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"Why don't you speak ordinary English?" she said coldly: Linguistic Rebellion in "The Prussian Officer" and Lady Chatterley's Lover

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“WHY DON’T YOU SPEAK ORDINARY ENGLISH,” SHE SAID COLDLY:
LINGUISTIC REBELLION IN “THE PRUSSIAN OFFICER” AND *LADY
CHATTERLEY’S LOVER*

By

Nicole R. Koroch

THESIS

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“WHY DON’T YOU SPEAK ORDINARY ENGLISH,” SHE SAID COLDLY:
LINGUISTIC REBELLION IN “THE PRUSSIAN OFFICER” AND *LADY
CHATTERLEY’S LOVER*

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ABSTRACT

“WHY DON’T YOU SPEAK ORDINARY ENGLISH,” SHE SAID COLDLY: LINGUISTIC REBELLION IN “THE PRUSSIAN OFFICER” AND *LADY CHATTERLEY’S LOVER*

By

Nicole R. Koroch

Criticism of D. H. Lawrence’s novel, *Lady Chatterley’s Lover*, tends to focus on issues of sexual awakening, the natural world, and figurations of gender and power. However, little examination has been done on the instances of language as a rejection of authority through the character of Mellors, a returning soldier and a gamekeeper. In the novel, Mellors speaks both a “broad” vernacular as well as “proper” English and this linguistic variance reveals two significant aspects of Mellors’ character. Here, I will implement Jacques Derrida’s theory of differance to show that just as the “a” in differance, as a graphic symbol, signifies deferment, movement, difference, division and connection, so does Mellors, as a graphic representation, function in the same way—as a metaphysical figure of resistance through his various subversions of meaning-making—through his speech, dress, and position in society. Second, I will demonstrate through Judith Butler’s notions of linguistic vulnerability that Mellors’ usage of the vernacular operates as a disruption of the linguistic ritual and acts as a form of abuse and rebellion. The variations of Mellors’ language render the listener (the aristocracy) vulnerable as his speech defies their expectations. In this way, Mellors displaces the classist power dynamic as he is the one that controls and subverts the moment of circumscription.

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This thesis is dedicated to my mother, Cindi Koroch.

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Introduction

Much of the criticism of D. H. Lawrence's most controversial novel, *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, tends to focus on issues of sexual awakening, the natural world, and figurations of gender and power. Certainly, these questions are appropriate: In the novel, baroness Lady Connie Chatterley explores her latent sexuality with her impotent husband's gamekeeper; they fall in love only after they discover themselves through the body, and a hopeful ending is supplied through Connie's pregnancy and relative freedom from the confines of her marriage. Clearly, the narrative is heavily invested in notions of desire and power. However, little examination has been done on Lawrence's marked attention to the instances of language as a rejection of authority through a returning soldier, Mellors, the gamekeeper. In this case, both descriptors of Mellors are important. On the one hand, his employment as gamekeeper conveys his position of subordination of class as the hireling of an aristocratic house. On the other, his past as a soldier suggests something else entirely as the term "soldier" conjures conflicting images of obedience and loyalty, destruction and death.

Lawrence complicates Mellors' character through his language as he allows him to speak both broad Derbyshire as well as "proper" English. Throughout, I will argue that this linguistic variance reveals two significant aspects of Mellors' character: First, I will use Jacques Derrida's theory of differance to show that just as the "a" in differance, as a graphic symbol, signifies deferment, movement, difference, division and connection, so does Mellors, as a graphic representation (always written and never "heard"), an "ontological simulacra," function in the same way—as a metaphysical figure of resistance through his various subversions of meaning-making—through his speech,

dress, and position in society. Second, I will demonstrate through Judith Butler's notions of linguistic vulnerability that Mellors' usage of the vernacular operates as a disruption of the linguistic ritual and acts as a form of abuse and rebellion. The variations of Mellors' language render the listener (in this case, the aristocracy) vulnerable as his speech defies their expectations. Butler argues that the ability to be injured by speech comes from a lack of control as "the capacity to circumscribe the situation of the speech act is jeopardized at the moment of the injurious address" (*Excitable Speech* 4). In this way, Mellors displaces the classist power dynamic as he is the one that controls and subverts the moment of circumscription.

The choice to apply a Derridean approach in my analysis of *Lady Chatterley's Lover* may seem an unwieldy one, for as Amit Chaudhuri points out, a deconstruction of a text can frequently "demonstrate the impossibility of interpretation" (*Lawrence and Difference* 4). However, my objective, through revealing the similarities between the character of Mellors and the "a" of difference, is to highlight Mellors' position of resistance and ultimate power as a being and individual, through his language, within the novel. While the recognition of his nonconformity of class or authority is not particularly adroit or new on my part, criticism of this particular character usually aligns him with nature or his sensuality—and when critics do look at his usage of language, they concentrate on his sexual obscenities or earthy euphemisms. This kind of sexualized focus only serves to "other" this character and feminize him as his use-value is solely dependent upon his body, which is to miss the point of his function within the narrative. Analyzing Mellors through the lens of "*Différance*" removes his gender and class (and all other tokens of privilege or prejudice) so that the focus is on his interactions within the

“network of oppositions.” In this way, he is ultimately revealed as an unnamable, unknowable character, and one that in the end, just as the “a” in difference does, suggests a sort of hope in his metaphysical existence.

In *Excitable Speech. A Politics of the Performative* and *Gender is Burning: Questions of Appropriation and Subversion*, Judith Butler uses notions of performativity and interpellation to analyze how language acts upon the listener, as well as how instances of rearticulation and appropriation seek to displace dominant social norms. Moreover, as in the case of “The Prussian Officer,” I will explore how silence acts as a complicated performative utterance, as a silence can function as both a refusal as well as a concession. While Butler’s analyses typically focus on gender and queer subjectivity, the application of her work is appropriate here as Mellors belongs to a powerless body and attempts to gain a semblance of authority through his alternating usages of vernacular and “proper” English as a form of linguistic subversion. In doing so, Mellors unwittingly “cites” the system that inscribes him, which is as Butler observes a reiteration of “the very desire” of the subject and subjected. In other words, Mellors’ rejection of the aristocracy through his language indicates a certain compliance with the very system that dominates him. However, Butler does suggest a form of reconciliation here, which will be helpful to my purposes: She sees a certain “distance” that is freed when these instances of appropriation are viewed through a mediated space (in her case, the cinematic gaze in *Paris is Burning*) which is “*between* that hegemonic call and its critical appropriation.” In *Lady Chatterley’s Lover*, the “hegemonic call,” or the aristocracy’s constructions of being, are interceded through Lawrence, as the reader’s guide and conscience.

Although the focus of my topic is the function of language in *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, I believe it is important to stress Lawrence's influences as these were the foundations of his mediating presence and gaze. All of Lawrence's works look at class and attempt to define power. After WWI began, Lawrence started to include the figure of the soldier to highlight his conceptions of class and authority. The image of a soldier, any soldier, is a complicated one; it immediately conjures conflicting notions of killing and brotherhood. Soldiers bring destruction, but they also have the ability to deliver peace. They follow orders and perform duties that most civilians are not allowed to do (and would not want to if they could). More importantly, they function as a cooperative. In *Class, Politics, and the Individual*, Peter Scheckner looks at the trajectory of Lawrence's interest in issues of class and in doing so, reveals how the soldier comes to represent both what he despised about the war, as well as his exploration of the meaning of individuality. Even as Scheckner mainly concerns himself with the historical contexts of Lawrence's vacillating views—his working-class upbringing, the war, the socialist movement, his own social climbing—he looks at how, later in his career, Lawrence realized that soldiering and individuality (individuality, being the mark of the hero, of course) could not exist in tandem. While Scheckner believes that it is in the "leadership novels" (*Aaron's Rod*, *The Plumed Serpent*, *Kangaroo*) that Lawrence truly reconciles his ideas of soldiers and individuality, I would argue that it is through the character of Mellors that Lawrence is finally able to realize his vision of a figure that is both connected to his fellow man *and* an individual.

The only way that Lawrence could create a character that was both an individual *and* a soldier was to make that character into an "other" as with the Mexican general,

Don Cipriano, in the *Plumed Serpent*. In looking at the personal “trace” of Lawrence’s works, his “intertextuality,” so to speak, I will be able to provide a better understanding of Lawrence’s preoccupation of class and the rejection of classist power structures. To do so, I will look to Amit Chaudhuri and his work on Lawrence’s intertextuality. As previously noted, Chaudhuri ultimately rejects Derrida’s notions of differance in *D. H. Lawrence and ‘Difference’* for his own analysis of Lawrence’s poetry, however, he still uses some of Derrida’s deconstructionist theories to consider the intertextual nature of Lawrence’s work. Within Lawrence’s poems and narratives, different themes and traces are apparent and can be better understood through the plays of the signifier/signified relationship. Chaudhuri recognizes that the “signified,” (the various themes and the actual representations) of a work is “powerful” yet “undefinable” and exists outside of the text. What Chaudhuri sees in Lawrence’s poems is a space of performance between “otherness” and the gaps between the surrounding objects and their “metaphorical recreation.” These words and metaphors travel through the traces of his other works, through instances of language and dialogue, as modes of rejection. This concept of “intertextuality” will be particularly useful when discussing the relationship between Lawrence’s short story “The Prussian Officer,” the first he would write about the interplay of soldiers and class and *Lady Chatterley’s Lover*, his last.

