

Post Great War I Battles in Lawrence's *Lady Chatterley's Lover*

Koffi Samuel KOUAKOU

English Department

Alassane Ouattara University

Abstract: Returning from the First World War with barely half his body restored during two years of hospitalization, Clifford Chatterley begins a new life to which he clings with all his heart. My research reveals that his new life is in reality nothing but an endless series of battles even more difficult and ruinous than those fought on the battlefields during the nights and the tragically chaotic days at World War. Concretely, Clifford Chatterley's life shows that the most distressing battles of a soldier begin after war.

Résumé : Rentré de la première guerre mondiale avec à peine une moitié de son corps restaurée durant deux années d'hospitalisation, Clifford Chatterley entame une nouvelle vie à laquelle il s'accroche de tous ses vœux. Mon étude révèle que sa nouvelle vie n'est en réalité qu'une suite interminable de batailles encore plus difficiles et plus ruinantes que celles menées sur les champs de batailles dans les nuits et les jours tristement chaotiques pendant la guerre mondiale. Concretely, la vie de Clifford Chatterley montre que les batailles les plus éprouvantes du soldat commencent après la guerre.

Introduction

The World War I easily brings to the mind the idea of mass destructions, the crackling of cannons, the whistling of bullets, the bombardment of rolling vehicles and the dead under the rubbles. Until today, the World Wars (1914-1918 and 1939-1945) are those that have most profoundly marked the history of humanity. Antony Beevor, the author *The Second World War* considered that it was not a question of any particular, but rather the world “*was in a war which killed over sixty million people and had stretched around the globe.*” (Antony Beevor, 2012, 1)

The purpose of this study is to demonstrate through Lawrence’s *Lady Chatterley’s Lover* that while the World War was certainly terrifying, causing a dramatic upheaval in the course of the history of the world’s peoples, it was not the most traumatic experience. For, life after war like that of Clifford Chatterley is the toughest.

Yet, the novel’s title predisposes the reader to intensely scan the descriptions of sexual acts in David Herbert Lawrence’s narrative. This erotic aspect at some extent surely contributed to *Lady Chatterley’s Lover*’s reputation.

In George M. Schwarmann’s article entitled *Maxism and Bolshevism in DH Lawrence’s lady Chatterley’s Lover*, he said “*The novel Lady Chatterley’s Lover represents a landmark writing in the history of erotic literature because of its sexuality explicit scenes which is why it caused considerable controversy on its publication in 1928.*” (George M. Schwarmann, 2008, 82) This excerpt highlights significant facts regarding *Lady Chatterley’s Lover*. First, the publication date distinguishes this literary work by David Herbert Lawrence as an early 20th century novel. Second, George M. Schwarmann evokes the sexual content in *Lady Chatterley’s Lover* that paradoxically contrasts with the moral values of that time. And finally, George M. Schwarmann points to the controversy surrounding its publication in England, a country conservative of noble traditions. In line with George M. Schwarmann’s idea, the title *Lady Chatterley’s Lover* also incites the readers to perceive love and sexuality as the main themes that emerge from this novel by David Herbert Lawrence.

However, the publication date also recalls the days after the First World War. Burmenskaya Daria Aleksandrovna and Prokopenko Yulia Nikolaevna respectively scholars published “*COMPREHENSION OF THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE TRAGEDY OF THE FIRST*

WORLD WAR IN THE NOVEL “LADY CHATTERLEY’S LOVER” BY DH LAWRENCE” an article whereby they only seized the theme of war. And they claimed “The novel *Lady Chatterley’s Lover* (1928) depicts the atmosphere the English reality after the First World War, the fates of the characters – the result of the experienced catastrophe. So the novel reveals an important anti-war theme. And Lawrence does not describe the brutal battles and does not give monologues about the senselessness of the victims; he presents these problems in the sphere of human feelings, the relationship between men and women” (Burmenskaya Daria Aleksandrovna, Prokopenko Yulia Nikolaevna, 1) The assertions of the authors of the article namely Burmenskaya Daria Aleksandrovna and Prokopenko Yulia Nikolaevna credibly mention the historical facts that are transcribed in the novel *Lady Chatterley’s Lover*. In their perception *Lady Chatterley’s Lover* focuses less on erotic acts than on the war and its effects.

