

## Chapter VIII

### D.H. LAWRENCE AND FEMINISM

Since 1960 the 'politics of interpretation' has become a challenge to the 'freedom of interpretation', particularly in the feminist criticism. The feminists sought to explain 'the production of every text except the text that provides explanation' (Booth, W.C. in Morson, G.S.(ed); 1986, p.146). They took up chiefly the male - produced literary texts as sites for analysis, but cast most of them away as specimens of misogynistic art. They had, therefore, to set their wits to re-imagine, to re-interpret, to re-think and to rewrite the central texts of Western culture. Virginia Woolf speaks of 're-writing history' (Quoted in Showalter (ed)1985, 92); Adrienne Rich claims that Women's writing must begin with a "revision of the past"; Carolyn Heilburn comments that we must "restore women to history and ---- restore our history to women"(Showalter (ed), 1986, 32). All of them insisted on a "revisionary imperative" (Showalter,32). But what the revisionary and re-interpretative productions of the feminists did in the late sixties and early seventies is that "it tends to speak more clearly about what it is against than about what it seeks" (Morson, G.S.(ed): 1986, 161). Indeed the feminist critique, despite its greater dependence on tradition than it acknowledges, has become a diversity and a challenge to the canonical genre.

Although the feminist literary theory in the form in which we now know it is more or less a result of the social and political upheavals of the 1960s, it has its root in the long-drawn literary culture. In the later part of the eighteenth century, the male author's monopoly in the development of Western culture created a counter-voice within and against itself. This voice of protest paved the way for another discourse recognized

as feminism, a foster-child of the mainstream. The first classic text, the foundation stone of modern feminism, is Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792), where Wollstonecraft raises her voice against domestic tyranny over women. In her opinion, the denial of political rights, right of education or of equal work for women is tyranny. She observes that women, born with equal rights, are taught to be subordinate, weak and feather-headed. Later on, Margaret Fuller's *Women in the Nineteenth Century* (1845) and John Stuart Mill's *The Subjection of Women* (1869) and a number of other books tried to uphold that voice of protest raised by Wollstonecraft. This counter argument was further carried on by the suffragette movement in the beginning of the twentieth century. In the 1920s, the demands of the individualist feminists for equal rights have been fulfilled in legal or formal sense along with women's right to vote in 1928. But within this, according to some feminists, remained the seed of inequalities of opportunity for women to develop and realize their talents and to pursue a career in civil and political society. Virginia Woolf in her classic feminist document, *A Room of One's Own*, observed that the social and economic obstructions are responsible factors for the backwardness and weakness of the women community. But with her famous concept of androgyny, a reconstructive rather than a deconstructive attitude, she visualizes a world where man and woman can co-exist peacefully. The next great contribution to the feminist criticism is Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* (1949), an encyclopaedic work drawing on history, biology, psychoanalysis, Marxism and literature. Beauvoir observes that throughout history women have been reduced to objects for men; women have been constructed as men's other and man has denied her

the right of subjectivity. The patriarchal social ideology presents woman as immanence, and man, as transcendence. This fundamental assumption dominates all aspects of social, political and cultural life. About woman she says : "Her body is not perceived as the radiation of subjective personality, but as a thing sunk deeply in its own immanence; it is not for such a body to have reference to the rest of the world; it must not be promise of things other than itself; it must end the desire it arouses" (Beauvoir, 1949, 189). She, in fact reiterates Wollstonecraft's idea that one is not born a woman but rather becomes a woman. Indeed Beauvoir's book is implicitly 'a call to woman to assert her autonomy in defining herself against man' (Charvet, J. 1980, 100). Kate Millett's *Sexual Politics* (1969), on the other hand can be called 'one of the wittiest and most savagely ironic pieces of literary demolition one could hope to find' (Widdowson, P., 1992, 14). In her book, Millett tries to assert that the relation between the sexes now and throughout history is an instance of male dominance over female, and this sexual domination is the most pervasive ideology of Western culture.

Till 1970, feminist criticism, mainly feeding on the patriarchal ideology, deconstructs it demonstrating male hegemony over the formation of the female subjectivity. But thereafter, the feminists begin to focus their attention exclusively on the works of women writers giving birth to a new phase of feminist criticism, the 'gynocriticism'. This new reconstructive attempt is 'more self contained and experimental, with connections to other modes of new feminist research' (Showalter (ed), 1985, 129). The gynocritics, paying attention mainly to female authors, insinuated to their own shortcomings that woman's writing demands an attention to the

philosophical, linguistic and practical problems of women's use of language; for, the language, which is part of dominant male culture, is to the woman, oppressive. Women's failure to have access to language 'forced them into silence, euphemism or circumlocution'(Showalter,255).

