observes, 'a man washing himself! Commonplace enough', but then gives way to a highly visionary, yet tactile, experience.[43] The whole passage is a revision of Connie's view of the male form as she comes to see Mellors' external trappings, his 'clumsy breeches', as obscuring his 'pure, delicate white loins'.[44] She grapples with an inability to articulate the moment, falling upon negation to describe his body which is 'Not the stuff of beauty, not even the body of beauty'.[45] David Kellogg, echoing the views of Foucault and, later, Lydia Blanchard, appreciates that 'sex stands both beyond language and in desperate need of articulation' in *LCL,* and in this moment, Lawrence expresses this conflict between representation and the limits of language.[46] Three times Connie names Mellors a 'creature', distancing him from the human and initiating what Gramich terms the restoration of 'a precivilized, indeed a primeval, world'.[47] Alongside this, Lawrence evokes religious imagery to marry the spiritual and the physical, 'the warm white flame of a single life' being both tangible and insubstantial in the same way that the body is, for Connie, an elusive concept.[48] This imagery is complicated by the 'white flame' as it inverts common associations of fire with the colour red, indicating that Connie is abstracted from her pre-existing ideas of the body.

Lydia Blanchard voices the view of several critics in her belief that Lawrence should have 'restricted himself to the conventions of his earlier works in which… he drew on metaphor, imagery, even apparently asexual dialogue and plot to suggest both the experience of and the response to sex'.[49] Arguably, however, Lawrence draws upon nature symbolism to indicate both sexual and reproductive tension. Through the body of a chick, nurtured by Mellors, Connie responds to her long suppressed maternal drive. The chick, 'the little drab thing', standing 'on its impossible little stalks of legs' is identified with Connie, the physical reality of this fragile life highlighting her own need for bodily interaction.[50] Connie's contact with the chickens is not sentimentalised as 'the mother-hen pecked at her hand fiercely', the movement striking Connie in the same way that she 'received the shock of vision in her womb' when gazing upon Mellors' naked body.[51] Their private moment is almost entirely conceived through touch as the conversation is fragmented and inconsistent, the movement of their bodies and mutual interaction with the chick structuring their exchanges. Kellogg identifies that Connie's crying is a 'devocalized expression of *pain*', demonstrating the insignificance of words as the body and its emotional displays are prioritised.[52]

Mellors' carnal need to have Connie in the woods at first makes the act appear brutal. She is forced to confront the primitive side to sex as 'she had to lie down… under the boughs of the tree, like an animal, while he waited… watching her with haunted eyes'.[53] He is positioned as predator, disconnected from Connie with his absent 'haunted eyes', which is reflected during the initial stage of their intercourse. They are separate and exposed as he 'bared the front part of his body' and 'his naked flesh… came into her'.[54] However, as their bodies come together, Gramich asserts that we 'notice the breakdown in individuation between their respective bodies… [individuation being identified] as one of the main characteristics of the "civilised body"'.[55] Connie must open herself to this primal experience in order to dismiss the restraining effects of the civilised body. A similar moment of animal passion overtakes her when she exalts in her naked body by stripping off her clothes and dancing in the rain.

[40] Kalnins, 'Three Endings', p. 477; Lawrence, 'Chrysanthemums', p. 198.
[41] Lawrence, 'Chrysanthemums', p. 198.
[42] Humma, *Metaphor and Meaning,* p. 93.
[43] Lawrence, *LCL*, p. 68.
[44] Ibid., p. 68.
[45] Ibid., p. 69.
[46] David Kellogg, 'Reading Foucault Reading Lawrence: Body, Voice, and Sexuality in *Lady Chatterley's Lover*', *D. H. Lawrence Review*, 28:3 (1999), 31-54 (p. 39).
[47] Lawrence, *LCL,* pp. 68, 69; Gramich, '"Civilized Body"', p. 149.
[48] Lawrence, *LCL,* p. 69.
[49] Lydia Blanchard, 'Lawrence, Foucault, and the Language of Sexuality', in *D. H. Lawrence's 'Lady': A New Look at Lady Chatterley's Lover,* ed. by Michael Squires and Dennis Jackson (Georgia: The University of Georgia Press, 1985), p. 21.
[50] Lawrence, *LCL*, p. 119.
[51] Ibid., pp.119, 69.
[52] Kellogg, 'Reading Foucault', p. 48.
[53] Lawrence, *LCL*, p. 138.
[54] Ibid., p. 138.
[55] Gramich, '"Civilized Body"', p. 154.

The descriptions significantly contrast with Connie's private observation of her body earlier in the novel. No longer 'small, and dropping pear-shaped', 'Her pointed keen animal breasts tipped and stirred' as her body regains vitality, all social pretensions being washed away by the cleansing rainfall.[56] This passage repeatedly points towards the idea of energy and organic natural processes as Lawrence uses temperature and touch to articulate the harmony of body and mind. Until their bodies come together, Connie is only 'a strange pallid figure' in the rain; once Mellors gathers 'the heap of soft, chilled female flesh', touch is prioritised above all other senses.[57] They connect with, and leave their mark upon, the environment as 'The rain steamed on them till they smoked'.[58] Interestingly, the sex act itself is afforded very little description, being summarised in a sentence, as attention is devoted to showing how their bodies consciously recognise and understand one another. Lawrence's belief that 'the full conscious realisation of sex is even more important than the act itself' is played out in this scene of mutual bodily exchange; a scene which goes beyond sex as the body is worshipped and saved.[59]

Both 'Chrysanthemums' and *LCL* reveal 'our imperative need… of the mind and soul, body, spirit and sex: all'.[60] Their depiction of incomplete individuals demonstrates the dangers of living through the mind at the expense of the body as several of the characters come to resemble machines more than living, breathing human beings. Through his evolving characters, Connie, Mellors and Elizabeth, however, Lawrence demonstrates that this extinction of the body is reversible. Whilst Elizabeth's story is at once more tragic due to her realisation under the influence of death in 'Chrysanthemums', Lawrence's most opinionated novel, *LCL,* offers his contemporary readership an explicit warning against society's degenerative effect upon the body. Connie and Mellors, through a painful process of discovery, reconnect with their bodies by throwing off their civilised selves, at times attaining and revelling in what Lawrence believes to be 'our imperative need'.

[56] Lawrence, *LCL*, pp. 72, 230.
[57] Ibid., pp. 230, 231.
[58] Ibid., p. 231.
[59] Lawrence, 'Propos', p. 308.
[60] Ibid., p. 329.

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