Like Burmenskaya Daria Aleksandrovna and Prokopenko Yulia Nikolaevna, Yasmin Asci published an article on the effects of war in the *Lady Chatterley’s Lover*. The convergence of perception of Burmenskaya Daria Aleksandrovna and Prokopenko Yulia Nikolaevna and Yasmine Asci regarding *Lady Chatterley’s Lover* convinces that the theme of war is not an insignificant one in this literary work by David Herbert Lawrence. Thus, Yasmin Asci through her article *Effects of war in DH Lawrence’s novel Lady Chatterley’s Lover*, argues that “The purpose of this study is to show, by the help of Lawrence, the negative results of World War I that affect the people. The most harmful results of the war are demonstrated in Lawrence’s modern *Lady Chatterley’s Lover*. After reading his novel, we can understand the outstanding evil war which causes society to change so tragically. For Lawrence, new world in which his characters need to live his full of the frigidity, greediness, insensibility, isolation, loveless relationships, corrupted half-dead bodies and evils of machines and capitalism.” In this excerpt, she clearly states her objective which is focused solely on the horrors of wars in *Lady Chatterley’s Lover*. In other words, for Yasmin Asci too, war appears as the major theme of this 20th century novel. As for Clifford Chatterley, his daily life after returning from war highlights the new battles he faces which amount to nothing but sufferings

Clifford Chatterley’s new battles

David Herbert Lawrence describing Clifford Chatterley affirms: “His hold on life was marvelous. He didn’t die, and the bit seemed to grow again. For two years, he remained in the doctor’s hand. Then he was pronounced a cure, and could return to life again with the

lower half of his body, from the hips down, paralysed for ever” (David Herbert Lawrence, 1) This passage extracted from the first lines of *Lady Chatterley’s Lover* unveils the physical battle Clifford Chatterley began to wage after returning from the war. Here, this physical battle specifically consists in accepting the change his body had undergone, his injuries, his fragile health, his disability and do with this rest of his body what all ordinary individuals without disabilities do to assure their daily life. Indeed, this excerpt reaffirms that Clifford Chatterley, deployed to that war as a soldier, miraculously did not die. *“He didn’t die”* said David Herbert Lawrence. This is certainly an indirect way for the author to advance that the fate of any soldier at war is death. Clifford Chatterley, however, managed to survive and his appreciation for human life seems to have deepened as a result of this terrible ordeal and that would constitute the reason for his involvement in this physical battle.

Moreover, when the passage specifies that he spent two years in hospital, it implies that this physical battle began while he was bedridden. Clifford Chatterley’s extended period of treatment systematically indicates that he triggered his survival instinct too. Concerning survival instinct, John “Lofty” Wiseman could be cited here as resource person insofar as, with regard to himself he specifies: *“For 26 years, as a professional soldier, I had the privilege of serving the Special Air Service (SAS). This elite unite of the British Army is trained to carry out arduous operations in all part of the world, often isolated and far from conventional forces.”* (John “Lofty” Wiseman, 8) John “Lofty” Wiseman shares his knowledge, forged over decades of travelling through extreme terrain around the world, in his book entitled *SAS Survival Handbook*. On the subject of survival instinct, he states: *“The instinct to survive will never change, neither will the human body’s amazing ability to endure. Yet we should also bear in mind that, as become more civilized, survival skills are being forgotten. It is doubly important, there to practise our survival skills, and be prepared for anything. Survival training is the best insurance policy you can take out in an unstable world.”* (John “Lofty” Wiseman, 9)

Activating the survival instinct for Clifford Chatterley in his current physical state seems undoubtedly a more demanding battle than fighting in the trenches during World War. For, according to John “Lofty” Wiseman *“The Will To Live (WTL) means never giving in, regardless of the situation. It’s very reassuring to know that there is nothing on the earth that we cannot deal with and there is no place where we cannot survive. As long as we follow the basic survival principles, prepare ourselves, and apply this WTL, we will come through. Some*

people have stronger will than other, but we can all improve.” (John “Lofty” Wiseman, 10) The explanations provided by John “Lofty” Wiseman through this extract demonstrates that the Will To Live is a true exercise that involves a specific know-how and also a very valiant internal personal predisposition. In Clifford Chatterley’s case, while he was engaging his battle for survival, he was paralyzed and alone far from his fellow troops who could give him a boost. And when two years later, he was alive and began a new life, it can be considered as his first victory already. In the passage, John “Lofty” Wiseman also mentions that some people have a stronger Will To Live than others. This precision unveils that Clifford Chatterley belongs to this category of people whose Will To Live is tougher. Similarly, Clifford Chatterley’s physical condition as described, demonstrates the extreme danger of that war. Despite the specter of death at World War I, Clifford Chatterley survived, though half of his body was completely destroyed, no trauma is reported about him. That testifies Clifford Chatterley’s almost infallible mental strength.

