

48. The fact of the appropriation of this belief by reactionary political ideologies does not invalidate it.
49. It seems difficult to determine exactly when Lawrence first discovered Rozanov, whose commentary on Dostoevsky's *Legend of the Grand Inquisitor*, published in Russia in 1890, was certainly known to S.S. Koteliansky. Lawrence registers very acutely his awareness of the fact that Rozanov represents the culmination of a tradition in Russian writing.
50. The 'leaves' have fallen from the parent 'tree' of the 'great tradition' of Russian writing. Rozanov's autumnal melancholy is accompanied (as in *Lady C.*) by prophetic vitalism and eroticism. Rozanov's two volumes take the form of a kind of Pascalian 'pensées'. But the brevity and laconicism of his 'bits' also have a lot to do with the fact that he was writing for a column in the journal *Novoye Vremya* where the physical shape of his column-inches was pre-ordained.
51. V.V. Rozanov, *Solitaria*, London: Wishart and Co., 1927, p.155.
52. *Ibid.*

## The Strange Becomings of Sir Clifford Chatterley: a Schizoanalysis

Stephen Alexander

### *The Philosophy of Difference and Becoming*

The process of becoming must be understood not as the unfolding of an essence toward the goal of fixed being, but, rather, as something involving 'the affirmation of the positivity of difference, meant as a multiple and constant process of transformation.'<sup>1</sup> A genuine becoming is always, therefore, a becoming-other and not simply progression or regression along a straight line of identity. It is always an unwilling process; an opening up to the strange forces of desire and disintegration, not an attempt to filter these forces through the ego in order to experience them as conscious sensation, thereby bartering away physical intensity for mere mental representation. Connie Chatterley's becoming the New Eve and the becoming-Old Adam of her lover, Parkin/Mellors, provide good examples of the above.

However, not all becomings are pure in this manner; some, like those of Sir Clifford Chatterley, are inherently decadent attempts to explore and experience the process of disintegration whilst refusing to surrender the old self: what Lawrence refers to as 'corruption within the mind'. It is these counterfeit-becomings of Sir Clifford about which we wish to say something here.

### *The Becoming-Cybermensch and Becoming-Baby of Sir Clifford Chatterley*

If both Connie and Mellors accept the need for breakdown in order to achieve a breakthrough into the fourth dimensional

realm of bliss, then, in a sense, so too does Clifford. But whereas the lovers seek to form a new mortal relationship within the flow of active desire, the latter wants to achieve his own isolated perfection and immortality plugged into the flow of capital and allowing only radio waves to pass over his well organised and sewn up corpse-body. And if Connie and Mellors can be observed beating a retreat from an outer world of chaos and mechanical insanity masquerading as civilised order to an inner world of fulfilment and 'the peace that comes of fucking', then Clifford can be seen abandoning his emotional and sensual self, allowing it to rot into a state of marsh-degeneracy, in order that he may succeed in the outer realm of big business and heavy industry. Clifford's case demonstrates what happens when one attempts to live entirely from the upper centres and perversely accentuate those aspects of our nature which are, ultimately, human, all too human, surrendering all phallic wonder and tenderness and denying the feelings, desires and forces which pass into us and through us from behind and below.

Clifford begins his becoming-machine at a molar rather than a molecular level, when, during the War, he is blown up and has to be reassembled from the bits that are left by medical science. Although paralysed below the waist and confined to a metal wheelchair, it is not this that matters most in determining Clifford's fate. In other words, it is not the fact that he has lost the use of his legs and his sexual potency which is crucial (except of course in a rather obvious symbolic sense); what really matters is that 'he had been so much hurt, something inside him had perished, some of his feelings were gone. There was a blank of insentience.'<sup>2</sup> Numbness of soul, not of limbs, is Clifford's problem, and Lawrence is keen to stress that Clifford had been unfeeling and sexless even prior to his injury.