The development of the feminist criticism from the first phase of deconstruction to the second phase of reconstruction, from woman as reader to woman as writer, is a great stride forward to linguistic, psychoanalytical and ideological emancipation. But this kind of sectarian polemics paradoxically intensifies the dissension between the sexes. In this connection, Avrom Fleishman says that an artist should not be seen as a 'single minded monological spokesman for a home-brewed ideology — whether approved or disdained, — but as offering the rhetoric, ideas and other inputs of a whole range of characters, representatively modern men and women.' (Brown, K.(ed) 1990, 109). For art, as Wyane C. Booth says, 'is the one last domain, the domain of aesthetic where alone freedom is untrammelled'. (Booth, 148). The chief enemy of artistic freedom is its concern for ethical, political and social validity. Yet art-work, as Booth observes, must have implicit in it some metaphysics or doctrine. Any work of art spiritually empty, socially futile or politically destructive or otherwise repugnant is valueless or worthless. To maintain freedom of art and artistic criticism that feeds on and support art is 'to forego judgement and attempt only description'(Booth, 149). Since art springs from some implicit metaphysics or ideology, criticism may also be based on some ideology : discipline or code invented by others.

Bakhtin's is such an open-ended ideology that can possibly avoid the faults of

ideologues. Being discontented with the simpleminded ideological lebellings and gradings, he undertook to develop 'a dialogue between two truths' (quoted in Booth, 150). He discovered a dialogic imagination at play at the heart of human life in all its forms and presented a clear and bold yet flexible criterion for estimating ideological worth. He conducted a steady polemic against narrow formalistic or individualistic views of the world and the self. He discarded the notion of unitary self with a comment that self is social and each of us is constituted not as an individual, private atomic self but as a collective of many selves. We encounter these selves as what Bakhtin calls the 'voices' or 'languages' thrown up by others. Language, in his opinion, is of course made of not only words, it is a whole system of meaning, constituting an inter-related set of beliefs or norms. So 'language' to him, is sometimes synonymous with 'ideology'. Each person is, in his view, constituted as 'a hierarchy of languages, each language being a kind of ideology brought into speech'(Booth, 151). Bakhtin says that social man is surrounded by ideological phenomenon, by object-signs of various types and categories, by words in the multifarious forms of their realization, by scientific statements, religious symbols and beliefs, works of art and so on. All these things in their totality comprise the ideological environment which forms a solid ring around man within which his consciousness forms and develops. Individual consciousness, Bakhtin says, can only become a consciousness by being realized in the forms of ideological environment proper to it; in language, in conventionalized gesture, in artistic image, in myth and so on.

To be precise, self is polyphonic and art-work similarly is more or less a

representation of polyphony. Literary forms are, for Bakhtin, formed ideologies and those who make and receive them are in fact plural selves. Any kind of art-work that does most justice to polyphony or heteroglossia is most praiseworthy and the novel, in this respect is the highest literary form. In its truest form, it insists on resisting monologue and on countering the temptation to treat human being as 'objects' reducible to their usefulness to us. The people who inhabit fiction "are essentially, irreducibly, 'subjects', voices rich beyond any one's uses performing in chorus too grand for any participant's full comprehension" (Morson, G.S. (ed), 1986, 152). This describes the differences between individuals though they live in the same society and speak the same language. The language with which they interact with each other forms a heteroglossia forming new socially typifying languages. This helps us underline the differences between the sexes and simultaneously hint at the fact that "women now talk or have ever talked in ways different from men's"(Booth, 154).

In the light of the above viewpoint, if we consider the people who inhabit fiction as 'essentially, irreducibly subjects', we have to face some unavoidable questions concerning the novels of a great imaginative artist like Lawrence. Do his novels treat women as members of a class inherently inferior to men? Do his novels reduce individual women to objects, not persons, objects to be used or abused for the enjoyment of men? Any work of art that portrays women as inherently inferior to men, or as objects for use, is an unjust act, unless the portrayal is somehow effectively criticized by the work itself. Certainly there are sufficient propositions both in favour of and against women, in Lawrence's imaginative works, balancing and criticizing each other. If

surface attitudes count, the opposite is also true. We see similar treatment of men. But the total effect is different. His works as a whole, his complete imaginative offering produces a third thing, his ideology of life and of human relationships, particularly the man-woman relationship. Such an ideology that we appraise is not only what we infer in Lawrence himself, but also what we find in his society as influencing the work and what we find in ourselves. Consequently, his work is both author-criticism and reader criticism.

Although Lawrence, in his *oeuvre*, presented a number of women, mistresses of their own selves with firm determination, his own view about women is ambiguous. His later women characters are however escapists, upholders of the atavistic life-style, the women of his earlier novels upto *Women in Love* are mostly revolutionary in their rejection of the modern mechanistic life. Let us consider the concluding passage of *The Rainbow*, where Ursula, the female protagonist of the novel, dreams her dream :

She knew that the sordid people who crept hard-scaled and separate on the face of the world's corruption were living still, that the rainbow was arched in their blood and would quiver to life in their spirit, that they would cast off their horny covering of disintegration, that new, clean, naked bodies would issue to a new germination, to a new growth, rising to the light and the wind and the clean rain of heaven. She saw in the rainbow the earth's new architecture, the old brittle corruption of houses and factories swept away, the world build up in a living fabric of Truth, fitting to the over-arching heaven' (*The Rainbow*, 495-96).

Is not it our own hope and aspiration ? Ursula stands here not only for herself as a woman but also for the whole humanity. She at once becomes the mouthpiece of both the author and the readers. If we trust the tale and not the teller and imaginatively

accompany Ursula in her struggles against her family, against man's world and the life denying industrial world, we would rather eagerly support her cause. The entire novel can be seen as a history of a matriarchal family where women are both the 'fighting host' and the fighting selves. To the vital feminist question whether the narrative of the novel reveals women as a class with inherited inferiority - we have only a confident 'NO'.