While I believe that too much sensationalized attention has been given to Lawrence’s penchant for the “obscene,” I understand how it is almost impossible not to when taking into consideration the issues of censorship many of his works faced. Be that as it may, Lawrence did not employ instances of obscenity lightly. In the *Art of Perversity: D. H. Lawrence’s Shorter Fiction*, Kingsley Widmer argues that Lawrence

confronts his fears of the modern age through his use of “perversity”—through his depictions of sex, his willingness to use “unsayable” words, and his fascination with the dark side of human desire. In this case, Widmer views the acknowledgement of his perversity as a form of praise as it is through the obscene that Lawrence seeks to “destroy ordinary values” and forces the reader to confront ultimate meanings—and lack of meanings—through his language. Even as Widmer makes this leap, however, he fails to observe that this so-called perversity functions like Butler’s “mediated space” as the actions and words are “othered” as mere obscenity, but can be viewed through the gaps of the dominant systems of being. As these “perversities” are increasingly viewed, the meaning of what is perverse and what is not becomes subverted and what was once perceived as abnormal is normalized.

Finally, Lawrence himself offers a unique insight and perspective into his writings and creative processes. While criticism has moved away from weighty considerations of authorial intent (and rightly so) Lawrence’s essays and letters are frequently contradictory and veer into strange tangents and histrionics—which always seem to miss the actual significance of his work. For instance, in his defense of *Lady Chatterley’s Lover* he writes that the “real point of this book” is that he wants “men and women to be able to *think* sex, fully, completely, honestly, and cleanly” (*Lady Chatterley’s Lover* 308) and yet in a letter to his friend Lady Ottoline Morrell he tells her that “*Lady C*” is not about sex, but about an “*adjustment in consciousness*” and this adjustment relies on the ability to say words that only the lower classes are comfortable saying, such as “shit! or piss! without either a shudder or a sensation” (*Selected Literary Criticism* 26). Here, as in most of Lawrence’s evaluations of his own novel, he focuses on the sexual nature of

the book, which comprises very little of the actual narrative. Instead, he only briefly touches on notions of class and language which is not only a major component in both character development and the story's trajectory, but a prominent topic in his oeuvre. It is worth noting that Lawrence fails to correctly "interpellate" his own writing, and this suggests that both the intertextual landscape of his work and his position as a space of classist reconciliation are defined by the conscriptive institutions he wished to refuse which calls into question the subjectivity of his mediating gaze.

Chapter One: The Fascination of Soldiers and Class

D. H. Lawrence is a flawed and complicated figure of study—he was a racist, misogynist, and his abusive relationship with his wife, Frieda, was very much public and legendary among his circle of friends (*Lady Chatterley's Lover* xiii). His distasteful faults notwithstanding, it is unfortunate that D. H. Lawrence has gone a bit out of fashion. Despite his bombast and grandiose writing style, he strove to defy the power structures of his society in unconventional ways. He frequently constructed characters that were oppressed through their gender and class but were endowed with a certain amount of agency in which to navigate his or her world. His beliefs were antithetical to that of his generation: he believed in nature, he believed in the body, and he believed that the mind needed to be liberated and sexually civilized. Walter Allen tells us that Lawrence “was against his age, he loathed it, and if he had lived beyond his forty-fourth year no doubt his loathing would have increased” (*The English Novel* 431). Certainly, in much of his work, that loathing and anxiety for the modern age is evident through his characters that struggle against the various power structures in which they are circumscribed. However, even as Lawrence’s characters are figures of rebellion, their success is never sure and typically their heroic mark is their persistent individuality and social isolation. Even in his earliest pieces of writing there is an unconscious awareness of language, a fascination with how language is socially constructed and consumed, and many times Lawrence’s characters use language as a means to rebel against society.

As the son of a coal miner and educated largely through scholarships and by his mother, naturally, Lawrence was obsessed with ideas of authority and class. However,

even as he was low-born, through his writing and genius, he was able to climb the ranks of society, and as a result, his views on class cross a great, and sometimes ridiculous, spectrum of opinions. Inevitably, as Allen argues, Lawrence's class consciousness was convoluted as he was dismissive of the middle class, the bourgeoisie, and instead tended to align with the very rich or very poor:

It is the rancor of his class consciousness—in his novels working men and aristocrats may be praised, but never the bourgeoisie—which is responsible for so much of the unpleasant side of his genius, the hectoring, jeering, bullying note he drops into when imagination flags. (*The English Novel* 432)

This “hectoring” side of Lawrence commonly appeared in his personal essays and was, in general, judgmental and cavalier in tone, as with this comment about the bourgeoisie's conflicting appetite for prudery and pornography: “If the purity-with-a-dirty-little-secret lie is kept up much longer, the mass of society will really be an idiot, and a dangerous idiot at that” (*Selected Literary Criticism* 51). Lawrence had little respect for the bourgeoisie, or “the mob,” and this antipathy sprung, not only from his belief in the power of the individual, but also in his rejection of religion and other societal constructions that he found impossible to maneuver—and he did not care who he alienated with his candor: “You can't tamper with the great public, British or American,” Lawrence wrote in his essay, “Pornography and Obscenity,” “*Vox populi, vox Dei*, don't you know. If you don't, we'll let you know it,” (*Selected Literary Criticism* 33). For Lawrence, the voice of the “*populi*,” or people, is as powerful as the voice of God, and one is forced to conform to their ideals—whether they want to or not. In an attempt to write above “*vox populi*” he was careful that all of his protagonists and the heroes of his novels were never of “the mob,” and as with Mellors, even their very language speaks outside convention.

The advent of WWI brought about a change in Lawrence's writing. He hated the war and blamed those in power (politicians and the aristocracy) for its inception and drawn-out conclusion, and indeed, he believed that the war was the beginning of the end for the human race. However, throughout the war, Lawrence supported the soldiers and recognized them as individuals, separate from the classes they may belong. In a letter to publisher and editor, Harriet Monroe, he writes: "The war is dreadful. It is the business of the artist to follow it home to the heart of the individual fighters—not to talk in armies and nations and numbers—but to track it home" (*Selected Literary Criticism* 42). In this case, it is "home," in a domestic and national sense, that is the great unifier, for the captain and the private—and Lawrence makes clear that this is the case for both the "Englishmen's heart" as well as the German's. There is a classless-ness to the image of the soldier that Lawrence seemed to perceive.

Typically, when Lawrence utilized the soldier-figure he never wrote about them in context of the war or combat, never about the realities of having to kill the enemy, and never about the fear of being killed, instead, he chose to write about the soldier outside of battle, soldiers that do not fight. Nevertheless, in the novel, *Kangaroo*, written in 1922, in the chapter, "The Nightmare," he reveals the complicated paradox of the killer/redeemer image of the soldier through the relived experiences of the characters. Scheckner maintains that this particular chapter "acknowledges that a real world of class, property and revolution exists, while it simultaneously probes that world to see if it is pervious to a new world order based on a different set of assumptions" (114). The assumption of course, was that a soldier could, after fighting in a war and living as a

soldier, return to an old identity and old way of life, a question that Lawrence found worth pursuing in much of his work.

“The Nightmare” is widely regarded as one of the more successful, early depictions of the psychological trauma of war and combat. Carl Krockel, in his essay “Reading Modernist Fiction as War Testimony: The Case of D. H. Lawrence’s ‘Nightmare,’” argues that not only is this chapter “a corner-stone in understanding Lawrence’s work biographically,” but that it “generally has been read at face value. Richard Aldington asserted in his novel of the war, *Death of a Hero* (1930), that any further attempt to describe wartime England would be redundant because ‘Lawrence has done it once and for all’” (*Etudes Lawrenciennes*). Here, in “The Nightmare,” characters relive their years as a soldier and as they do so, the soldier’s position of isolation, even within the brotherhood of the regiment, becomes painfully evident. In this particular passage, the character, Richard Lovat, muses that if he is going to remain psychologically intact during the horrors of combat, then he will have to live inwardly, which will further set him apart from his fellow man:

And now, if circumstances had roped nearly all men into the horror, and it was a case of adding horror to horror, or dying well, on the other hand, the irremediable circumstance of his own separate soul made Richard Lovat's inevitable standing out. If there is outward, circumstantial unreason and fatality, there is inward unreason and inward fate. He would have to dare to follow his inward fate. He must remain alone, outside of everything, everything, conscious of what was going on, conscious of what he was doing and not doing. Conscious he must be, and consciously he must stick to it. To be forced into nothing (*Kangaroo* 152).

Here, Lawrence seems to grasp a contemporary understanding of PTSD where the soldier feels that he is isolated from everyone and everything around him. This aspect of the soldier figure is a tragic one and Lawrence effectively transferred this image of the man that must contend with the horrors of combat, to the image of the working man who must

fight the horrors of a tyrannical system. In “A Propos of ‘Lady Chatterley’s Lover’” he writes that this sense of isolation is the harbinger of violence as it signals a collapse of the “old togetherness”:

The working-classes retain the old blood-warmth of oneness and togetherness some decades longer. Then they lose it too. And then class-consciousness becomes rampant, and class hate. Class hate and class-consciousness are only a sign that the old togetherness, and the old blood-warmth has collapsed, and every man is really aware of himself in apartness. Then we have these hostile groupings of men for the sake of opposition, strife. Civil strife becomes a necessary condition of self-assertion (*Lady Chatterley’s Lover* 332).