For Clifford, what has always mattered most is not *sexual* but *personal* intimacy; he is a man who likes to keep

his affairs at the level of the ego and the mind, not the body. This enables him to be both charming and intelligent, but, as Connie begins to notice, it keeps him strangely disconnected not only from her, but from everyone and everything: 'He was remotely interested: but like a man looking down a microscope, or up a telescope. He was not in touch.'<sup>3</sup> Zarathustra encounters this type of 'moon-like' man of cool detachment and 'emasculated leering' during the course of his travels and condemns their secret desire to defile the things they lust after which they know how to look at and perhaps to finger, but not how to touch with their bodies and intuitively respond to.

Unable to touch, so too is Clifford untouchable; for despite the increasing material bulk of his upper-body, physically he hardly exists. Thus, try as she might: 'Connie felt she herself didn't really...touch him. She had never finally got at him: perhaps there was nothing to get at, ultimately: just a negation of human contact.'<sup>4</sup> And so it is that whilst Clifford can show an extraordinary and uncanny degree of observation in his writings and be 'curiously true...to the modern psychology'<sup>5</sup> there is absolutely no warmth of feeling in his work. His sarcasm and sophistication both disguise and betray his lack of tenderness. Not that he cares about either his own lack of feeling, or the feelings of others: his only concern is with maintaining the surface of polite society and with keeping established forms intact. Thus we note how his dress and appearance, his manners and speech, are as well-ordered as his home, Wragby, is clock-work and mechanical in its day-to-day running. For Clifford, to preserve the shell of existence is the great duty and obligation of his class: 'And yet, to Connie, it was methodical anarchy. No warmth of feeling united it organically.'<sup>6</sup>

And just as she herself begins to come apart, so too does Clifford begin to turn rotten like an addled egg, naively believing that he can maintain his fair exterior regardless, by



means of a combination of will power and an increase in his knowledge of the workings of the world:

He began to read again his technical works on the coal-mining industry...it was astounding, the ingenuity and the almost uncanny cleverness of the modern technical mind...It was far more interesting than art, than literature, poor emotional, half-witted stuff...In this field, men were like gods, or demons, inspired to discoveries, and fighting to carry them out. In this activity, men were beyond any mental age calculable. But Clifford knew that when it did come to the emotional life, these self same men were of a mental age of about thirteen, feeble boys. The discrepancy was enormous and appalling.

But let that be. Let men slide down to general idiocy in the emotional mind. Clifford did not care. Let all that go hang.<sup>7</sup>

This important passage marks the beginning of Clifford's conscious decision to accelerate the processes of disintegration within his own soul; his decision to surrender what remained of his integrity and manhood in an effort to become in some manner superhuman and inhuman at the same time. There are several points upon which I would like to comment.

First, it is worth noting Clifford's casual contempt for art and literature; he is a *bildungsphilister* for whom culture provides a pleasurable backdrop and occasional distraction from the more serious business of making money. Clifford transforms without difficulty from a writer of fashionable stories to an industrial technocrat and, as we will see, it is in coal and not fiction that he finds his inspiration and immortality.

The first of the above (inspiration) is what Clifford seeks and surrenders himself to, in his quest for the latter (immortality). To become a god requires having a heart as 'numb

as a potato' and a penis that 'never lifts his head up', says Tommy Dukes<sup>8</sup> and Clifford can lay claim to both of these atrophied and ineffectual organs. But it also requires the ecstatic experience of inspiration and this, as we mention, is what Clifford finds in the underworld of the coal mine:

...he was gone, he was no longer a human being, but an elemental, caught up in a weird inspiration, a *raptus* – And his soul had passed into a permanent ecstasy, the long-enduring ecstasy of the struggle with uncanny Matter. It was as if he fused himself into the very existence of coal and sulphur and petroleum and rock, and lost his humanity.<sup>9</sup>

Connie, seeing what becomes of her husband, suddenly understands the hatred for inspiration found in the Greeks: for the latter were fearful of losing themselves and being carried away; 'possessed by some raving force'<sup>10</sup> beyond their control. Nietzsche even suggests that Socratic rationalism was adopted as an emergency measure of self-preservation at a time of instinctual anarchy and in the face of such forces unleashed by the arrival of original nihilism.