Again consider another concluding piece, now of *Women in Love*, a dialogue between Ursula and Birkin :

“Having you, I can live all my life without anybody else, any other sheer intimacy. But to make it complete, really happy, I wanted eternal union with a man too : another kind of love” he (Birkin) said. “I don't believe it.” she (Ursula) said. “It's an abstinence, a theory, a perversity”--- “You can't have two kinds of love. Why should you! “It seems as if I can't” he said. “Yet I wanted it”. “You can't have it, because it's false, impossible,” she said. (*Women in Love*, 444).

Here Ursula establishes herself as a critic not only of Birkin and his perverse ideology, but also of his creator, Lawrence. She expostulates with Gerald Crich, a representative of modern mechanistic society, for his brutal treatment of an Arab mare and strongly criticizes Birkin for his indecision about selecting his life-partner. Now, if Birkin is taken to be the mouthpiece of Lawrence, then whose mouthpiece is she ? And whom does she represent ? Surely, she is her own mistress and represents her own free self everywhere. She is an intelligent modern woman who exercises her autonomy both in understanding and in activity. The intriguing truth is that Birkin does not believe in her criticism, yet he has to accept, to swallow and to digest it. She is 'all women' to him. But everywhere she contradicts him and his idea of love. She finally accepts him but not

his ideas and ideals. She fights against his theory and perversity but finally surrenders to the man Birkin, bereft of his ideas. She is, in the novel, not an object to be used or abused by a man, but a subject, an interlocutor of Birkin, at least his equal in thought and action. She is, as Birkin says, a representative of all women, a fiery voice which the youths of the society like Birkin have to accept whether they believe it or not. Her voice, is, as it were, the articulation of the muted voice of every sensitive reader or conscientious man. Moreover, she contradicts Birkin when he turns his love-ideology from natural to supernatural, (--- an equilibrium, a pure balance of two single beings - as the stars balance each other, *W.L.*, 133); and brings him down to practical life. Birkin is incapable of relating his theory to life. His dubious attitude towards woman enrages Ursula and her strong and ruthless criticism brought him back to practicality. Finally he looked remorseful. The other female characters, like Hermione Roddice and Gudrun also cannot escape Ursula's criticism. She criticizes Hermione for her insensitive, intellectual attitude to life and to men like Birkin. Hermione's vested interest in discouraging Ursula about Birkin indirectly provokes Ursula to stand for Birkin and against Hermione. Again, Ursula rejects Gudrun's whimsical comment about Birkin that he has no real critical faculty and that "you can't trust him" (*W.L.*, 14). She rejects this finality of Gudrun's, this dispatching of people and things in a sentence, because "it was all such a lie." (*W.L.* 241). Ursula is a considerate woman, more practical than Birkin. Her decision to cut off her relationship with the family and to tender her resignation from her service, at the outset, appears capricious. But no, she severs herself from her family only to reject the feudal system of the family where freedom of speech

and action is always treated as audacity. Her resignation from the job also suggests this urge for freedom from bondage. Ursula is an impartial critic of modern social system in which we live and of the so called modern men and women whom we meet frequently. But unlike most feminists, she is a constructive critic, integrated in thoughts and actions. She performs her task of educating Birkin about the need of the felt experience of life. This she achieves through a subtle role that combines love and discipleship. Ursula appears to rise above even Lawrence, her creator, who seems to have instilled in her all his good qualities and ideas minus his tyrannical attitudes. In that sense, Ursula is a critic of her own creator, Lawrence.

Thus *Women in Love* together with *The Rainbow* can be said to have traced nearly a history of the rise and development of the feminist movement. Terry Eagleton's understanding of the evolution of the feminist movement holds good in this respect. In Eagleton's view, distinct from the public sphere, there was the private sphere, the intimate sphere of family and household in the eighteenth century. This intimate sphere, if not part of the public sphere, provided 'a vital source of impulses and energies for that public arena'. (Eagleton, T., 1984, 115). Although the bourgeois public sphere officially excluded that intimate sphere, they were in other ways deeply attached to each other. The domestic world generated new form of subjectivity which was publicly oriented and which then passed over into the male-dominated public sphere to attain self-reflective formulations. Eagleton observes that 'the ideology of the family serves in the eighteenth century to mask domestic power relations and their interlocking with systems of bourgeois property.' (Eagleton, T., 1985, 117). The development of that

bourgeois society into the modern epoch changes significantly the relations between public sphere and intimate family sphere. "With increasing stratification of the public sphere", he says, "intimate sphere becomes progressively marginalised". (Eagleton 117). State education and social policy take over many of the functions previously reserved to the family, blurring the boundaries between public and private, and stripping the family of its socio-productive role. The intimate sphere, Eagleton says, is in this sense deprivatized, pulled into public society, but only in a notable historical irony, to be reprivatized as a unit of consumption. The family is now no longer the privileged site of subjectivity it once was, and experience within the intimate sphere has itself become commodified. The intimate sphere has been increasingly incorporated into the state. The emergence of women's movement, as Eagleton comments, can be seen as a response to these changed conditions. The feminist demand for the full socialization of the family moves with the domestic ideologies which mask the material evolution. The women's movement tried to reformulate the relation between public and intimate spheres. The marginalization of the intimate realm closely related to the decline of the public sphere has led to a fresh resurgence of that realm in the form of a new counter-public sphere which consists of feminist discourse and practice. Within this new domain, the shared fact of gender works to equalize all participants within it.