For Lawrence, modern society brought about all sorts of atrocities and WWI was only one atrocious symptom of, what he believed to be, the larger problem of class disparity. It is interesting to point out, in this context, that “class-consciousness” and “class hate” may begin wars, but Lawrence believed that it was his duty to follow the “business” of war “to the heart of the individual fighters.” His subsequent use of the soldier figure, as a classless figure, as an active participant of rebellion, reveals how enmeshed were his notions of isolation, war, and class-consciousness.

As an exploration of class and soldiers, “The Prussian Officer” and *Lady Chatterley’s Lover* offer similar perspectives but differ in their ultimate conclusions. “The Prussian Officer” functions as a prototype of sorts, as Lawrence himself was just beginning to understand his own complicated views. In this story, the protagonist fails to escape from the bonds of class as he does not possess the proper elements to fight the system. In both “The Prussian Officer” and *Lady Chatterley’s Lover* the narratives feature two soldiers, outside of the context of combat, who are both conscious of their class differences. Further, in both narratives, there is one character that plays the role of the servant, while the other occupies a position of power—and this position of power is

undermined by plays of sexual desire. In “The Prussian Officer” a young soldier is abused by his officer who he must also serve as an orderly. In the end, the soldier kills the officer and then dies as he tries to escape the regiment, and the final image is one of both soldiers, side by side, together in death. Throughout the short story, the two characters are only referred to by their rank or position and the only reference to their names is when it is spoken by the other, which suggests that they can only be hailed and interpellated, or identified and individualized, through their differences of being. In this case, an application of Judith Butler’s theories, unlike in *Lady Chatterley’s Lover*, reveal spaces of *unmediated* power which cannot be reconciled in their present state (which will be indicated by numerous metaphors of unattainability). Meanwhile, the sexual desire that the characters feel for each other, but act on only through violence, further points to Lawrence’s fledgling vision of the reconciliation of authority. Mellors gains power through his sexual desire, while the young soldier can only attempt to gain power through its erasure. “The Prussian Officer” can be seen as an unsuccessful precursor to *Lady Chatterley’s Lover*, which was written over a decade later, and will provide a relevant introduction to the same themes and issues I will examine in Lawrence’s last novel.

Chapter Two: Desire and Futility in “The Prussian Officer”

Lawrence was not simply “class conscious,” as Wallace insists, instead he believed that the class system was the reason for most of the world’s social ills and why there was a great separation between all men. For Lawrence, the class system caused wars and the human-dislocation of modernity. In “Autobiographical Sketch,” he writes: “The answer, as far as I can see, has something to do with class. Class makes a gulf, across which all the best human flow is lost” (*Selected Literary Criticism* 4). In other words, the question *and* the answer, begin with notions of class and Lawrence spent most of his life searching for ways to reject that system in his writing. However, in this rejection, there is an element of longing for a unification, or an alliance, between the classes. In *Lady Chatterley’s Lover*, this unification will come in the form of Mellors and Connie’s child and her wish to throw off the burden of her title. In “The Prussian Officer,” Lawrence sees no hope for the future and he uses the tensions of sexuality and authority between a captain and his soldier to illustrate how fighting against the whole classist order is a futile endeavor that must fail by virtue of its permeation in the social unconscious.

The story is worth analyzing here, even though it was written over a decade before *Lady Chatterley’s Lover* and its conclusion is the antithesis of the rather hopeful nature of that novel. Lawrence’s essays, narratives, and poems are intertextual; that is, themes, words, and phrases are constantly repeated, recycled, and evolved which shape the meanings of both the future text and its earlier conception. While Amit Chaudhuri is concerned with how the individual words in Lawrence’s poetry “travel” through multiple

poems, the same thing occurs through the larger themes of his narratives. To recognize the intertextual nature of Lawrence's work, as Chaudhuri argues, is to understand how Lawrence manages notions of "otherness." The trace, or history, of the signifier/signified relationship of certain Lawrencean themes, such as his employment of the figure of the soldier or manifestations of sexual desire, reveals their ultimate importance. For Chaudhuri, the "gaps" between the usages of particular words in different poems, or for my purposes, themes and images in different narratives, are textual—in other words, the temporal and physical space between the instances of application "does not simply and unproblematically travel off the page towards life and landscape," the gaps themselves should be regarded as texts. Moreover, conceptions of otherness are circumvented through the repetition of the words and themes:

Because of the repetitive, intertextual nature of the poems, this word travels textually, through its traces and usages in other poems, in a circular or lateral manner; the vertical, transcendental jump towards 'otherness' is thwarted...the Lawrencean sign or word, through the traces of its intertextuality reminds us of the general poetic discourse to which it belongs. (60)

Through the intertextual gaps there is a space that is similar to Butler's space of mediation where a reconciliation of the hegemonic system can exist. While the characters in "The Prussian Officer" dwell in a world that refuses any notion of hierarchal subversion, the temporal span between this work and *Lady Chatterley's Lover* offers a "transcendental jump" of hope and progress. To put it more simply: The figure of Mellors matters more when placed in context with this earlier work.

"The Prussian Officer" exists in symbols and metaphors—mountains cannot be reached, wine is spilled as blood, thirsts go unslaked, and beatings read as a rape. This is an allegorical tale for Lawrence, and as such, the descriptions of the two characters are

formulaic: The officer is described as a typical aristocrat—complete with mistresses and a gambling problem—and he is “haughty and overbearing” while his “servant knew practically nothing about him, except just what orders he would give, and how he wanted them obeyed” (2). Here, the officer is established as a representation of his function in society, his pastimes deal in money and his person is simply something to be obeyed, rather than known—or more to the point, to obey him *is* to know him. The soldier, on the other hand, is portrayed as the common Everyman and as Widmer argues, represents a “figure of primordial innocence” and who “has been taken, by the extremity of desire and rebellion out of his conventional self” (*Art of Perversity* 11). Indeed, there is a certain purity in the image of this young soldier and he is deeply conflicted by both his feelings of hatred and desire, and yet chooses to fight the various systems that confine him all the same. However, Lawrence makes sure to focus on his more brutish qualities; his hands are strong and covered in scars, and as the poor often are in Lawrence’s narratives, the soldier acts “straight from instinct” (“The Prussian Officer” 3), as an animal would. While Lawrence felt a certain connection to the working class, he also felt that they were “narrow in outlook” and existed in an intellectual “prison” (*Selected Literary Criticism* 4-5). In order for Lawrence’s working class heroes to prevail, they had to be endowed with an amount of intelligence and education, like Mellors (and as he himself was). However, the young soldier, even as he likes to write poetry and attempts to resist the structures of authority that bind him, he is not endowed with the token mental or emotional faculties of the typical Lawrencean hero.

The beginning of the story hints at its unworkable conclusion: the young soldier is shown walking “on and on in silence” towards mountains that will fascinate him

throughout the narrative, mountains that he will never reach, mountains that represent both a barrier and a division even if he could: “He walked on and on in silence, staring at the mountains ahead, that rose sheer out of the land, and stood fold behind fold, half earth, half heaven, the barrier with slits of soft snow, in the pale bluish peaks” (1). Two things are important here: First, the soldier is silent. To speak, to be heard, and to listen to another’s speech, is to reaffirm one’s existence. In *Excitable Speech* Butler explains that “to be addressed is not merely to be recognized for what one already is, but to have the very term conferred by which the recognition of existence becomes possible” (5). For the soldier, his silence indicates, first, his invisibility, his almost-nonexistence—or as Derrida would say, through his silence there is no being in his being—and at the same time no one is recognizing him and he is recognizing no one through marks of speech. Secondly, this silence indicates a lack of action, even as he makes his way to the mountains that represent, for him, a connection of heaven and earth, of the aristocracy and working class, there is a negation of action through the soldier’s silence. For, as Butler argues, we are “linguistic beings” and we “require language in order to be” and so “language acts” (1) it may act against us, or it may act for us as we have the ability to articulate our wants and needs. The soldier may walk toward the mountains, but he will never be able to bridge the distance fully if he is to remain silent. Certainly, the silence of the young soldier becomes louder and more meaningful throughout the progression of the narrative as he becomes more trapped within his own subjectivity. The second important detail in this beginning scene is the image of the mountains in the distance. As I mentioned, for the soldier, the mountains represent the two opposing ways of existence—one can be either working class and of the earth and brutish, or one can be

aristocracy and of the heavens. Lawrence frequently aligns the working class with nature, as we will see in *Lady Chatterley's Lover* as Mellors works as a gamekeeper and exists in a pre-modern state in the forest. However, here the mountains themselves encompass both ways of being and this is what the soldier strives for; he wishes for some sort of connection between the classes, but as Lawrence explicitly points out, this is an impossibility as the mountains form a "barrier with slits of soft snow." It is this very need for a connection and its impossibility that cause the soldier's (and the officer's) ultimate demise.