Today, however, such rationalism has been carried to the point of its own self-destruction and collapse; reason has itself become a danger and a form of logical intoxication as man confuses the ecstasy of more and more knowledge for the active flow of desire and living mystery with which one should travel. Lawrence insists that a distinction must be made between mechanical inspiration and what he terms the 'breeze of God'. But of course, only those with a healthy will to power can hope to make such a distinction: Clifford, the corrupt intellectual and decadent idealist, cannot begin to evaluate difference and know distinction in 'the great invisible influence'<sup>11</sup> of the Outside, for he knows only reactive forces and their effects, the base representations of consciousness, and the will to negation that is triumphant within modern humanity.



So, in as much as Clifford does let go of his limited human self, it is not in order to become-animal, or become-man risen in the flesh as his wife rises a woman. Instead, in wishing to become super-human and without limits (a god), he merely becomes more of a machine capable not of touching the world, but merely of ravishing it, possessing it, exploiting it, and, at last, destroying it. Connie and her lover both exercise a degree of caution and retain enough of what is most valuable in their human selves; but Clifford lets 'all that go hang' and ends up retaining and strengthening what is most despicable in his human self: the pettiness, the resentment, the bad conscience, the fears, the hate which calls itself love, as he moves toward his goal of becoming an unearthly being of pure spirit and ego, free from the encumbrance and embarrassment of having guts and testes.<sup>12</sup> However, the mistake Clifford makes is in thinking he can abandon his body and his emotional-intuitive self and simply slide down to a mental age of thirteen; as we shall see, Clifford's ultimate becoming is an obscene and humiliating becoming-infantile.

As Clifford moves toward this becoming-baby, he becomes increasingly self-absorbed and starts to drop even his intellectual companionships maintained from his Cambridge days, in favour of playing simple card games with his nurse, Mrs. Bolton, or listening alone to the radio for hours on end like an imbecile: 'It amazed and stunned Connie. But there he would sit, with a blank, entranced expression on his face, like a person losing his mind.'<sup>13</sup>

As I indicated earlier, this illustrates how Clifford botches the job of building for himself a body without organs: rather than opening himself up to the nourishing and creative flow of desire between himself and the external world, himself and others, he shuts himself off to all but forms of machine-sensation and stimulation.

Lawrence writes: 'The amazing move into abstraction on the part of the whole of humanity – the film, the radio, the gramophone – means that we loathe the physical...We don't *want* to look at flesh and blood people – we want to watch their shadows on a screen. We don't *want* to hear their actual voices: only transmitted through a machine. We must get away from the physical.'<sup>14</sup>

Thus whilst Connie seeks to escape from the dead zone of simulacra and abstraction back into the world of flesh, Clifford moves wilfully in the reverse direction. Connie watches as her husband drifts off into this 'other weirdness' and is partly astonished, partly horrified as Clifford 'almost suddenly changed into a creature with a hard, efficient shell' and 'pulpy interior' like one of the 'crabs and lobsters of the modern industrial and financial world'<sup>15</sup> with steel exteriors.

Perhaps the crucial question to address regarding this becoming-crustacean-machine is how far does it go? The answer, in Clifford's case, seems to be all the way. For if, as Colin Milton argues, in earlier works Lawrence regarded the 'hardness and mechanical movement of contemporary civilised man as...something which conceals but has not contaminated the instinctive life underneath',<sup>16</sup> by the time of writing *Lady Chatterley's Lover* this optimism has been replaced by a far more pessimistic and, in some ways, more profound, analysis of the question concerning man and technology that allows for the fact that: 'the machine, inevitably, is *within* us...and not simply in the sense that the individual...is conceived of as reduced in our society to a significance purely functional or instrumental. The machine is in us in the deeper sense that the great reductive principle is in us'<sup>17</sup> (i.e., the will). Thus the becoming-cyborg of man is a real becoming (not merely a metaphorical description).

It is one of the great ironies or paradoxes of Lawrence's own position that although he rages constantly against the machine and the 'automatic principle' of the 'non-vital uni-



verse', he is the first to insist that man is himself part-machine (the mind being a 'great dynamo of super-mechanical force'<sup>18</sup>) and that his evolution has always been intimately related to the development of technology. If, in one sense, man is the inventor of the machine, so, in another, he is the invention of the machine. Any absolute division posited between the organic and inorganic, natural and artificial, is simply untenable. Man has his being in both the vital fourth dimension and the fixed, automatic realm of the machine. Nihilism can perhaps be defined as a state of affairs in which man falls from the former exclusively into the latter; but there can be no human life of even the most affirmative kind that is lived exclusively in the former.