This trajectory as traced above can be demonstrated in terms of Lawrence's twin novels, *The Rainbow* and *Women in Love*. *The Rainbow* begins with the Brangwen family in the post-feudal pattern, intimate and organic. The Brangwens were vitally related to nature, but "they were a curious family, a law to themselves, separate from the

world, isolated, a small republic set in invisible bounds' (*R.B.*, 103). Although the Brangwen women sometimes were relegated to the modest dower houses at the edge of the estate, they were the 'fighting host', full of aspiration. The men emotionally and intellectually submitted themselves to their women, for they thought that woman was the symbol for that further life which comprised religion, love and morality. Tom Brangwen looked for a woman who would "be my conscience keeper, be the angel at the door way guarding my outgoing and my incoming' (*R.B.* 19). He married Lydia Lensky, a woman of different tongue, whom he could hardly understand. But the language barrier scarcely mattered to their intimate relationship in conjugal life. She remained subservient, but nowhere is she treated as secondary or inferior to her male counterpart. Throughout her married life, she remains the dark source of every vital activity together with superior intelligence and understanding. In the second generation, the situation changed due to increasing industrialization slackening the family's organic relationship with nature and earth. Simultaneously, the role of the women in the family shifted from 'fighting host' to fighting self. Anna Brangwen raises a voice of protest, though a mild one, against the obstinacy of her husband, Will Brangwen. The family now is forced to be marginalized with the advent of formal education. The changed social policy also changes the nature of human activities blurring the boundaries between public and private spheres and stripping the family of its productive role. Ursula Brangwen, the eldest daughter of Anna and Will, focused herself faced with such a crisis in and around her. Being informally educated on the history of the past (through her grandmother Lydia Lansky), she realizes a drastic change in the society where family is no longer

treated as autonomous sphere, with its productive role, as it has been previously considered. What is now at stake, she realizes, is the "very essence of civilized reason." (Eagleton, T., 117). The formal education system, 'only a little side-show of the factories of the town'(R.B., 434), failed to satisfy her. She protests against Skrebensky's war-mongering ideology and rejects him; she stands against the feudalistic attitude of her father and goes out of the family to join the men's world of activity as a school mistress. After her rejection of Skrebensky as a lover, her suffering hurts us, but her struggle for freedom inspires us. At the end of *The Rainbow*, her voice becomes the voice of suffering humanity. But hitherto she is a social and political critic, representating the voice of the author as much as of the readers. In the next novel, *Women in Love*, this voice of Ursula is further consolidated. She finally becomes "all women" representating their cause, a counter-voice to Birkin's. Her demand for equalization in the shared facts of genders, is implicitly established, for Birkin, the failed ideologue, has to accept her view as evinced at the end of the novel.

In the post-war novels, Lawrence's changed attitude towards women exposed him to attacks, the harshest coming from the radical feminists. But the later feminists, comparatively liberal in their attitude towards Lawrence, have tried to rescue him from such charges, drawing on different missing accounts and placing him in his own time and society. Hilary Simpson, in her article, : "Lawrence, Feminism and the War" explains in terms of historical determination, the reason for Lawrence's changing attitude to women, especially during and after the First World War. She observes that a highly industrial nation like England, faced with mass conscription of its active men in

the inter-war period, had to look for an alternative labour force. The employment of women in different jobs, previously held by men, is an alternative process to solve that problem. Consequently, the influx of women in different jobs, gradually changed the social status of women in the society. The new social freedom and financial independence made them more conscious than ever before about their own position in society. This new freedom made itself felt against the earlier moral stringency; unmarried mother was more sympathetically treated, and "conventional notions of a certain reserve as between the sexes have been very largely modified" (Widdowson, P. (ed) 1992, 92). In Simpson's opinion, the experience of the war also marks a turning point in Lawrence's life. In 1914, Lawrence wrote: "woman becoming individual, self-responsible taking her own initiatives: (*Letters*, 22 April). He wanted 'feminization' of experience, the necessity for man to take woman and the feminine side of her nature seriously. But he disliked women's entry into the world of industry and technology, and this change of attitude "exemplifies the drastic revision of the notion of womanliness" (Widdowson, P., 1992, 94). *The Lost Girl*, Simpson says, is "a perfect transition piece clearly spanning Lawrence's pre- and post-War concerns, moving as it does from women's revolt to women's submission" (Widdowson, P., 96).