This desire for a connection between the classes becomes even more complicated later on in the narrative as there is a certain possible link, and erasure, of class through a sexual relationship with the officer. The possibility and desire notwithstanding, the soldier rejects both the "thrill of deep pleasure and of shame" of the officer's rather crude and abusive advances in an effort for independence. The overt sexual tension between the two has almost nothing to do with actual sex, and almost everything to do with a demand for power. As Widmer shrewdly recognizes, "There is something more than homosexuality here. The sexual sadism of the officer-servant relation rests on the covert sexual basis of authority, but the narration emphasizes the subjective change in the youth" (7). This is evidenced as the officer acts on these desires through demonstrations of abuse, and as his desire increases, the abuse becomes more frequent and more obvious, culminating in a mock rape when the young soldier is kicked repeatedly from behind as he does the dishes:

When the young soldier saw him, his heart suddenly ran hot. He felt blind. Instead of answering, he turned dazedly to the door. As he was crouching to set down the dishes, he was pitched forward by a kick from behind. The pots went in a stream down the stairs, he clung to the pillar of the banisters. And as he was

rising he was kicked heavily again, and again, so that he clung sickly to the post for some moments. His master had gone swiftly into the room and closed the door. (7)

The soldier's blindness and silence indicate his powerlessness in this situation, and indeed, in all situations. He can perceive the danger and the potential loss as he turns to the door, however, his silence at the moment of violation is a renunciation of his subjectivity. Butler argues that a subject's existence is necessarily incorporated "in a language that precedes and exceeds the subject, a language whose historicity includes a past and future that exceeds that of the subject who speaks" (*Excitable Speech* 28). Since the soldier gives no answer, he negates his own existence through the negation of language, as there is no referent to his past or future, he loses his presence in the present and is almost complicit in the perpetuation of his station and of his abuse. While Derrida argues that one can "conceive of a presence and self-presence of the subject before speech or its signs...in a silent and intuitive consciousness" (396) through trace as a priority of meaning, the soldier's silence as he looks at the door, his only means of escape, suggests that his individuality is in jeopardy through his speechlessness. After all, the officer is able to use this door after the abuse which is a privilege not afforded to the soldier. Again, here, Lawrence purposefully does not endow the young soldier with the same kind of markers of triumph that he will utilize with other characters later in his career.

The sexual desire in this narrative works to reveal two things: The first, as I have already discussed, aligns notions of sexuality with notions of authority. The second regards desire in an antiquated way as, for Lawrence, to desire another requires a certain difference (not to be confused with *differance*) which involves a man and a woman.

Further, the misogynist in Lawrence believed that men were superior to women, and so it is no surprise that there is a gender reversal as the soldier performs “woman’s” work as he is assaulted. In this case, the crucial and defining difference between the aristocracy and working class is highlighted through the play of gender. It is important to point out that the officer’s class as a defining characteristic of his being is wholly dependent upon that of the soldier’s. The officer’s murder is a denial of the soldier’s sexual desire, as well as an attempt to create a space of authority for himself. In a society (and a narrative) where such a space is impossible, sexual desire and authority cannot exist at the same time. Even so, both characters seem to recognize that their relationship and their identities are dependent upon a form of reciprocity as one man defines the other: “It was between him and the Captain. There were only the two people in the world now—himself and the Captain” (“The Prussian Officer” 10). Indeed, the characters remain unnamed throughout the story and are only referred to as variations of “the Captain” and “young soldier,” however, they are named at certain points by each other. The young soldier is the first to name the officer as he uses his name, “Herr Hauptmann,” or “Captain,” as a way of an answer, while the officer shouts “Schöner!” at the soldier as a rebuke and threat before the assault. This action of naming, of interpellation, clearly differentiates them from each other, as each has the power to do so in the manner in which they are socially constituted. In the end, both characters die and wind up next to each other “side by side” in the mortuary, the young soldier “without having seen again” (22) just as the officer is blinded with blood at his time of death (a nod, perhaps, to his pedigree). Through their blindness and proximity in death, Lawrence suggests that class

hierarchy is so embedded in the culture that quite literally neither subject is able to escape or grow within their prescribed social bounds.

Although he is unsuccessful, the young soldier refuses to submit to the officer's overtures of power, and his sexual non-compliance and eventual murder are acts of rebellion—even as he is attracted to the officer in various ways. While Widmer argues that the “subjective change of the youth” is a loss of innocence and the murder purely “gratuitous” (7), this analysis seems too dismissive as it is clear that the young soldier is not terribly concerned with his innocence, but interested, rather, in maintaining a semblance of control as he tries to distance himself from the officer. Yet, the only way he can do this is to fully recognize his own subordinate class as it relates to the officer's elevated one, to serve him without reservation, and to acknowledge and participate in the classist system: “The youth instinctively tried to keep himself intact: he tried to serve the officer as if the latter were an abstract authority and not a man...But in spite of himself, the hate grew, responsive to the officer's passion” (“The Prussian Officer” 5). Although there is this instinct to keep himself “intact,” or whole, which indicates a denial of this man-made construction of authority to undo him, it also points to his inability to escape the confines of his class, as he can only abstract himself from it and hate the system he must serve. It is mainly his silence that confers an outward obedience, and it is this silence that portends the soldier's failure to re-signify his identity as a symbol of power in this narrative and Mellors' mark of success in *Lady Chatterley's Lover*. In *Gender is Burning*, Butler explains that a “rearticulation of hegemonic norms,” or as in Mellors' case, his usage of Derbyshire as a way to subvert power structures, “open[s] possibilities for resignifying the terms of violation against their violating aims” (383). Rather than

utilizing the soldier's figure as a means of disruption, Lawrence instead uses him to expose the futility of classist refusal.

The soldier's inability to understand language or speak, in conjunction with his thirst, during the final scenes of the story further point to the ineffectiveness of the murder act. His thirst is representative of his unmet desire, while his silence shows his dehumanization in even attempting to defy conscriptions of class. After he flees the company and begins walking towards the mountains he will never reach, he sees a peasant woman and realizes that he cannot speak to her or understand her and so they cannot exist to each other, as he existed with the officer:

[She was passing like a block] of shadow through the glistening, green corn, into the full glare...He had no language with which to speak to her. She was the bright, solid unreality. She would make a noise of words that would confuse him, and her eyes would look at him without seeing him. (20)

With this Lawrence implies that as the soldier has killed the means for his distinction as a subject, the officer, and remains silent while doing so, he is no longer to be perceived by even those of his own class. The peasant woman is the embodiment of contrast; one moment she is a "block of shadow" and the next she is illuminated by the "full glare," while the soldier is something that cannot be seen, or heard, something that cannot even comprehend what is being said to him.

At the end of "*Différance*," Derrida tells us that his quest for the perfect word for difference is what he calls a "Heideggerian *hope*." Indeed, through Derrida's at times playful and frustrating discourse, that there is an attempt at all to discover such a concept is a hopeful endeavor. The "a" of difference represents a moment before language and before meaning, and comes as close to existing in the present as anything can, as

language can never be experienced in the moment. Derrida quotes Heidegger to illustrate the uniqueness of the presence of a real present in language and being:

The relation to the present, unfolding its order in the very essence of *presence*, is unique...It is pre-eminently incomparable to any other relation; it belongs to the uniqueness of Being itself...because Being speaks through every language; everywhere and always (406).

The absence of hope in “The Prussian Officer” is reinforced by the young soldier’s silence. Through his silence there is a reduction of being, of distinction, as it is clear that his silence directly relates to a recognition of existence (or being). If this recognition does not occur, it follows that the distinction of difference does not either. Silence is a disruption of the process of being, since silence truly does not exist. Silence is nothing, it is futility in action. While Lawrence certainly rejects even the possibility of a positive relationship or connection between the working class and the aristocracy here, he revises his beliefs in *Lady Chatterley’s Lover*.

Chapter Three: The “*Différance*” of Mellors

In *A Propos of “Lady Chatterley’s Lover,”* Lawrence’s defense of his novel, he writes of his own work about the aftermath of WWI: “This is the ugly fact which underlies our civilization. As the advertisement of one of the war-novels said, it is an epic of ‘friendship and hope, mud and blood.’ Which means, of course, that the friendship and hope must end in mud and blood” (*Lady Chatterley’s Lover* 332). Lawrence’s cynicism here, as well as Mellors’ general conclusions within the novel that “the human world is doomed” (220) suggests that he believed that there were many aspects of the modern world, such as the disparity of class, that left little to hope for societal and domestic peace, just as he illustrates in “The Prussian Officer.” Peter Scheckner argues that Lawrence had “unresolved feelings” about the value of engaging in society or politics, and moreover questioned how one could possibly “sustain an intimate relationship within an oppressive context” (27). This relationship between private and public harmony is evidenced by the predominance of troubled sexual relationships that we see in Lawrence’s work. However, in his last novel, even as the character Mellors appears to be Lawrence’s sounding board through his bitter musings and sardonic soliloquys, the novel presents many symbols of hope, such as Connie’s pregnancy, the inviolate descriptions of nature, and even Mellors himself. Indeed, the narrative ends in Mellors’ voice with the promise of classist unity and his own recognition of a “hopeful heart” in a letter to Connie: “But a great deal of us is together, and we can but abide by

it, and steer our courses to meet soon. John Thomas says good-night to his lady Jane, a little droopingly, but with a hopeful heart—” (302). This ending is a far cry from that of “The Prussian Officer” where a desire for the release from the systems of power and sexual fulfillment culminate in murder and death. Here, the working class and aristocracy are joined through Mellors and Connie, their child a guarantee that both desires can be achieved. In this case, for this novel about war that refuses to speak about the war, this tale of “friendship and hope” ends in a very real comingling of blood and mud, as the brutish and natural working class and blue-blooded aristocracy are able to co-exist and reproduce—and so, Lawrence is finally able to reach the mountain of “half earth, half heavens,” and the “barrier” is transcended.