The problem and danger begins when man fails to distinguish himself in any way from the machine; i.e., when he identifies his being and his unfolding with the mechanical principle and mental representations of consciousness, when he mistakenly believes that 'he is progressing and developing himself to something "higher", in and through the machine'.<sup>19</sup> Clifford is one such man; prepared to substitute the 'natural self-regulatory intelligence of the body plasma by a goblin in the brain'<sup>20</sup> – i.e., that ideal little machine, the ego.

Due to the complete identification with his own ego and total conformity with his own idea of himself, Clifford functions automatically and becomes more and more armoured against the external world and all that is spontaneous in himself. This makes him not only 'cold like a crab, greedy like a crab, lustful with the rickety egoism of a crab',<sup>21</sup> but slavish and proletarian, despite his aristocratic title and social status.

Yet there is at least one sense in which Clifford is not 'free to be a crab': he, no more than anyone else, is able to side-step or turn back from the crisis of nihilism. Aware of this, he decides to push on into the furthest extremes of

decadence: not in order to accelerate the process in order that nihilism may be perfected and in this way overcome; nor in the hope that he may emerge physically regenerate on the other side of the abyss having himself been dipped in oblivion and reminded of his own mortality. Clifford is one of the damned; one of those unhappy souls that cannot die and become silent, but must ever-assert themselves as they seek out 'the private and egoistic resurrection of the spirit, into the ideal eternity'.<sup>22</sup> Clifford cares nothing for the eternal return of the flesh, for he is a despiser of the body and an 'afterworldsman' of the kind to which Zarathustra refers – one who through 'suffering and impotence' creates the thought of another life external to space and time; a heaven where flowers never fade.

Thus Clifford's way is a way into Nothingness and a continuation of his own stale egoism. He leads us neither to the *Übermensch* nor into the future. Full of the 'viciousness of invalids' and living in petty triumph over the murdered phallus, he gains his greatest pleasure from bullying his wife and servants 'not by obvious compulsion, but by insidious negation'<sup>23</sup> and from becoming a success in the modern world of mechanized greed that sparkles with bright lights and gushing hot metal and destroys whatever does not conform: 'Soon it would destroy the wood, the bluebells would spring no more. All vulnerable things must perish beneath the rolling and running of iron.'<sup>24</sup>

Thus it is that we see Clifford venturing into the woods in his motorised chair, puffing smoke. Connie trails behind in distress as she watches 'the wheels jolt over the wood-ruff and the bugle, and squash the little yellow cups of the creeping jenny',<sup>25</sup> before making a wake through the forget-me-nots with which she will later decorate her body and the body of her lover.

Readers who are tempted into sympathy for 'poor Sir Clifford' should remember his willingness not only to crush



the flowers of the wood beneath the wheels of his chair, but also to 'crush mankind to death'<sup>26</sup>, within the wheels of industry. They should recall that he is thoroughly infected with the 'virus of hate': 'Nothing loud-mouthed and fascist, but a keen, tingling, subtle hate'<sup>27</sup>, that the only tender thing to be done would be to shoot him with less qualms than one would kill a weasel. Death is the only solution for those who frustrate life and whose souls are rotten inside them.<sup>28</sup> And surely death would have provided a more honourable and dignified fate for Clifford than his final becoming; a becoming-infantile in a corrupt and perverse parody of that becoming-child which Zarathustra advocates, which is arrived at via a becoming-camel and becoming-lion, *not* a becoming-crab-machine.