But *The Lost Girl* itself can be seen as a counterblast against contemporary socio-moral ideas and ideals. The social chaos created due to surplus women population, Lawrence realized, was an *ipso facto* result of the political turmoil during the War and post-War period. Women's absorption into different jobs previously performed by men, as Hilary Simpson has observed, was a vital cause of Lawrence's

disgust and his changing attitude to women. But this cannot explain this change sufficiently. Lawrence himself was in favour of women's participation in the work of the outer-world. Ursula, in *The Rainbow*, left her family-circle and joined a school as a teacher; Madam Rochard in *The Lost Girl*, was the guide and manager of the band of strolling male players, Natch-Ki-Tewara and conducted the band with skill and respect. She is never shown as degraded either morally or socially. *The Lost Girl* is Lawrence's direct attack, not on women but on the industrially civilized people who were responsible for the chaotic social milieu. Women became ferocious to the extent of showing tyranny over men as evinced in a short story "Ticket Please". This may be due to a feeling of insecurity of their jobs and livelihood. By all means, a counter-voice was called for and Lawrence presents it in the figure of Alvina Houghton. Alvina Houghton, dissatisfied as she had been with modern living, joined the Natchas only for Ciccio, her lover. But the low living standard of the Natchas forced her to be out of it to join a nursing job in a Hospital. Here she met Dr. Mitchell, a modern aristocrat, who pressured her to marry him when there was no call from her heart. She was in a dilemma. If she married Dr. Mitchell, she herself would be lost into the labyrinth of Modernism; whereas her acceptance of Ciccio as husband was suggestive of her rejection of everything that was modern. Ultimately, she accepted triumphantly the primitive state of life by marrying Ciccio, a representative of it. Now with this marriage, Lawrence has brought into question the whole system of modern civilization.

To be precise, *The Lost Girl* offers a cross-current of views and ideas between what Lawrence presents and what his readers are accustomed to, a dialectical

presentation of the conflict between Lawrence's unconventional ideas and his readers' conventional ideas. As we go through the superb description of contemporary social milieu, we are satisfied; but when he contradicts this with his own ideas, unfamiliar to us, through Alvina Houghton, we are shocked; our conscious understanding resists us to accept it. It may be simply because the producer, that is, Lawrence, is super-sensitive to the situation, whereas we are tightly bound to convention. But if we consider a vital question, namely, what does he want to say and why? - we may find, like Lawrence, a deep wound at the heart of our modern civilization. The social and political turmoil of the inter-war period, however, provided its women with a freedom, obviously reckless and chaotic; this female autonomy makes an ominous insinuation towards women's insecure and pitiable living condition. Alvina, as she was 'not ordinary' because of her supersensitive perception of life, rejects the modern society, perhaps, to illuminate this side-issue - the pathetic life-style the women had to lead - of our society. Lawrence, through his fictional character, Alvina, makes a direct attack on us, the civilized people, but nowhere does he let Alvina to be treated as secondary. Lawrence's sympathy for Alvina is never sparingly absent in the way he treats her in the novel. On the other hand, if Ciccio is a Lawrentian hero, he becomes so not mesmerizing Alvina to marry him but showing us about what we are deficient of and what we have left behind accepting this civilized life-style. Simultaneously, Alvina seeks those lost-essentials of life into the primitive life-style, casting aside the modern world.

Graham Hough says about Lawrence's 'savage pilgrimage' that "Lawrence's geographical migrations did not inspire Lawrence to form and develop new ideas, rather

he moved to new country because his developing new ideas needed a new landscape and a society to match them”(Hough, G. 1961, 141). While such a comment is not out of place, Lawrence’s migrations at the same time can be said to have enhanced the complexity and variety of his ideas and experiences. The influence that his continental visits exercised on him as much as the influence of the people he met and the different landscapes he passed through helped change his attitude both to life and to art. This changed attitude towards his characters is conspicuous in his leadership novels. *Kangaroo* is a good example of it. True, Lawrence’s Australian admirer Katherine Susannah Pritchard protested against *Kangaroo*’s acceptance as “an authentic picture of Australia” (Kermode, F. 1973, 99), and said that Lawrence “knew very little about it, felt blind to it --- and was especially ignorant about its democratic politics” (Kermode, 99). But later Australian critics contradicted this view by saying that the politics in the novel, though fantasticated and inadequate, are not altogether remote from those of contemporary Australia. “There was a conflict between a socialist movement and a para-fascist ‘digger’ movement, and Lawrence related it weirdly --- to his current speculations about authority in the home and in the state”. (Kermode, F. 1973, 99). Although Lawrence’s home-brewed leadership idea comes out in Australian perspective, his own mode was “back to his own centre-back back, the inevitable recoil” (*Kangaroo*, 308). Richard Lovat Somers, the protagonist of *Kangaroo*, while visiting Australia, developed his interest into the nasty leader-centered male politics. He met Kangaroo, an emotional Jew who believed in fatherly love. Like an idiot or a greedy aggressive politician with a lust for power, Somers entangled himself with the diggers movement

nourishing within himself the idea of 'lord and master'. He determined to domineer over his wife Harriet. But Harriet, more practical, more sensitive and more intelligent than Somers, never wished to surrender her autonomy to him. She flatly rejected his lord-master idea, an impression of Australian male-politics, and ruthlessly attacked him to bring him back to practicality :

"Him, a lord and master ! why, he was not really lord of his own bread and butter; next year they might both be starving. He was not even master of himself, with his ungovernable furies and his uncritical intimacies with people --- he was the most forlorn and isolated creature in the world, without even a dog to his command. He was so isolated he was hardly a man at all, among men. He had absolutely nothing but her. Among men he was like some unbelievable creature - an emu, for example. Like an emu in the streets or in a railway carriage" (*Kangaroo*, 195)

This radical but ironic remark shows Harriet both at her anguish she feels for Somers and her defiance of him. But she knows more about him than anybody else and her apprehension about his ultimate failure was not wrong. Finally Somers, the failed ideologue, compensates for his failure by coming back to Harriet. Now, Somers' submission to Harriet implies a double-edged failure of their creator Lawrence ; first, of his fantastic leader-cum-follower idea and secondly, of his post-war launching of an aggressive campaign against women.