Another reality about Clifford Chatterley’s physical battle is that beyond the fact that this battle is difficult, it will unfortunately last for the rest of his life. In effect, historical accounts reveal that the First World War lasted from 1914 to 1918, four years of terror. As consequences, the damage was enormous. Fraser Cameron Professor at the Hertie School of Governance in Berlin reported *“The human cost of the First World War was horrendous. More than 16 million people, both military and civilian, died in the war. An entire generation of young men was wiped away. In 1919, the year after the war was over in France, there were 15 women every man between the ages of 18 and 30. It is tragic to consider all of the lost potential, all of the writers, artists, teachers, inventors and leaders that were killed in ‘the war to end war’”* (Fraser Cameron, 3) This passage is extracted from Fraser Cameron’s article *The Impacts of the First World War and Its Implications for Europe Today*. In this excerpt from his article, the professor seems unable to find the word to qualify this First World War. He finally referred to it as a so-called war to create a stable and peaceful world. Although the effects of the First World War were devastating, it lasted four years and then came to a halt. The belligerent countries then reconsidered their relations, moving towards a more humane cooperation and coexistence. However, Clifford Chatterley’s physical battle is ongoing as long as he lives. His determination not to end his own life, but rather to reclaim his authentic existence, implies that he must bear each day not as a burden but as a gift. This physical struggle means he must bravely face his disability every day without letting it affect his

mental health. And David Herbert Lawrence adds again *“Having suffered so much, the capacity for suffering had to some extent left him. He remained strange and bright and cheerful, almost, one might say, chirpy with his ruddy, healthy-looking face, arid his pale-blue, challenging bright eyes. His shoulders were broad and strong, his hands were very strong. He was expensively dressed and wore handsome neckties from Bond Street. Yet still in his face one saw the watchful look, the slight vacancy of a cripple.”* (David Herbert Lawrence, 1) Clifford Chatterley, in reality, is suffering terribly. But the physical battle he is waging leads him to conceal his pain. In an appearance he strives to maintain with joy, he certainly sees his physical transformation caused by his disability. He was a soldier at World War recruited based on his good physical condition and for having demonstrated all the bravery expected from a soldier. Now having passed the horrors of war, he finds himself confined to a wheelchair. His arm, shoulder and hands, which have become broad and strong, are enough to constantly, remind him of his unbalanced metamorphosis. But, still in his physical battle, he doesn't hesitate to dress lavishly, choosing refined clothes and accessories. However, despite all these fine clothes and this handsome appearance, David Herbert Lawrence's description emphasizes on the weight of Clifford Chatterley's infirmity and suffering even though Clifford Chatterley himself does everything he can to hide his pain.

After the physical battle, Clifford Chatterley also faces an internal battle. The following excerpt provides a clearer picture of it: *“This was in 1920. They returned, Clifford and Constance, to his home, Wragby Hall, the family seat. His father had died, Clifford was now a baronet, Sir Clifford, and Constance was Lady Chatterley. They came to start housekeeping and married life in the rather forlorn home of the Chatterleys on a rather inadequate income. Clifford had a sister, but she had departed. Otherwise, there were no near relative. The elder brother was dead in the war. Crippled for ever, knowing he could never have children, Clifford came home to the smoky Midland to keep Chatterley name alive while he could.”* (David Herbert Lawrence, 1)

The year 1920, as indicated in the excerpt, signifies precisely that the First World War is over and that, life has returned to normal. David Herbert Lawrence's narrative reveals that Clifford Chatterley no longer has any close relatives. His father has died. His brother also died in the war, from where he (Clifford Chatterley) returned alive. His sister who is the only member of his family still alive does not dwell in his hometown. Then, he is the only Chatterley in their family home. His internal battle requires him to indefinitely bear the pain of losing his family