The catalyst for this final metamorphosis is Connie's letter to Clifford in which she informs him of her love for another man. Clifford reacts to this with a self-willed hysteria; shocked, but not surprised. Mrs. Bolton, who has overseen and encouraged Clifford in his regression to infancy with a subtle mix of feelings and motivations of her own, knows that in order to pull him through his point of crisis she will have to act not only as his nurse, but as a mid-wife, as the latter gives birth to the baby of himself. Instinctively, she realises that there is little point in attempting to rouse at the last minute his phallic pride: 'for his manhood was dead...He would only squirm softer and softer, like a worm, and become more dislocated. The only thing was to release his self pity. Like the lady in Tennyson, he must weep or he must die.'<sup>29</sup>

And so Mrs. Bolton encourages Clifford to cry: but actually not to weep like a woman at all, but, rather, to cry like a great self-centred baby:

And she drew him to her, and held her arms round his great shoulders, while he laid his fair face on her bosom and sobbed...she softly stroked his dusky-

blond hair and said 'There! There! There! There then! Never you mind then!'

And he put his arms round her and clung to her like a child, wetting the bib of her starched apron, and the bosom of her pale-blue cotton dress, with his tears. He had let himself go altogether at last.

So at length she kissed him, and rocked him on her bosom...And finally he even went to sleep, like a child.<sup>30</sup>

Lawrence continues:

After this, Clifford became like a child with Mrs. Bolton. He would hold her hand, and rest his head on her breast, and when she once lightly kissed him, he said 'Yes! Do kiss me! Do kiss me!...'It was sheer relaxation on his part, letting go all his manhood, and sinking back to a childish position that was really perverse. And then he would put his hand into her bosom and feel her breasts, and kiss them in exaltation, the exaltation of perversity, of being a child when he was a man.<sup>31</sup>

Thus Clifford achieves a sort of peace, like Mellors, via a perverse and counterfeit sexual relationship that is in stark contrast to that established between the latter and Connie. Clifford's peace is not that which comes of fucking (i.e., a peace that is won through struggle), but the peace that comes via surrender: a coward's peace. Many critics have played down the sheer horror of the above scene and the oedipal relationship between Clifford and Mrs. Bolton that emerges out of it. I think, however, that it is vital to emphasise both; particularly the oedipal nature of the love affair. Mrs. Bolton is not only nurse and mid-wife to Clifford, but mother and lover: she cleans him, feeds him, comforts him during the night, like a mother her child; but so too does she kiss and caress him and allow him to fondle her breasts in a



manner that is far from 'innocent' in any sense of the term. If Clifford does not achieve sexual fulfilment via his relationship with Mrs. Bolton, he does reach a state of perverse exaltation and gratification.

Lawrence makes it clear to us in his works on the unconscious why and how this is so: essentially, living as he does exclusively from the upper-channels, Clifford has a need to see everything with his eyes and feel everything with his fingers (these organs being alert from the chest according to Lawrentian physio-psychology or 'pollyanalytics'). And thus Clifford's fondling of Mrs. Bolton's breasts is an act not of phallic tenderness, nor a true touch within desire, but, rather, an act of intense self-consciousness and sensation-seeking (a form of secondary masturbation). Clifford ensures by the use of hands and eyes that the experience goes exclusively via the upper centres of consciousness and is thus easily and quickly transformed into mental delight: he has knowledge of Mrs. Bolton that is of a pseudo-sensual variety.

In other words, Clifford has his sex in the head and he touches Mrs. Bolton with his mind, not his body, just as he ravishes the flowers in the wood (before crushing them). Again, it is important to remember that Clifford's sexual desire has not been killed within him due to his physical injury and disability, but corrupted by his idealism and: 'thwarted, insulated by a whole set of india-rubber ideas...till every form of perversion and death-desire sets in!'<sup>32</sup> This results once the spontaneous and intuitive life of the body is subjugated to the fixed machine principles of the monotonously one-tracked mind (i.e., when the body finds itself over-coded and imprisoned by the organism). The final result of this can only be 'a long, slow development in madness'.<sup>33</sup> Clifford's fall into infantile perversity and insanity would be depressing enough were it an unusual case history; but, alas, it is the story of many men today and thus has wider social and

political implications. Crucially, Lawrence is aware of this, and he tells us that:

The curious thing was that when this child-man which Clifford now was – and which he had been becoming for years – emerged in the world, it was much sharper and keener than the real man he used to be. This perverted man-child was now a *real* business man...The wallowing in private emotion, the utter abasement of his manly self, seemed to lend him a second nature, cold, almost visionary, business clever.<sup>34</sup>

This seems to me to be a brilliant and important insight and one confirmed by other authors concerned with the politics of desire and particularly the way that capitalism thrives upon the frustration, perversion and exploitation of our most active forces and sexuality: see for example Reich, Marcuse, Deleuze and Guattari. The task of the schizoanalyst is not only to take apart egos tirelessly and resist the forces of oedipalisation, but also to expose the baseness and corruption at the heart of our moral world order.