*The Plumed Serpent*, "in fact, takes up the story of the Lawrences' travels where *Kangaroo* left them" (Hough, G., 1961, 146), but Lawrence himself has disappeared. The central character of the novel is Kate Leslie and her oscillation between acceptance and rejection of Mexico sets the pattern of the whole book. The only representative of the modern idealistic world, Kate Leslie, with disgust about 'mechanical cog-wheel

people' of the civilized Western world, visits the ancient Indian community and their religious rituals in Mexico. Although Lawrence is her creator, the report we get from her is hers, not Lawrence's. It is more important to assess her reports, her experiences and her attitude towards those brutal heroes of the Aztec religion, than Lawrence's own attitude towards her. It may be that Lawrence presents his views and ideas about the aboriginal people and their religion through Kate Leslie, his female representative; but simultaneously his own comment, sometimes biased, about Kate, isolates and detaches him from her and she is sometimes also oppressed by his brutal treatment. It appears that Lawrence occasionally sides with the aboriginals and compels her to bow down to those male representatives in order to fulfil his role as a prophet. If we listen to Kate and believe in her experiences she reports, we can get an insight into the kind of wisdom she gains from them. As an enthusiastic visitor of Mexico but a reluctant recipient of the Quetzalcoatl religion, she with her all but the last words opens up a hatchway from that to which she is about to commit herself. The narrative structure exposes her dual movement, but with a definite progress which is "the opening out of her life from the modern Western woman's mode of separateness, self-assertion, the life of the ego to another mode of profound and inarticulate communion of which the separate activity of the ego is only an incidental part" (Hough, G. 1961, 161). Other characters, like Don Ramon, Cipriano Dona Carlota and Teresa, though they have sufficient independent life of their own, they "exist only to further this movement" (Hough, G. 161).

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people' of the civilized Western world, visits the ancient Indian community and their religious rituals in Mexico. Although Lawrence is her creator, the report we get from her is hers, not Lawrence's. It is more important to assess her reports, her experiences and her attitude towards those brutal heroes of the Aztec religion, than Lawrence's own attitude towards her. It may be that Lawrence presents his views and ideas about the aboriginal people and their religion through Kate Leslie, his female representative; but simultaneously his own comment, sometimes biased, about Kate, isolates and detaches him from her and she is sometimes also oppressed by his brutal treatment. It appears that Lawrence occasionally sides with the aboriginals and compels her to bow down to those male representatives in order to fulfil his role as a prophet. If we listen to Kate and believe in her experiences she reports, we can get an insight into the kind of wisdom she gains from them. As an enthusiastic visitor of Mexico but a reluctant recipient of the Quetzalcoatl religion, she with her all but the last words opens up a hatchway from that to which she is about to commit herself. The narrative structure exposes her dual movement, but with a definite progress which is "the opening out of her life from the modern Western woman's mode of separateness, self-assertion, the life of the ego to another mode of profound and inarticulate communion of which the separate activity of the ego is only an incidental part" (Hough, G. 1961, 161). Other characters, like Don Ramon, Cipriano Dona Carlota and Teresa, though they have sufficient independent life of their own, they "exist only to further this movement" (Hough, G. 161).

Kate Leslie, an enthusiastic visitor, oddly encouraged by the mystic primitive religion of Mexico, attends the Mexican bull-fight show along with two Americans. The

repulsive scene disgusts her. She leaves the stadium and at the gate meets General Viedma, a Mexican officer widely known as Don Cipriano. Now Kate is a beautiful widow of about forty. "She had been brought up with the English-Germanic idea of the intrinsic superiority of the hereditary aristocrat. Her blood was different from the common blood, another finer blood" (*The Plumed Serpent*, 888. Hereafter by page number). She, as a sensitive woman, is "used to all kinds of society" (638), and "watched people as one reads the pages of a novel, with certain disinterested amusement" (638). She is a reader, mainly of people, country and life-style, and visited so many countries. Mexico appears to her to be cruel, down-dragging and destructive. In spite of her repeated comments about the evil impression of the country on her and her firm determination not to stay long in the country, she gradually begins to enter into the heart of Mexico, Sayula in Jalisco. The information of the Spanish newspaper that "the gods of Antiquity Return to Mexico" (647), rouses her interest in the mystic religion of the ancient Indians. In Sayula, Kate finds the new-old religion in action. She enthusiastically joins the crowd of Mexican Indians round the drummer and from a broadsheet learns that they are singing the valediction of Jesus and the welcome of the new-old God Quetzalcoatl in Mexico. It appears that Don Ramon is the hierophant of the revived Quetzalcoatl mysteries and Cipriano is his devoted disciple. She meets Dona Carlota, Ramon's wife, a devoted catholic, who is connected with some charitable works. Carlota appears to Kate to be a woman in her own right who loves Ramon, but is horrified by his and Cipriano's desperate attempts to violate Christianity. She is in the book realistically drawn with her own spirit of freedom.

