

Reconfiguring Postwar Class Relations: A Literary Sociology Analysis of The Representation of Laborers and Aristocrats in 'Lady Chatterley's Lover'

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ABSTRACT

Lady Chatterley's Lover (2022) is more than just a story of forbidden love; it also depicts the conditions of social class, gender inequality, and one's struggle for independence in a restrictive society. This article, from the point of view of literary sociology, tries to see this film not only as entertainment, but also as a social story that criticizes power relations in marriage, old rules, and noble class levels. The relationship between Lady Constance Chatterley and Oliver Mellors, who come from two vastly different worlds, shows how love can be a way to go against the rules. On the one hand, Connie's marriage to Clifford shows how emotionally alienated she is and the demands of status; meanwhile, her relationship with Mellors grows in a place of freedom-in nature-and reflects her search for a more honest and real relationship. From this analysis, it can be seen that love in this movie is not only about two people falling in love, but also about the struggle to regain control of oneself, choice, and the right to speak-especially for women in a society full of rules. So, Lady Chatterley's Lover is not only about love, but also expresses the desire to be fully human again, in a world that often doesn't care about feelings.

Keywords: Human; Freedom; Society; Lady Chatterley's Lover.

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INTRODUCTION

Literary works always appear in a clear social context. It is the result of interactions between societies, which are formed by, for, and of the societies themselves. In this regard, the sociology of literature approach is crucial: it allows us to understand literary works not merely as works of art, but also as depictions of the social structures, class conflicts, and ideological clashes that surround the society in which they are created. One example of a work that reflects these social dynamics is *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, both in the novel version by D. H. Lawrence and in its latest movie released in 2022.

However, this *Lady Chatterley's Lover* movie is not just about the forbidden love between a noblewoman and a man from the lower class. It is more than that, as it chronicles the social tensions and transformations in England after World War I, a time when class boundaries began to fade, and many people began to question their role and position in the long-established social order. The characters of Lady Constance Chatterley, who comes from an aristocratic family, and Oliver Mellors, who works as a ranger, reflect not only individuals, but also two social classes engaged in a relationship full of challenges and resistance.

Using a literary sociology approach, the movie can be seen as a social story that raises themes such as class injustice, patriarchal domination, and individual attempts to gain control over the body and the right to love against social norms. The relationship between Lady Chatterley and Mellors is more than just an ordinary love story, it is also a critique of the class system and traditional values that limit the freedom of individuals, especially women.

The film adaptation of *Lady Chatterley's Lover* in 2022 is interesting because it is made in the context of modern media that is more sensitive to social issues. This raises the question: does the movie simply rehash an old story in a cinematic way, or does it update its social message to be more relevant to current conditions? With a sociology of literature approach, these questions will be discussed and analyzed in this presentation.

Therefore, this analysis is not only important to understand the interactions between the two main characters in the story, but also to examine how literary works-in this case a film adaptation-can function as a social mirror and a means of criticizing society. *Lady Chatterley's Lover* illustrates that love does not only involve feelings, but also relates to power, social status, and the struggle to define freedom in a world full of restrictions.

THEORETICAL REVIEW

Sociology of Literature.

Literary sociology can be considered as a discipline that explores the complex relationship between literature and society in an objective and scientific way. This approach usually examines literary works not only as art or texts, but also as reflections and results of social dynamics, cultural values, and interactions between individuals in society. Therefore, the sociology of literature bridges the dialectic between social life and the literary work itself, including the interaction between the author, his work, and the reader in the existing social context. This research includes analyzing how the social background of an author, the conditions of society at the time the work was created, and the public's response to the work influence each

other. In addition, sociology of literature also emphasizes the social role of literature as a tool of criticism, a means of entertainment, and a social reflection that can trigger awareness and change in society.

Literature reflects social life that is realized in the form of works through the creative process and imagination. Literary works tell and describe human life. The sociology of literature serves as an approach to understanding literary works in relation to society. This approach pays attention to various social aspects in literary works, including the problems and identities in them.

Literary sociology is a method that sees literary works as the result of social interaction. This means that literary works not only reflect the imagination of the author, but also contain elements of history, ideology, power structures, social values, and class conflicts that exist in society. With this approach, literature is understood not just as a mirror of social reality, but also as part of the social system itself.

According to Alan Swingewood, the sociology of literature connects literary texts with broader social structures. He points out that literature can depict social tensions, power relations, and prevailing political and economic dynamics. In other words, literature holds the voice of a period. In this case, *Lady Chatterley's Lover* reflects the social changes after the war that not only affected public life, but also created conflict between traditional norms and the individual's desire for independence. (The Sociology of Literature - Swingewood, Alan 1972)

By applying the sociology of literature approach and referring to the thoughts of Alan Swingewood and Lucien Goldmann, the analysis of *Lady Chatterley's Lover* can explore more deeply the dynamics of class, power relations, and criticism of social structures that limit individuals. The movie not only tells a story of forbidden love, but also depicts a narrative of changing times, conflicts of values, and the search for the meaning of freedom in an increasingly complicated society.