To conclude, then, in the strange case of Sir Clifford Chatterley we are presented with someone who, unable to bear the responsibility of manhood and honest maturity, accepts the reduction of himself back to the *corruptive* state of childishness. If Zarathustra awaits the child of innocence and forgetfulness who will symbolise a new beginning for man, he is not to be reached via a process of sentimentalised disintegration within the accomplished ego. Clifford makes the fatal error of turning a process into a goal: for becoming-child is simply part of a process that enables one to make a fresh start beyond good and evil and all bad conscience; the child must then grow and struggle towards a new blossoming as man or woman. To mistake childhood as some final state at which to aim in itself, or to lust as men and women for the futility and sentimentality of the kindergarten, is, says Lawrence, disgusting and the sign of extreme decadence.

And yet, disgusting or not, don't we all now find ourselves within an economic, social, and political environment that obliges us to behave like infants seeking instant gratification? It is not, alas, merely Zarathustra's cave that has been turned into a nursery today...

### Endnotes

1. Rosi Braidotti, *Nomadic Subjects: Embodiment and Sexual Difference in Contemporary Feminist Theory*, Columbia University Press, 1994, p.111.
2. D.H. Lawrence, *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, ed. Michael Squires, Penguin Books, 1994, p.6.
3. *Ibid.*, p.16.
4. *Ibid.*
5. *Ibid.*
6. *Ibid.*, p.17.
7. *Ibid.*, p.107.
8. *Ibid.*, p.39.
9. D.H. Lawrence, *John Thomas and Lady Jane*, Penguin Books, 1986 p.339.
10. *Ibid.*, p.340.
11. *Ibid.*
12. Nietzsche writes: 'The belly is the reason that man does not so easily take himself for a god.' See *Beyond Good and Evil*, trans. R.J. Hollingdale, Penguin Books, 1990, part IV, section 141.
13. D.H. Lawrence, *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, *op.cit.*, p.110.
14. D.H. Lawrence, 'Men Must Work and Women as Well', in *Assorted Articles*, London: Martin Secker, 1930, p.142.
15. D.H. Lawrence, *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, *op.cit.*, p.110.
16. Colin Milton, *Lawrence and Nietzsche: A Study in Influence*, Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1987, p.163.
17. Colin Clarke, *River of Dissolution: D.H. Lawrence and English Romanticism*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1969, p.131.
18. D.H. Lawrence, *Psychoanalysis and the Unconscious*, Penguin Books, 1983, p.214.
19. Wilhelm Reich, *The Mass Psychology of Fascism*, trans. Vincent R. Carfagno, Pelican Books, 1983, p.366.
20. *Ibid.*, p.374.
21. D.H. Lawrence, *John Thomas and Lady Jane*, *op.cit.*, p.293.
22. *Ibid.*, p.70.
23. D.H. Lawrence, *The First Lady Chatterley*, Penguin Books, p.39.

24. D.H. Lawrence, *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, *op.cit.*, p.119.
25. *Ibid.*, p.184.
26. *Ibid.*
27. D.H. Lawrence, *John Thomas and Lady Jane*, *op.cit.*, p.112.
28. This is certainly the conclusion reached by Mellors: see *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, Penguin Books, 1994, p.280.
29. D.H. Lawrence, *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, *op.cit.*, p.290.
30. *Ibid.*
31. *Ibid.*, pp.291-2.
32. D.H. Lawrence, *Psychoanalysis and the Unconscious*, *op.cit.* p.245.
33. *Ibid.*, p.246.
34. D.H. Lawrence, *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, *op.cit.*, pp.291-2.