Hitherto, Kate is our chief reporter. But henceforth the book begins to lose the grip of its construction; we hear more about the humpty-dumpty of the mystic new - old religion and “desert Kate’s consciousness for the first time and observe the actions of Ramon and his companions directly without her mediation” (Hough, G., 1961; 150). This chaos of the religious performances goes on for more than a hundred pages. Considering this section of the novel, H.T. Moore said that “*The Plumed Serpent* is the most ambitious failure of his (Lawrence’s) novels” (Moore, H.T., 1974, 503). After the artistic perfection of the first two-thirds of the novel, as Aldous Huxley comments, the rest of it has fallen apart because of Lawrence’s lack of belief in it. “Doubt had crowded in on Lawrence” and “had to be shouted down. But the louder he shouted, the less was he able to convince his readers.” (Quoted from, Moore, H.T., 1974, 504). To be precise, in Huxley’s opinion, Lawrence writes in this section of the novel about what he does not believe firmly. And in this section of the novel, Kate Leslie is forced to be the object at the cost of her subjectivity. She falls a prey to the mystic religious rituals of the aboriginals. Despite her ceaseless struggles, she is increasingly entangled with them. She saves Ramon’s life by killing his enemies, but finds herself forced to be the goddess Malintzi, the wife of Cipriano, the living Huitzilopochtly of the Mexican aboriginals. It is to her “the finality of death”(816). “She could conceive now her marriage with Cipriano; the supreme passivity, like the earth below the twilight, consummate in living lifelessness, the sheer solid mystery of passivity”(816). But Kate Leslie is a woman of great spirit and free understanding about life. She is neither a marionette of Lawrence, nor a puppet at the hands of the Mexicans. ‘She desperately protests to be free :

“Oh! she cried to herself, stifling. “For heaven’s sake let me get out of this, and back to simple human people. I loathe the very sound of Quetzalcoatl and Huitzilopochtli. I would die rather than be mixed up in it any more. Horrible, really, both Ramon and Cipriano. And they want to put it over me, with their high-flown bunk, and their Malintzi, Malintzi! I am Kate Forrester, really. I am neither Kate Leslie, nor Kate Tylor. I am sick of ‘these men’ putting names over me. I was born as Kate Forrester, and I shall remain Kate Forrester.” (857).

This is her protest against both Lawrence, her creator, and the patriarchal social system, primitive as well as modern. Kate is sick of ‘these men’ who are not only Mexican aboriginals but who might also have been the modern men including Lawrence himself for forcing her to assume roles. She is victimized, but she never surrenders; she never mutely accepts anything destructive of her personal autonomy. It is neither Ramon, nor Cipriano, who is able to convince her of the new form of passivity in conjugal life. It is from Teresa that she learns something. Kate learns from Teresa that there is something beyond love in married life that can make one more devoted and more intimate to the other in their life. This new understanding makes her unsettled :

‘She was aware of a duality in herself, and she suffered from it. She could not definitely commit herself, either to the old way of life or to the new. She reacted from both. The old was a prison, and she loathed it. But in the new way she was not her own mistress at all, and her egoistic will recoiled’ (897).

Kate now often thinks if Teresa is a greater woman than herself. She is thus shaken within herself because Teresa was proved to be a wise woman, ‘wise enough to take a lesson’(903). Kate’s final weak appeal to Cipriano, “you won’t let me go” implies neither simply her surrender to Cipriano, nor her rejection of him, but her surrender to the new wisdom about the primitive form of conjugal life, which she has acquired

having to come to terms with the aboriginal woman, Teresa.

The feminist criticism, as is shown above, began from women's situation in society where they were defined as "The Second Sex" and manipulated by a "Sexual Politics". It now seeks to challenge these assumptions thrown up and long nourished by a social system. From this standpoint, *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, itself registers such a feminist challenge. Constance Reid, the female protagonist of the novel gets married to Clifford Chatterley to be renamed as Lady Chatterley. But later on, she willingly abandons her ladyship putting into question the upper-class patriarchal socio-moral codes of conduct. She violates the sanctity of sacred and socially inviolable tie of Christian marriage, because the marriage itself, she thinks, has violated its true significance to sensual life. She meets Oliver Mellors, her husband's gamekeeper, a man of superior physical vitality but of lower social status. Her sexual intercourse with him saves her from the bored state of life which heitherto has been "ravished --- without ever being touched, ravished by dead words" (L.C.L., 109). She was 'really awakened to life' with this warm physical touch : a process that at once refutes the socio-moral codes of conduct.