members without succumbing to any form of depression. This same battle also involves accepting that he will never be able to have children. Next, the passage indicates that he returns to live as a Chatterley child and ensure the continuation of the family name for as long as he can with what remains from his whole life. The start of this internal battle demonstrates Clifford Chatterley's tenacity. Once more, Clifford Chatterley shows no sign of giving up but rather throws himself into that battle, come what may. Clifford Chatterley also shows no anxiety about what his wife thinks of his disability or his inability to have children. Unfortunately again, that war did not make Clifford Chatterley wealthy. Clifford Chatterley is aware of all these difficult truths. He knows them all and does not complain. He manages all the enormous losses in his life with great bravery. The last sentence of the preceding extract liberally mentions that Clifford Chatterley arrives home for another battle which he takes personally to heart; that to "*keep Chatterley name alive while he could*". Clifford Chatterley openly declared this battle as the battle of honour. He also seems to admit that this is his very last battle on earth. Therefore, he intends to fight it with all the energy and willpower he has left. Furthermore, this battle for honour reflects the deep bond he feels with his biological family. So Clifford Chatterley's strong bond with his family helps to understand the full meaning he gives to this battle for his family's honour.

Furthermore, another reality is unveiled through the description of Clifford Chatterley's daily life. The passage below illustrates another situation in Clifford Chatterley's family: "*On Sunday Clifford wanted to go into the wood. It was a lovely morning, the pear-blossom and plum had suddenly appeared in the world in a wonder of white here and there. It was cruel for Clifford, while the world bloomed, to have to be helped from chair to bath-chair. But he had forgotten, and even seemed to have a certain conceit of himself in his lameness. Connie still suffered, having to lift his inert legs into place.*" (David Herbert Lawrence, 119) Early Sunday morning, as the passage mentions, Clifford Chatterley felt the need to appreciate the beauty of the landscape. These few lines express how perfect the world around Clifford Chatterley seemed; a marvelous natural setting in a pleasant atmosphere. Meanwhile, Clifford Chatterley sat, crippled in his lower limbs, waiting for someone to come and help him with all his needs. This extract highlights Clifford Chatterley's dependence on the others and, beyond that, his relation with others. Yet, Clifford Chatterley seems completely untouched by his physical, economic and social situation. As for Connie, her mental load is visible and overwhelming. She finds herself giving up her own life, her wants, her desires, to dedicate

herself to Clifford Chatterley's peace of mind. *"Connie helped him as much as she could. At first she was thrilled. He talked everything over with her monotonously, insistently, and she had to respond with her might. It was as if her whole soul and body and sex had to rouse up and pass into theme stories of his. This thrilled her and absorbed her."* (David Herbert Lawrence, 8) The relationship between Connie and Clifford is undoubtedly beneficial for Clifford. He no longer has any family and Connie provides him with all the necessary support with such devotion. These extracts above highlights another type of battle Clifford Chatterley is fighting. This is the external battle. In this passage, the external battle of Clifford Chatterley is reflected through the challenges in his contacts with people close to him specifically his romantic, family and friendly relationship. Definitely, Connie finds herself alone with her husband. It is true that Clifford Chatterley has lost his father and brother. But, it is necessary to recall as David Herbert Lawrence's narration begins, he makes precision that Clifford Chatterley still has a living sister. Sadly, Clifford Chatterley is the sole heir despite of his critical physical condition. He remains the one Chatterley left to defend the Chatterley lineage. The challenge in his relationship with his sister is having to bear her in his thoughts as a living Chatterley but someone he will almost certainly never see again. It is a situation of physical separation, a family breaking up which doesn't exactly improve Clifford Chatterley's state of mind, once more Clifford Chatterley shows no sign of wanting to give up the fight to protect the Chatterley legacy.

The external battle marked by his difficulties in the relationships with the others continues all the way to his father-in-law. *"Connie's father, where he paid a flying visit to Wragby, and in private to his daughter: As for Clifford's writing, it's smart, but there's nothing in it. It won't last! Connie looked at the burly Scottish knight who had done himself well all his life, and her eyes, her big, still-wondering blue eyes became vague. Nothing in it! What did he mean by nothing in it? If the critics praised it, and Clifford's name was almost famous, and it even brought in money... What did her father mean by saying there was nothing in Clifford's writing? What else could there be? For Connie had adopted the standard of the young; what there was in the moment was everything.* (David Herbert Lawrence, 8) *And moments followed one another without necessarily belonging to one another.* Connie's father, visiting their abode, makes no secret of hostility towards his daughter's marriage with Clifford Chatterley. Indeed, his conversation above reveals his feelings, which clearly amount to dissatisfaction with their marriage. The words he uses begin by expressing his despair while beholding their

love. He is certainly aware of his son-in-law Clifford Chatterley's physical condition. However, he shows no compassion. He first makes it known that he is well aware of Clifford Chatterley's book writing initiative, but in response, he simply feels contempt for Clifford Chatterley's efforts. This exchange between Connie and her father exposes the tension in the relationship between Clifford Chatterley and his father-in-law.