Mellors is the antithesis of the young soldier in “The Prussian Officer.” Whereas the soldier remains silent and complicit in his own abuse and objectivity, Mellors acts through his language and in so doing recovers his subjectivity and successfully rebels against the systems of authority that he must navigate. His success, though, corresponds with his existence as an ontological simulacra, that is, his metaphysical character, as a “graphic representation” on a page, without physicality or legitimacy, even as he signifies the collective working-class subaltern. It is important to point out Mellors’ resemblance to Derrida’s “*Différance*”—which is neither a word nor a concept, just as Mellors is neither simply an idea nor is he a mere representation—as it draws attention to his figure of resistance and harbinger of change, and finally of hope. Just as the “a” in *différance* is the embodiment of ontological difference and temporality, of space and connection, and of ultimately an unsayable, imperceptible truth, so is Mellors the embodiment of these same divergent characteristics.

It is clear that Mellors is a character of deconstruction and rebellion and this is further highlighted by his difference from the other characters who wish to conform to the dictums of society: He rejects society and modernity to live in solitude in a small cottage in the forest with his dog, Flossie. His connection to nature as both a keeper and occupant of the natural space further signals his position as the hermeneutical, Lawrencean hero and bearer of power within the narrative. Mellors' inner dialogues and verbal diatribes reveal his loathing for civilization, and one point he says to Connie:

“I tell you, every generation breeds a more rabbit generation, with indiarubber tubing for guts and tin legs and tin faces. Tin people! It's all a steady sort of bolshevism—just killing off the human thing, and worshipping the mechanical thing. Money, money, money! All the modern lot get their real kick out of killing the old human feeling out of man, making mincemeat of the old Adam and the old Eve.” (217)

Lawrence seeks to dehumanize the modern generation through likening them to tin and indiarubber, and so suggesting that Mellors is *unlike* them, while, at the same time, pointing to the glorification of money, and the classist system as the reason for their dehumanization and lack of humanity. However, even as Mellors rejects his tin generation, his society has endowed him with a substantial amount of power in which to navigate the system that he hates. This bit of power both differentiates, as well as further inscribes him as a subject. This notion of linguistic difference, has a sort of prior authority and, as Derrida explains, has been “inscribed in the thought of what is conveniently called our ‘epoch’” as philosophers and scientists base much of their work on the differences between subjects. This “reflection of difference,” Derrida continues,

will lead us to consider difference [with an “a”] as the *strategic* note or connection—relatively or provisionally *privileged*—which indicates the closure of presence, together with the closure of the conceptual order and denomination, a closure that is effected in the functioning of traces. (386)

Similarly, Mellors is a strategic connection between the upper and lower classes, as father to Connie's baby, through his mediated position as gamekeeper to an aristocratic house, as well as his ability to fit in anywhere as his level of education allows him to mix in both spheres. He is afforded a choice of class, a choice that many people are not allowed. Mellors is a gap of subjectivity, as well as a connection, and as such he is also a closure, an occlusion, even as the trace and historicity of class begins and ends with him. Yet, his ability to mix with both classes marks him as an outcast and he confuses the other characters through his rejection of the prescribed social categories. Upon his return from the war, even though he is able to rise in the ranks as an officer, he chooses to be a gamekeeper, "as if to spite himself" (145), as one of the locals says of him. Connie thinks, after having met him for the first time: "he seemed *so* unlike a gamekeeper, so unlike a working-man anyhow; although he had something in common with the local people. But also, something very uncommon" (68). This quality of belonging and polarity set him up to be a character of connection and division, of nonidentity and sameness.

Immediately, Derrida sets up his notion of differance, through the verbs "to differ" and "to defer," (which are the same in French) to refer as both a link and a means of dislocation. He is quick to point out, however, that this interaction "is not simply between act and object, cause and effect, or primordial and derived," that is, differance is not just an interplay of linguistic understanding of originary or manufactured meaning, and he goes on to explain:

In the one case, "to differ" signifies nonidentity; in the other case it signifies the order of the *same*. Yet there must be a common, although entirely different [*differante*], root within the sphere that relates the two movements of differing to one another. We provisionally give the name *differance* to this *sameness* which is not *identical*; by the silent writing of its *a*, as it has the desired advantage of referring

to differing, *both* as a spacing/temporalizing and as the movement that structures every dissociation. (385)

Here, just as Mellors is both common and uncommon, unlike and like, difference encompasses a space that recognizes that for a signification (whether it be linguistic or material) to be rendered different, it must also refer back to what it differs from, which suggests a dependency and relationship that functions to connect and separate. As for Mellors, his character operates in a similar way, not in just how he may or may not relate to the local coalminers, but in the way he chooses to speak as well. Mellors is able to choose how he manages his language, and I will argue in the next section how his utterances are acts of violence against the aristocracy, however, for my purposes here, it is important to point out how this choice works as a connection and separation of difference and deferment. For instance, when Connie asks her husband how Mellors was able to become an officer in the army when he speaks Derbyshire, he responds: “‘He doesn’t—except by fits and starts. He can speak perfectly well—for him. I suppose he has an idea, if he’s come down to the ranks again he’d better speak as the ranks speak’” (92). Here, his connection to the “ranks” is through his language which separates him from the aristocracy in a tangible and audible way; and while the “a” in difference is *inaudible*, the effect of the separation/connection is the same. Mellors is the “same but not identical,” he may belong to the ranks only if he can speak like them, and this speech, as a part of his previous mode of being, acts to temporalize and disassociate his subjectivity as his personal trace, or historicity encompasses a past that made him at once the same and different from the Chatterleys while his present and future follow the same fractured connection.

Derrida attempts to understand and define this linguistic paradox difference/sameness, connection/separation, and in so doing rejects Saussure's earlier work of the signifier/signified relationship. Derrida's "*Différance*" argues against, extends, and reforms Saussure's notions that language cannot effectively function outside spoken and written forms as there is nothing to differentiate its meaning without those structures, and yet, if that is the case, then language must always happen in the past, never in the present, which is the space of truth and being. Instead, Derrida refuses Saussure's inscriptive notion of language as a dictating system of authority, and maintains through the mysterious "a" of difference that rather than a subject being inscribed within the language that there is a "presence and self-presence of the subject before speech or its signs, a subject's self-presence in a silent and intuitive consciousness" (396). Or in other words, it is the subject that inscribes the language through their being, through their conscious and mortal existence. This is a revolutionary concept, and the character of Mellors operates in the same way. If we are to view Mellors as a text (as certainly almost everything and everyone can be a text) and as a text that *speaks* (as all texts do), we see that his being, his consciousness, his actions, his very self, speaks before language. Early in their relationship Connie seems to recognize this priori of language within Mellors—and finds it unsettling: "It puzzled her, his queer, persistent wanting her, when there was nothing between them, when he never *really* spoke to her" (127). Here she resents his silence, and later on we learn his dialect as well, as she equates language, and a language that aligns with her personal ideologies, with desire. However, Mellors' act of wanting *is* a speech act, and "queer" one that has the power to "puzzle." Here, in the space between desire and speech do we perceive Derrida's concept

of difference as the self's "silent and intuitive consciousness" and presence expresses itself as an undisputable truth, without language and before signification.

Among other things, difference is a signal of desire as the signification of language must always be perpetually deferred. In the novel, this is most exemplified through the ending as Mellors' desire is perpetually deferred by way of his separation from Connie as he waits for his divorce. In a letter to her he writes: "Well, so many words, because I can't touch you. If I could sleep with my arm round you, the ink could stay in the bottle" (301). In this case, Mellors replaces his desire with language, a silent language, as the written word is simply a "graphic representation" like the silent "a" in difference. It is worth pointing out that just as Connie is "puzzled" by Mellors' silent wanting earlier on, here, Mellors remarks that being "separate for a while" is probably the wiser way—"If only one were sure" (301). Even as he recognizes this deferment of separation (this gap of being-together) as wise, he is still unsure of its outcome, of his and Connie's future. While Mellors pens his letter to Connie in the present, the signification of their separation is both utterly lost to him, and glaringly apparent—However, as the novel leaves the reader here, this "absence of the transcendental signified extends the domain and the play of signification infinitely." Chaudhuri offers a useful explanation of how Derrida's notions of difference reside in an oppositional space of meaning and unmeaning, of deferment and presence, which is further complicated as only the present can ultimately reveal the tangible and unmistakable signification of language:

Derrida's own comments about *différance* are curious, provocative, and even quasi-mystical. *Différance* generates, cancels, and regenerates meanings through differences; at the same time, and ultimate referential meaning is forever postponed or deferred in a chain of sign-substitutions. The 'absence of the transcendental signified extends the domain and the play of signification infinitely.' Moreover, this *noumenon*-like *différance* 'has neither existence nor

essence. It belongs to no category of being, present or absent' ... '*Différance* is neither a *word* nor a *concept*' and it is 'clear that it cannot be *exposed*. We can expose only what at a certain moment can become *present*, manifest. (64)

Here, and as we see in Mellors, language and meaning is fluid and can never be fully grasped in the present. Nevertheless, the trace of meaning is always at play but always postponed, which can then only function as the Kantian "noumenon," something that can only be perceived as an intuition. Mellors acknowledges the necessity of the deferment as the space that creates truth and meaning: "We fucked a flame into being," he writes to Connie, "Even the flowers are fucked into being, between sun and earth. But it's a delicate thing, and takes patience and the long pause" (301). That is, their creation of what will connect and unify the working class with the aristocracy through this "long pause"—but it will dwell as the young soldier's mountain "half earth, half heaven."