*Lady Chatterley's Lover*, Lawrence declares, "is a nice tender phallic novel-not a sex-novel in the ordinary sense of the word": (*Letters* ; 15 March, 1928). This assertion of Lawrence about 'phallic consciousness' against 'sex consciousness' has been severely criticized by Simone de Beauvoir in *The Second Sex* (1949). She called him a 'male chauvinist' and charged that he substituted 'a phallic cult' for 'the cult of Goddess Mother' (Beauvoir, 1949, 249). Kate Millett, in her *Sexual Politics* also substantiated

further the same charge with a comment that in Lawrence 'female is passive, male is active' (Millett, K., 1969, 240). But the "phallic consciousness" as Graham Hough observes, "means to assert the primacy of the deepest instinctual forces over the more superficial and personal kinds of attraction more commonly recognized in the civilised world" (Hough G., 1961, 176). Daniel J. Schneider also expresses a similar view when he says that "the phallic consciousness" is "the pre-verbal sympathetic awareness or responsiveness which being rooted in sex, is essentially unitive, a force binding men and women, and men and men, and men and the cosmos together" (Widdowson, P. (ed), 1992, 166). Lawrence's cult of phallic worship is not a way to exert the male supremacy over his female counterpart; rather it is, to him, suggestive of the productive role of sex in life. The phallus, in his opinion, is the symbolic representative of the Holy Ghost, a third force that unites man and woman at a level higher than mere physical plane. It thus provides us with a wisdom beyond gender politics. On the other hand, Catherine Breiliet, an eminent feminist says that "sex doesn't work without an element of theatricality and fantasy and for a woman that means being dominated by a man" (Quoted in Brown, K., 1990, 21). Although this remark is outwardly horrific, it opens up a new region of our understanding that "we simply do not as yet have an adequate vocabulary for comment on female responses to erotica : pornography, for example, is for the most part produced wholly in accordance with male criteria, with women as its material" (Barron, J., in Brown, K. (ed) 1990, 21).

About the apparently obscene passages in *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, Graham Hough observes that "the nature and quality of sexual experience has a powerful

influence on character and development" (Hough, G., 1961, 187), and in handling of sex, Lawrence "is certainly breaking more than a mere taboo of the printing house." (Hough G. 187). The four-letter words are, in Hough's opinion an integral part of Lawrence's purpose. But simultanelusly Hough raises a question that although there is no proper vocabulary to discuss sex, yet by using obscene words to elucidate the tabooed acts and parts of the body, Lawrence has violated the normal code of respectful language. For, "no writer can alter the connotation of a whole section of a vocabulary by mere fiat" (Hough, G., 139). Tony Pinkney, harping on the same string with Hough, says that the use of the obscenities in the novel's central relationship "must be understood as a self-wounding textual device---- whereby a self-insulting structure of modernism --- is brought back into grating conflict with the history it thought it had left for ever behind." (Pinkney, T., 1990, 146). But Lydia Blanchard, while striving for the principle of integration between one discourse and another, says that we are constantly dislocated by *Lady Chatterley*, in particular by the passages of explicit sex, because we are reading the novel within the wrong convention trying to naturalise it in relation to Lawrence's earlier fiction. But the text may also be read "as an exposing of the artifice of generic conventions and expectations" (Widdowson, P., (ed.), 1992, 125). On such a level the text finds its coherence by being interpreted as a narrator's exercise of language and production of meaning. In Blanchard's opinion, "to introduce opposing conventions of genre is to bring about a change in mode of reading and to look for a synthesis at a higher level." (Widdowson, P., pp.125-26). Lawrence's explicit description of the body and its use in intercourse are a way to escape repression of sexuality. Quoting, Barthes,

Blanchard says that the process of understanding a text is not only to pass from one word to another, it is also to pass from one level to another; and to do so with the present novel, is to experience the "rapture of dislocation produced by ruptures or violations of intelligibility" (Widdowson (ed), 132). In sum, the novel is an attempt to see sex in a new way that underlies Lawrence's desire to say it in a new way. Thus *Lady Chatterley* is a study of the tension between "the need to rescue sexuality from secrecy, to bring it into discourse, and the simultaneous recognition that the re-creation of sexuality in language must always --- resist language." (Widdowson, P., 183).

True, Lawrence, in his *oeuvre*, devoted more space for woman keeping in mind the point of her amelioration and fulfilment. He could understand that "--- a woman is not a man with different sex; she is a different world." (*Letters*, 21 Sept., 1914). He was even confident of his task, for he said, "I should do my work for women, better than the suffrage" (*Letters*, 23 December, 1912). But his striving to put sexuality into discourse made him an ambiguous figure with an apparently biased attitude towards women. This is because of his discharge of language that, according to Bakhtin, "exists as ideology" (Booth, W.C., 166) in the sense that its meaning is pre-established by the patriarchal social system. Lawrence's presentment of sex-ideology with language that is patriarchal in origin, often failed to comply fully with the feminist point of view. Lawrence, however, was not blind to this linguistic dispute. In order to avoid this complexity, he turned towards silent physical communion between man and woman, and towards the living activities of every individual, as alternatives of logocentrism. But these alternatives, as they were also put into discourse, were misunderstood by the feminists.

They targeted those alternatives for their scorn. Thus, what we see is that the feminist problem lies not in the presentment of sex and sex-life but in the antilogy, that is, the contradiction in terms of language; a problem still waiting to be solved with the help of something like Lawrence's Holy Ghost, the reconciler of the opposites.

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