Literature as Social Criticism

In addition, the main role of literature in sociological review is its ability to function as a tool of social criticism. It can be said that literary works can reveal injustice, inequality, and the dominance of values that rule society. In the context of *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, this work can be understood as a critique of the rigid class structure, patriarchal domination, and marriages based on social status as much as the love and emotional closeness that every married couple feels.

The interaction between Lady Chatterley and Mellors represents not only love, but also an act of resistance against an unjust social system. In this case, the literary work functions as a symbol of resistance to the dominant ideology.

Although derived from a novel written in 1928, the recent film *Lady Chatterley's Lover* (2022) is set in a very different atmosphere where issues such as sexuality, women's liberation, and criticism of the patriarchal system are topics of conversation around the world. Therefore, this film adaptation needs to be understood in the context of its production. This is the importance of the sociology of literature approach: not only studying the content of the narrative, but also considering how and why a story is made in a specific social context. The film adaptation can be seen as a re-reading of an ancient text from a contemporary perspective. This perspective enriches the analysis as it provides an opportunity to reinterpret themes that were once considered taboo, but are now the subject of social reflection.

METHODS OF RESEARCH

In this study of literary works (films), qualitative research methods are applied. This method comes from natural data and inductive or deductive analysis. In a literary work entitled *Qualitative Research Methods* by Lexy J., it is explained that qualitative research is a procedure that produces descriptive data, both in written and oral form, which comes from individuals and actors who are observed. A qualitative approach leads to the context of individuals or organizations in variables or hypotheses, seen as part of the whole. This approach can also be considered important for obtaining in-depth information, namely the real data as the value behind the visible information. (Lexy J. Moleong - 2007: 4)

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Emotional Relations as a Form of Class and Gender Resistance.

After the end of World War I in 1918, people in the UK experienced major changes, not only in political and economic aspects, but also in the social fabric. The war changed how people viewed social status, power, and old values that were previously considered unchangeable. Before the conflict, England had a highly structured class system - there was the nobility, middle class, and workers - who lived in clear social categories and rarely interacted with each other.

However, the war brought about a significant transformation. Many working-class men fought on the front lines, demonstrating their courage and ability. On the other hand, many men from the upper classes became casualties on the battlefield or suffered deep psychological effects. At the same time, class boundaries began to fade. People began to doubt why one group should be seen as superior to another simply because of family background.

Sociologists like Karl Mannheim explain this with the concept of "social generation", which refers to groups that grow up in a certain period (such as post-war) where they form new mindsets and values. Mannheim believed that collective experiences - such as war - can foster a sense of solidarity and change perspectives on conventional power and authority. (Karl Mannheim - Social)

In addition, Raymond Williams, a British cultural thinker, also discussed how economic and cultural changes after the war impacted class structures. In his work *Culture and Society*, he emphasized that class is not only related to wealth, but also to access to education, culture, and lifestyle. After the war, more individuals from the working class gained access to education and began to challenge the cultural dominance of the elite. (Raymond Williams - Culture and Society)

These changes were also reflected in the literature and media of the time. Many novels, plays and poems began to present the voices of ordinary people, not just those from noble or wealthy families. Society began to become more accepting of change and the drive for social mobility became stronger.

In *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, love is not something sweet and romantic, but a form of resistance to the strict social structure. which is very contrary to the title of the film 'Lady Chatterley's Lover' it turns out that in the film the relationship between Lady Chatterley and Mellors - two people from very different class backgrounds - becomes a symbol of the conflict between the restrictive aristocratic system and the human desire to love without being bound by social status.

Behind their closeness lies a sharp critique of post-war British society, where class boundaries remained strictly enforced, and marriage was more often based on family honor than love. This love story

serves as a kind of “silent protest” against oppressive norms, and shows that closeness can be the simplest yet most powerful way of social resistance. The movie shows the stark contrast between the comforts of the upper class and the emptiness within them. Lady Chatterley lives in a large house, with all its luxuries and status, yet has no meaningful relationship with her husband. It illustrates how luxury does not always mean happiness, especially in a post-war society where human relationships are replaced by symbols of honor and strict social routines.



Picture 1, (Clifford & Connie)

Base on picture 1 for the condition of Clifford and Connie's marriage relationship, it can be said to be unhealthy, meaning that it is not in the happiness of other people's marriage relationships. Because of several aspects that make them feel like they are blocked by a large fortress and not as normal as husband and wife in general. Moreover, the husband's desire to have children from other people with the context of prioritizing offspring who will continue the husband's life and career through offspring. But the husband's desire has not been accepted by Connie. But time and moments will answer all and it happened that Connie fell in love with her husband's own gardener (laborer). But it can be said that Connie's actions are resistance to her husband because she cannot fulfill the emotional needs that wives should get.