It is significant that Derrida repeats the phrase "*Différance* is neither a *word* nor a *concept*" throughout his essay as it reinforces the notion that the transcendental gap between signification and the present always resides outside the constructs of language and thought. At this point, it would be fair to ask, "what is one supposed to do with this kind of information?" as Chaudhuri's assessment that the deconstruction of a text can frequently "demonstrate the impossibility of interpretation" may seem a wise one. However, the deconstruction of Mellors as a figure of difference reveals how, as a fictional character, as a "noumenon," he is able to expose certain truths through his constructions and oppositions of language and temporal performances. While Mellors' personal truth may be perpetually deferred, his presence reveals a cultural truth of being. Mellors' true power in the narrative comes from his function as a deconstructive figure as he occupies various oppositional spaces as a highly educated working class man, a soldier

and an officer, and a character that exists on both the fringes of society and in its interior. These oppositions work together to reveal and rebel against the systems of authority that Lawrence objected. Jonathan Culler's brief explanation of deconstruction is valuable here for my applications as he writes that:

Deconstruction is most simply defined as a critique of the hierarchical oppositions that have structured Western thought: inside/outside, mind/body, literal/metaphorical, speech/writing, presence/absence, nature/culture, form/meaning. To deconstruct an opposition is to show that it is not natural and inevitable but a construction, produced by discourses that rely on it, and to show that it is a construction in a work of *deconstruction* that seeks to dismantle it and reinscribe it—that is, not destroy it, but give it a different structure and functioning. (126)

These man-made constructions, these oppositions that Mellors must straddle creates change and growth within the narrative and the power dynamics between the characters. Whether these decisions were conscious on Lawrence's part or not does not matter to my discussion, what matters is that the way in which this character was constructed was successful in its purpose—as a reinscription of power and being. Although, it is worth mentioning that Lawrence claims in his *A Propos* that he is not sure if the symbolism in the novel was intentional or not and “yet, the story came as it did, by itself, so I left it alone. Whether we call it symbolism or not, it is, in the sense of its happening, inevitable” (*Lady Chatterley's Lover* 333). In this case, not only do these questions of intention and inevitability imply an awareness of the mechanics of deconstruction and its value in the rejection to Modern hierarchical norms, it also implies that there is a priori of thought, one that dwells in Derrida's space of differance, in the “movement of signification” before any graphic or spoken representations of language.

Ultimately, as I have argued, *Lady Chatterley's Lover* deals in notions of hope and this becomes especially obvious in the final pages of the novel in the letter that

Mellors writes to Connie. This is no simple love letter as Lawrence, through the deconstructive character of Mellors, rails against the various issues he sees threatening modern civilization: the futility of industry, society's dependency on money, and the "poisonous" masses. "There's a bad time coming boys, there's a bad time coming! If things go on as they are, there's nothing lies in the future but death and destruction, for these industrial masses...But never mind" (300). While the beginning of the letter is filled with the same kind of dark prognostications, there is a sudden turn with this "never mind." Rather than end the novel with images of the downfall of society, Lawrence finishes with Mellors' realization of hope and his rejection of his societal fears through his connection with Connie, or his "Pentecost" flame, as he calls her. It is significant, for my purposes, that Mellors' shift should be inscribed and revealed through a letter—being that it is a clear symbol of deferment and a graphic representation. Writing a letter is an action that takes place in the present (or as much in the present that Derrida will allow), yet its purpose resides in the future, and when it is read it is a consumption of the past. This particular kind of letter, functions much like the letter "a" in differance, and this letter, this epistle, with its truths and shifts and deferments performs as a space for optimism and promise. But just as a promise does not necessarily include a fulfillment, this letter, or any letter, can never exist in the present, as it will always be a marker of the past. In this way, Mellors' letter is a figure of hope as Derrida helpfully explains of differance that "the structure of delay" is a description of "the living present as a primordial and incessant synthesis that is constantly led back upon itself" that deals

not with the horizons of modified presents—past or future—but with a 'past' that has never been nor will ever be present, whose 'future' will never be produced or reproduced in the form of presence. The concept of trace is therefore incommensurate with that of retention, that of the becoming-past of what had

been present. The trace cannot be conceived—nor therefore, can difference—on the basis of either the present or the presence of the present. (400)

For Derrida, difference looks much like the snake that swallows its tail, if we are to consider the head as the “future” and the tail as the “past.” The present cannot be perceived as a presence, so how then can a future or past form a presence when it is constantly led back upon itself? Of course, Derrida carves out a space of being-present for us in one’s consciousness, and this being-present resides outside of language. The same is true for Mellors’ letter, as its truth, its presence, functions in the space between Mellors writing it and Connie reading it—his “hopeful heart” perpetually deferred and always hopeful.

Chapter Four: Derbyshire as Linguistic Authority

As I have argued in previous sections, the rejection of power is unsuccessful in “The Prussian Officer” as a result of the young soldier’s silence. This silence “speaks” as a performative utterance: a performative utterance, in this case, is a speech act that performs or produces certain effects through its declaration. In “The Prussian Officer” this silence declares the soldier complicit in his otherness, and acts as a tacit agreement. Further, while Derrida believes that one’s being can exist in a brief space outside of language, he also suggests, through his “Heideggerian hope” of difference, that “being speaks through language” (406). This “being,” that is, one’s self and the living present, function through language *at the same time*. We are linguistic creatures, and as such we bestow language with a prior authority, one that acts on us before we are even conceived; language is an agency that has the power to create us in its image. Just as Sir Clifford suggests that in speaking Derbyshire Mellors not only identifies himself as one of the “ranks,” but becomes a part of the ranks, as well. Language has the power to make us—and to harm us. In *Excitable Speech*, Judith Butler looks at how racial slurs and other names act as a violence against the listener and maintains that “if we are formed in language, then that formative power precedes and conditions any decision we might make about it, insulting us from the start, as it were, by its prior power” (2). Just as a mother will replace a child’s real name with “Pumpkin” or “Honey,” and the child still knows who she is referring to, or, in the famous example of the immediate response to the policeman’s call of “hey, you!” there is an authority given to the call that precedes

even our reckoning that it was given. The slur, or hail, identifies the listener as the listener recognizes that the call is for her. In that moment of recognition, whether she believes that the call is true or untrue, does not matter, a certain power has been transferred, through the language, to the speaker over the listener. A sort of christening takes place when the listener accepts that the call is indeed for her, and power over her very identity rests with the speaker. The question must then be asked, if we are so constructed through language, how is it possible to reject the hail?—As Mellors certainly rejects his various interpellations of “gamekeeper,” “ranks,” “servant,” “underling” as he struggles to maintain his own identity. The answer, of course, is through language. For Mellors, through his varying usage of Derbyshire and “proper English,” he endeavors to take advantage of this constitutive and prior power of the hail as a form of rebellion against the aristocracy. Via Mellors’ disruption of the linguistic ritual he is able to subvert the aristocracy’s authority as he rejects their notions of societal standards.

The manner in which Mellors manipulates language, and the way the other characters in the novel react to his usages are curious and complicated. On the one hand, he is expected, as a member of the working class, to speak in the local dialect, as the “ranks” do. On the other hand, his ability to speak outside of his class in “proper” English reveals a privileged assumption that the “King’s English” is the best way to speak, and the way that one *should* speak, if they are so able; almost as if it is their duty to do so. That Mellors chooses to speak in dialect confounds both working class and upper class characters alike. This confusion that all of the characters share indicates two aspects of the cultural subconscious: not only are there specific ideological and linguistic

rules that everyone abides by, but also that these rules influence and supersede notions of identity. Indeed, Butler believes that the speaking subject

speaks *conventionally*, that is, it speaks in a voice that is never fully singular. That subject invokes a formula (which is not quite the same as following a rule), and this may be done with no or little reflection on the conventional character of what is being said. The ritual dimension of convention implies that the moment of utterance is informed by the prior and, indeed, future moments that are occluded by the moment itself. (*Excitable Speech* 25)

This occlusion of the moment through the historicity of convention operates much like the Derridean deferment *differance*. However, in this case, Butler suggests that the linguistic trace is an aggregate voice that speaks as a sort of Borg hive-mind. Mellors' refusal to meet these prescribed cultural expectations operate in two important ways: The first way, and the most obvious, is that it is an overt rejection of the prevalent inscriptions of class. The second is that within this refusal there are elements of both mockery and appropriation, and these elements act as a mediating force as Mellors' disavowal of class inscription must necessarily refer back upon itself as an acceptance of the system that inscribes him.