These problematic relationships resurface in another conversation like this one. *"It was in her second winter at Wragby her father said to her; 'I hope, Connie you won't let circumstances force you into being a demi-vierge.' 'A dem-vierge' replied Connie vaguely. 'Why? Why not?' 'Unless you like it, of course!' said her father hastily. To Clifford he said the same, when the two men were alone 'I'm afraid it doesn't quite suit Connie to be a demi-vierge.' 'A half-virgin!' replied Clifford, translating the phrase to be sure of it. He thought for a moment, then flushed very red. He was angry and offended."* (David Herbert Lawrence, 8) The passage reveals that Connie's father returned to his daughter's home and again belittled her marriage with Clifford Chatterley. And this time, he did not stop at what he said to his daughter; he went and confronted Clifford Chatterley. He spoke bitterly to him. This is clearly a personal attack by Connie's father against Clifford Chatterley. The weight and the violence of the words he directed at Clifford Chatterley indicated that it was, in fact, a deliberate attempt to persecute him. Face with such situation, the excerpt specifies that Clifford Chatterley "was angry and offended". Clifford Chatterley reaction reflects his powerlessness in the face of his father-in-law's attitude. In reality, Clifford Chatterley's father-in-law reminds him, without any remorse of his disability. In doing so, he expresses the fact that Clifford Chatterley is unworthy of marrying his daughter. Clifford Chatterley contempt also shows that his father-in-law sees this marriage as a waste. Clifford Chatterley endures this animosity from his father-in-law to the point that he doesn't let his indignation take hold. However, he is aware that his contact with his father-in-law exposes him to oppression. In the continuation of his internal battle, he manages to restrain himself in the face of such contempt and rejection. Clifford Chatterley thus demonstrates a sturdy inner strength that allows him to counter all forces opposed to his mental and moral integrity.

In conclusion, David Herbert Lawrence's *Lady Chatterley Lover* makes a tragic account of World War 1 and its effects on people like Clifford Chatterley. Historical narratives relatively to the First World War emphasize the bloody nature of this four-year war. The countries all around the globe diverted their attention from their socio-economic and human development

initiatives to engage in the massive destruction of their achievements. Each country had mobilized huge finance and deployed troops on the battlefields. The fate of the soldiers was perilous. The life of Clifford Chatterley, one of the few soldiers who went beyond the enemies' lines and returned alive, reveals that the battles on the ground were particularly deadly. Yet, after he returned from the war alive, his new life taught him that the most fearsome battles were not on the battlefield but rather those that occurred after the war. Clifford Chatterley certainly did not expect such a situation when he went to war. It is only in his quest for an authentic, ordinary life after returning from war that he is confronted with these new battles as bewildering as despairing. This time, he fights these battles, within his physical body which bears all the terrors of the First World War. His first battle was physical. Faced with his disability, his inability to have children, his inability to move on his own and his inability to satisfy his wife Connie's desires, he had to defeat self-pity. He would never carry his body as a burden or a sorrow but as a gain. Beyond self-acceptance, Clifford Chatterley carries himself as the only Chatterley child alive and conscious of ensuring the continuity of the Chatterley family line. He does not perceive his inability to have children as an irreversible handicap that would make incapable, rather he sees himself as a valiant son who can revive the Chatterley estate and represent the family with the life he has left to live on the earth. As for his internal battle, it consists to silence all his pains, which are considerably, ever since the death of his father. Next, the death of his brother followed. He must live these accumulated sorrows, both in the mind and body. Alongside this, his frustration is as profound as the loss of all his biological family members. While life around him continues its natural and harmonious course, he is confined to a wheelchair. His interactions with others, given his physical and mental state, merely lead to unbearable situations. Powerless, to satisfy his wife's desire, he is eventually reminded of this by his father-in-law, who becomes his tormentor. Finally, it is under his helpless gaze that his wife became pregnant by Mellors, the servant he hired as a new game-keeper.

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