Picture 2, (Clifford, Connie, Mellors)

Through a literary sociology approach, this picture encourages (Base on picture 2) us to understand how the upper class often lives with the pressure of social representations: they must appear strong, stable, and dignified, even though inside they feel emptiness and loneliness. In this context, Lady Chatterley's Lover presents a stark portrait of how the upper class is not only oppressed, but also trapped within the system they themselves created.

Love as a Safe Space from Social Power.

One of the profound aspects of the movie is how the female body - in this case Lady Chatterley - is portrayed as a symbol of struggle. On the one hand, she is trapped in a marriage that is socially acceptable, but emotionally and physically empty. On the other hand, she rediscovers the meaning of her body and desire through her relationship with Mellors.

From the point of view of literary sociology, this can be understood as a critique of the treatment of women's bodies that are often considered as social property: belonging to the husband, belonging to the family, even belonging to aristocratic society. Connie, initially bound to the role of a noble wife, slowly begins to reclaim control over her body and her choices. This is not just about sexuality, but also about the power to determine the direction of one's own life-a very personal form of emancipation.

Nature in the movie is not just a location, but also an important symbol of freedom. When the two protagonists leave the mansion to commune with nature, they seem to escape from social norms, and briefly succeed in creating their own world. Thus, the movie can be seen as a metaphor for escape from the class system that limits humans-where nature becomes a safe haven for individual freedom.

Connie is not just "having an affair" in simple moral terms. In a social and psychological context, Connie's actions can be understood as a response to a marital relationship that feels empty, rigid and dehumanized - influenced by Clifford's attitude as a husband who is emotionally disconnected and prioritizes social authority over personal intimacy. Therefore, it is logical to argue that Connie's affair was not only a sexual impulse, but also a reaction to the insensitivity of Clifford's masculinity and the emotional void in her marriage. The act became a form of silent protest against a social system that made love a matter of status rather than humanity.

The relationship between Connie and Mellors in *Lady Chatterley's Lover* goes far beyond a superficial physical relationship or affair. Their relationship touches a deeper and existential dimension - the human need to be heard, touched, and recognized as a human being in the midst of a rigid and unfriendly social system.

Connie, as a member of the elite class, was accustomed to the social laws that governed her life: she was expected to be a faithful wife, an elegant lady, and a protector of her family's dignity. However, in her marriage to Clifford, she finds neither warmth nor the opportunity to be herself. Clifford, who is physically challenged and obsessed with social status, treats Connie more as a possession than as his life partner. In this empty situation, Mellors, a forest ranger, emerges, showing a simple yet sincere humanity.



Picture 4, (Mellors as Labor)

The bond between Connie and Mellors is forged in the midst of nature-in the forest, away from the public eye. The location and the way they build their relationship is a powerful symbol that they are creating a small world apart from class judgments, social norms, and aristocratic expectations. In Mellors' arms, Connie not only finds passion, but also listens to the voice of her own body that has been suppressed by her social role. (Base on picture 4)

From the perspective of literary sociology, this relationship can be seen as an attempt to escape from an oppressive class system to a space of equal and humane love. Mellors, despite being from a lower class, does not admire Connie excessively or feel fearful like others around him. He sees Connie as an individual, not as a symbol of class. In this connection, a space is created that allows love, bodies, and feelings to exist without hierarchy.

The difference between Connie and Mellors' relationship and her marriage to Clifford opens up a space to reflect that true love does not arise from social status, but from the connection between souls. It is precisely outside the existing social system that they can experience being fully human-with equal wounds, desires, and freedom.

Connie and Mellors' relationship did not take place in the palace, nor in the formal dining room of the nobles as is usually the case, but in the forest, in nature, in locations free from public scrutiny. This is no coincidence. In their interactions, nature functions as an area without the influence of power-a place where they can let go of their social identities and relate to each other as equal human beings.



Picture 3, (Connie & Mellors)

Base on picture the context of Lady Chatterley's Lover, Connie and Mellors' relationship takes place in an outdoor environment-a location that can be symbolically understood as a “safe space” or heterotopia, as described by Foucault (1986), which is a concrete space that is outside the dominating order. Moreover, according to Lefebvre (1991), space is not neutral, but rather shaped and controlled by certain social forces. Therefore, Connie's decision to escape to the forest is a form of rejection of the social space of the aristocracy that hinders her role as a woman and an individual.

From the perspective of literary sociology, this location can be understood as a symbol of “safe space” from oppressive structures. Nature becomes a location where love evolves without orders, without norms, and without restrictive social roles. Thus, love in this movie is not only a personal feeling, but also a form of resistance to a rigid and hierarchical social system.

CONCLUSION

Ultimately, the movie is more than just a love story. It shows how a woman's personal experience can be seen as a critique of existing class structures, the instability of masculinity, and the emotional loss of marriage. In this movie, love emerges as a safe haven, as a form of quiet resistance, and as an attempt to redefine the meaning of freedom in a world filled with social restrictions. In this context, *Lady Chatterley's Lover* illustrates how literature-and its film adaptation-can be a tool for understanding social dynamics while representing the most basic human longing: to be loved and treated as a human being.

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