Mellors is able to reject classist notions of linguistic being through a linguistic reversal, as language is two-sided. While to speak and to be heard, in whatever capacity, bestows an authority on the speaker, the listener also secures a certain amount power through the recognition of his or her subjectivity *by the speaker*. In other words, even as the speaker furthers his or her own place of power through the speech act, the listener, through being identified and granted a notice of existence, may be allowed to reclaim a certain amount of power they may have lost through the listening. Butler explains the reciprocal nature of the linguistic act as she writes, "one is not simply fixed by the name that one is called," or even within the system in which they are inscribed. Butler

maintains that even as one is injured or controlled through language they are, at the same time,

given a certain possibility for social existence, initiated into a temporal life of language that exceeds the prior purposes that animate that call. Thus the injurious address may appear to fix or paralyze the one it hails, but it may also produce an unexpected and enabling response. If to be addressed is to be interpellated, then the offensive call runs the risk of inaugurating a subject in speech who comes to use language to counter the offensive call. (*Excitable Speech* 2)

Lawrence seems to acknowledge the possibilities of a reinscription of power through this social contract in *Lady Chatterley's Lover* as he depicts Mellors frequently defying authority through linguistic exchanges. In this way, Mellors' identity is not simply "fixed" through other characters' conception of him. For instance, before Connie and Mellors are lovers, at one point she indignantly asks him why he doesn't speak "ordinary English?" And he answers her with "Me!—I thowt it *wor'* ordinary" (95). Here, Connie implies that Mellors is abnormal for not speaking "ordinary English" and for a moment he recognizes her power to identify this abnormality, or to interpellate him, with his recognition of "Me!" In this case, rather than a question mark, which would indicate a questioning of her authority, there is an exclamation point that emphatically accepts that her observation pertains to him. However, he then flips the script, so to speak, as his subjectivity is "enabled" through her authority to "inaugurate" it. Further, through an awareness of his own identity *and* Connie's, he points out that his English *is* ordinary, as "ordinary" is synonymous with "common" or "plain." It is Connie's English that is unconventional, as certainly less people are capable of speaking an educated form of English than his rank-and-file Derbyshire. This distinction reveals that his grasp on the language is actually better than Connie's as his understanding is more exact. After this brief exchange, "She was silent for a few moments, in anger"—her silence and anger a

clear indication of Mellors' reversal of power, for just as the young soldier's silence is an agreement to the terms of authority the officer presents, so does Connie's silence function in the same way.

While Connie's silence is a tacit marker of concession, her anger at Mellors for his persistence in "talking broad" points to something else entirely. Later in the novel, after Mellors and Connie have fallen in love, Mellors is introduced to Connie's sister, Hilda. The meeting does not go well as Hilda is disgusted by Mellor's station. The two spend the evening sniping at each other and Mellors moves back and forth from dialect to "proper" English and back again. This both angers Hilda and confuses her. Here, it is important to examine the entirety of one exchange:

He spoke the vernacular with a curious calm assurance, as if he were the landlord of the inn.

"What is there?" asked Connie, flushing.

"Boiled ham, cheese, pickled wa'nuts, if yer like—Nowt much."

"Yes," said Connie. "Won't you Hilda?"

Hilda looked up at him.

"Why do you speak Yorkshire?" she said softly.

"That! That's non Yorkshire, that's Derby."

He looked back at her with that faint, distant grin.

"Derby, then! Why do you speak Derby? You spoke natural English at first."

"Did Ah though? An' canna Ah change if Ah'n a mind to 't? Nay nay, let me talk Derby if it suits me. If yo'n nowt against it."

"It sounds a little affected," said Hilda.

"Ay, 'appen so! An' up i' Tevershall yo'd sound affected."—He looked again at her, with a queer calculating distance, along his cheek-bones: as if to say: Yi, an' who are you? (243)

Mellors' transition from "proper" or "natural" English to Derbyshire signals a transition of power as he speaks the vernacular "as if he were a landlord at the inn," in this case, like a landowner "with calm assurance," a defining characteristic of the aristocracy. Further tokens of this immediate reversal are Connie's flushed face and Hilda's "soft" question. Here, these women, who would typically occupy a role of dominance with a

servant figure, are rendered quiet and submissive with Mellors' broad dialect. Even Hilda's question strengthens Mellors' power play as the act of questioning assumes that the other has the power to answer—that she gets the name of the dialect wrong serves to reveal her ignorance and further diminish her position of control. Mellors challenges Hilda's conception of "natural" (just as he did with Connie in their earlier exchange) when he points out that however "affected" his accent may sound to her, her "natural" English would sound just as *unnatural* and "affected" around the Tevershall locals. Finally, it is important to note here that twice Mellors creates a distance through his vernacular and demeanor: In the first instance, he corrects Hilda about the name of the dialect and looks at her with a "faint, distant grin," while in the second instance he looks again at her with a "queer calculating distance" after he settles who sounds affected to whom. In both cases, this reference to distance highlights Mellors' refusal of inscription within classist norms as he clearly does not wish to be included in the aristocratic circle, but disassociated from it as much as possible.

The anger and eventual disorientation that both Connie and Hilda feel through Mellors' inconsistent use of English points to an injury of sorts, one that Mellors is able to inflict through his language. For the sisters, there is a reversal of expectation and a subsequent loss of control. Butler explains why this linguistic destabilization has the power to injure, and to do so completely:

To be injured by speech is to suffer a loss of context, that is, not to know where you are. Indeed, it may be that what is *unanticipated* about the injurious speech act is what constitutes its injury, the sense of putting its addressee out of control. The capacity to circumscribe the situation of the speech act is jeopardized at the moment of injurious address. To be addressed injuriously is not only to be open to an unknown future, but not to know the time and place of injury, and to suffer the disorientation of one's situation as the effect of such speech. Exposed at the moment of such a shattering is precisely the volatility of one's "place" without the

community of speakers; one can be “put in one’s place” by such speech, but such a place may be no place. (*Excitable Speech* 4)

In *Lady Chatterley’s Lover*, Mellors does not name-call or slander. Instead, the injury and subversion of authority comes from the violated expectation that since he *can* speak “properly” it would be “natural” do so. That he *chooses* to speak Derbyshire challenges the listener’s notions of what constitutes as “natural”—this challenge even extends to Hilda’s perceptions of her own “place” within society when she realizes that Mellors “was instinctively much more delicate and well-bred than herself... he had all the quiet, self-contained assurance of the English, no loose edges” (244). Indeed, Hilda’s recognition that a servant is more “well-bred” than herself is certainly a “disorientation of one’s situation” especially as his delicacy appears to be in-born, upturning the belief that the fine traits of the aristocracy were the result of centuries of good breeding. In this way, not only has Mellors’ dialect served elevate his own status in her eyes through the juxtaposition between his vernacular and “well-bred” manners, but it has also managed to put Hilda in a “no place” of reduced authority.

As Mellors has chosen his place among the so-called “ranks” and “acts” the part through his dress and speech, he is conforming to the particular social standards of a Tevershall working-class man. However, even as he attempts to resignify his position of authority as he rebels against the power gap between the lower classes and the aristocracy, he must still occupy that repressive space of conscription to do so. In *Gender is Burning: Questions of Appropriation and Subversion* Judith Butler looks at how men that dress in drag and queer culture attempt to rearticulate hegemonic forms of dominance through reappropriations of fashion and normative values. As I have mentioned, her findings are appropriate here as in both subaltern groups of class and

gender there is a pursuit of power through the reclamation and reappropriation of cultural norms. For Mellors, this reappropriation takes the form of his use of Derbyshire as a language of control and through this use he has the ability to displace and undermine systems of hegemony through his speech. Butler believes that this rearticulation “might be understood as repetitions of hegemonic forms of power that fail to repeat loyally, and, in that failure, open possibilities for resignifying the terms of violence against their violating aims” (*Gender is Burning* 383). In this case, Mellors’ “rearticulation” of power can be understood in the literal sense through his use of the speech act. Further, just as Butler maintains that the failure to “repeat loyally” these rearticulations opens the possibility for resignification, Mellors does not always speak Derby, and this “failure,” which is a conscious performance, serves to highlight the “violating aims” of questioning what is “natural” and “proper.” Of course, this comes down to an issue of difference— it is through Mellors’ varying speech that one perceives the gap between one and the other.

The question that Butler asks in her essay, and one that I believe is important here, is whether or not these acts of rearticulation are enough to dispossess the dominant power structures? Without a doubt, Mellors is able to force Hilda and Connie to reassess their notions of class and being. However, even as he is able rebel against these notions, he must do so within the prescribed confines of the classist system. While Hilda can concede that Mellors is perhaps “more delicate and well-bred” than she, the frame of reference for what “well-bred” means for both characters is narrowly defined. Indeed, Butler observes “a certain ambivalence” in spaces of rearticulation, “one that reflects the more general situation of being implicated in the regimes of power by which one is

constituted and, hence, of being implicated in the very regimes of power that one opposes” (*Gender is Burning* 384). Mellors can refuse the classist system through his language, but he must be constituted in that system to do so. In the novel, during the ill-fated dinner, Hilda realizes that Mellors is “acting,” that “he was no simple working man, not he” (243) and she becomes “baffled, and furiously annoyed” by his performance: “After all, he might show that he realised he was being honoured. Instead of which, with his play-acting and lordly airs, he seemed to think it was he who was conferring the honour” (244). In order for this performance to work; for Hilda to be put in her “place” and for Mellors to reclaim his, he must work within the conscriptions of class. Mellors must act the part of a lord that has the power to confer honors, and this act must precede an acceptance and navigation of a system that can bestow such control.

Yet, despite this active performance, while Mellors accepts that he must abide by the rules of classist authority if he is to exploit the system, he is clearly tired of being “implicated in the regimes of power.” At one point, Hilda demands that he should display good and “natural” manners (i.e. *not* speak in dialect) and Mellors responds with “Nay...I’m weary o’ manners. Let me be!” (244). Here, it is important to mention that even as Hilda notices Mellors’ innate “delicacy,” he claims that he is “weary o’ manners” suggesting that their two notions of manners are completely different. In this case, Lawrence recognizes this complicated space of ambivalence as a site of rebellion as Mellors is shown to both embrace and reject classist normative performances. Whereas it would be difficult to wholly connect the relationship between imitations of heteronormative behaviors and drag in *Gender is Burning* to Mellors’ use of language as rebellion in *Lady Chatterley’s Lover*, Butler does make a compelling point which makes

a useful comparison here: She argues that “heterosexual privilege operates in many ways”—just as any ideological privilege—through “naturalizing itself and rendering itself as the original and the norm” (384). In this case, having good manners means supporting classist, privileged ideologies. However, Mellors’ use of dialect as subversion, even with all of his bluster and “lordly airs” suggests that there is, nevertheless, a “proper” and “natural” English that supersedes Derbyshire, and of this, Lawrence is entirely aware.

Despite this “certain ambivalence,” Butler argues that there is a “kind of talking back” to the hegemonic space (*Gender is Burning* 389) within the performance of rearticulation—and here it is debatable in which instance Mellors is performing; in the Derby or the “proper” English. However, this rearticulation “constituted already by that hegemony, will become the occasion for the rearticulation of its terms; embodying the excess of that production...and in the process confuse and seduce an audience whose gaze must to some degree be structured through the hegemonies” (*Gender is Burning* 389). In other words, the rearticulation runs the risk of being fetishized by the hegemonic gaze “where the accumulated force of a historically entrenched and entrenching rearticulation overwhelms the more fragile effort to build an alternative cultural configuration from or against that more powerful regime” (*Gender is Burning* 389). For Connie, as an embodiment of the hegemonic force, after the initial “fog of the dialect,” finds Mellors’ dialect quaint, playful, but while it entertains her, she never comes to view it as “proper,” and, interestingly, by the end of the novel he ceases to speak in it altogether. When she tries to imitate his dialect, a performance of her own, it is clear that

she is not trying to be cruel, but her attempts to speak as he does further highlights their difference:

“Ay!” she said, imitating the dialect sound.

“Yi!” he said.

“Yi!” she repeated...

He laughed at her quickly.

“Nay, tha canna,” he protested.

“Why canna I?” she said.

He laughed. Her attempts at the dialect were so ludicrous, somehow [...]

“Mun I?” she said.

“Maun Ah!” he corrected.

“Why should I say *maun* when you said *mun*,” she protested. “You’re not playing fair.” (177)

In this case, Connie’s attempts at Derbyshire sound “ludicrous” to Mellors for a couple of reasons—all of which point to the almost inescapable hegemonic grasp of the rearticulation act: For one, members of the aristocracy would only ever speak in dialect as a form of mockery or teasing, never to communicate in a serious way. This, of course, pre-supposes that Derby is “unnatural,” and one would only ever use it in jest. Secondly, during this exchange, even as Connie is using the dialect in a mischievous manner, Mellors seems to be protective of his language and he protests and misdirects her pronunciation and does not play “fair.” Even though Lawrence was most likely unconscious of many of his creative decisions, here it appears that Mellors is taking care that Connie does not “overwhelm the more fragile effort” of his use of dialect as rebellion, through her position of power. For, if his language is a joke to her, how effective is his performance?

At the end of *Gender is Burning*, Judith Butler concludes that in order to enable a successful “disruptive repetition” (395) of the reappropriative or rearticulative performance there must be a mediating distance between the dominant space and the

reappropriated one. For Butler, this can occur through the cinematic gaze, as “the camera figures tacitly as the instrument of transubstantiation...as that which controls the field of significance” (392). The viewer (or for our purposes, the reader) sees what the camera *wants* it to see. Typically, the eye of the camera almost always represents a privileged lens, and if this can be subverted, if the camera can represent a subaltern lens, the ensuing narrative becomes a more effective means of rearticulation. This lens, then, is the mediating space between hegemonic power structures and the disenfranchised. Lawrence attempts to be that mediating space for the reader in *Lady Chatterley’s Lover*. While Mellors’ rebellion still may be inscribed within the system he wishes to rebel against, Lawrence’s lens, his historicity and trace—as the son of a coalminer, as a working-class man navigating a privileged space of authorial success, as a man who felt always on the fringes of society—function to negotiate a compelling expanse of refusal.

Conclusion: The Linguistic Evolution of Lady Chatterley

Through the depiction of Mellors' (the pneumatic misanthrope, working-class yet educated hero from a coal mining village in the Midlands of England—the very image of Lawrence himself) Lawrence is finally able to create a character that can successfully rebel against the constrictions of class that he spent his whole life rejecting. Here, Lawrence refuses the class system as he unites the working class and aristocracy. This is a triumphant novel for Lawrence (despite its many legal issues involving its printing and its censorship) as it is clear from most of his works that he did not believe this sort of progress was possible. In Lawrence's much earlier "Autobiographical Sketch" he writes how this classist divide was responsible for his feelings of isolation and failure:

And I have *wanted* to feel truly friendly with some, at least, of my fellow-men. Yet, I have never quite succeeded. Whether I get on *in* the world is a question; but I certainly don't get on very well *with* the world. And whether I am a worldly success or not I really don't know. But I feel, somehow, not much of a human success. (*Selected Literary Criticism* 4)

Lady Chatterley's Lover seems to be a work of reconciliation. Here, Mellors evolves from a character that actively shuns the world and believes in the futility of modern civilization to one that believes that his love for a noblewoman can reconnect him with the rest of humanity. At one point, Mellors says that it is "quite nice" to envisage "the extermination of the human species, and the long pause that follows before some other species crops up" (218) while in the end he writes that he trusts "in the little flame between us" (300). However, even as Mellors evolves throughout the narrative, his creative conception spans three full novels and his changes in name, dialect, education, and trace all point a philosophical transformation of Lawrence himself.

One of Lawrence's authorial quirks was that he tended to fully rewrite his novels as he revised them. He wrote his last novel three times and while the *Chatterley* novels differ radically, they also share many similarities and follow the same basic plot. The differences, however, seem to revolve around the male characters which suggests that these changes had something to do with Lawrence's own ideological shifts. In the first two versions, *The First Lady Chatterley* and *John Thomas and Lady Jane*, Sir Clifford is depicted as a tragic figure whose physical and psychological damage from the war plays a central role in the narrative. While Mellors, who here is named Parkin, is barely recognizable as he speaks entirely in dialect, is uneducated, and an active communist. All of the markers of rebellion that Mellors possesses are absent in Parkin, such as the modes of rearticulation through linguistic variance or any of the traits of the "ontological simulacra" that defer meaning-making through the symbolic difference within his character. In this case, Parkin resembles the young soldier in "The Prussian Officer" whose lack of the Lawrencean tokens of the hero foretell an unsatisfying conclusion. In both of these earlier versions, at the end of the novel, Parkin ends up beaten within an inch of life by men of his own class and his future with Connie is uncertain. Here, even as Parkin is the isolated protagonist he is without a viable means of classist refusal and the education that grants Mellors his ability to code switch. Moreover, Parkin's only means of independence is through a dependence on Connie's money—which is still a dependence upon the aristocratic system. At the end of *John Thomas and Lady Jane*, Connie asks Parkin if he would do anything for her if she wanted him to, because, she says, "you mustn't think you can just leave me." Through his answer, it is clear that Connie operates in a position of power as there is a tone of subservience to his words:

“If you feel it’s the best, I will. I’ll do anything you like, for the best. I don’t reckon it’s any good layin’ the law down, not for myself or anybody—But I can go on looking for some farmin’ work, like, an’ then—” (*The First and Second Lady Chatterley* 570).

Here, Parkin defers to Connie’s better judgment and authoritative power, and seems unsure of his own plans of farming as he does not even finish his sentence. In addition, his dialect lacks the florid nuances of Mellors’ defiant and “lordly airs.” While in the first version, Parkin has neither a voice nor a presence in the final pages, in the second one his authority is truncated as it can only function through Connie and the classist system.

The drastic shift that occurs in the gamekeeper’s character throughout the different versions seems to have something to do with Lawrence’s own changing notions of being. Scheckner maintains that these novels “offer a unique insight into the conflicting themes with which Lawrence grappled during the last five years of his life”:

The progression from the first to the third version illustrates many of the lifelong tensions that dominated Lawrence’s novels: class, politics, the individual, and sex. The wide range of differences among the three novels also reveals the extent to which Lawrence was undecided about the role of the individual in society and the extent to which the individual could or should participate in shaping his own social future. (137)

The first two *Chatterley* works appear to align with Lawrence’s more cynical views of modern civilization as Mellors’ and Connie’s counterparts are almost irrevocably chained to the various socially ingrained structures of industry, marriage, and class. However, in the final version—which is, according to Scheckner, an “experimental novel” (166)—the characters are allowed to break free of these constrictive forces and retain their individuality, *as well as* develop human connections and hope for the future. In 1925, just a year before he began *The First Lady Chatterley*, in his essay “Why the Novel

Matters” Lawrence likens himself, as a novelist, to a god-like figure as he considers himself “superior to the saint, the scientist, the philosopher, and the poet” (*Selected Literary Criticism* 105) and his word is a living truth. Yet, even here, it is evident that Lawrence’s truth is evolving and changing as he writes:

We should ask for no absolutes, or absolute. Once and for all and for ever, let us have done with the ugly imperialism of any absolute. There is no absolute good, and there is nothing absolutely right. All things flow and change, and even change is not absolute. The whole is a strange assembly of apparently incongruous parts, slipping past one another. (*Selected Literary Criticism* 106)

For Lawrence, nothing is “absolute” or fixed, and in this case, it is important to note his usage of “imperialism” as this particular word connotes systems of class and notions of manifest destiny. Here, “all things flow and change,” including his own ideological assumptions of class, of humanity, and his place amongst the “incongruous parts.” What we see in the final *Lady Chatterley* is Lawrence’s evolution through Mellors’ development as a character. And just as human evolution can be tracked through the Broca’s area of the brain in the frontal lobe, our language center, so can Mellors through his linguistic agency.

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