

LAWRENCE AND THE BODY

For man, the vast marvel is to be alive. For man, as for flower, and beast and bird, the supreme triumph is to be most vividly, most profoundly alive. Whatever the unborn and the dead may know, they cannot know the beauty, the marvel of being alive in the flesh (Apocalypse, 149).

Our aim in this chapter is to review and reassess Lawrence's concept of the body in the light of contemporary theorists of the body. Central to Lawrence's criticism of culture is the thought that the status of the body in the dominant intellectual tradition, or the Judeo-Christian culture for that matter, has largely been one of absence or dismissal. Lawrence has strongly opposed the Judeo-Christian culture that regarded the body as the mundane path to a higher spirituality. He has equally denounced the post-Cartesian tendency of Western philosophy to reject the body as an obstacle to pure thought. This 'somatophobia'¹ of Western philosophy, a product of Judeo-Christian culture, is a cause of serious concern for both Lawrence and the contemporary feminists.

The devalued status of the body in the Western philosophical tradition is strongly contested by Lawrence and the feminists. Rene Descartes, a seventeenth century French philosopher and scientist, is the most influential of all modern philosophers to have assigned a derogatory status to the body. In his formulation, the process of thinking precedes the process of being in the world. The Western philosophical tradition since Descartes has regarded the body as the site of unruly passions and appetites that might frustrate the pursuit of knowledge and truth. The mind/body binary of the Enlightenment and its emphasis on mind have been challenged by the feminists. Like them, Lawrence the critic of culture has expressed his disbelief in the truth-claims of the Cartesian subject. He is suspicious of the Cartesian idea of mind as a disembodied universal. He has also doubted the transcendence of corporeality of the thinking subject and its claim to be a neutral observer. Like Nietzsche, Lawrence views the Dionysian substratum of being as the source and support of spiritual

qualities in our nature. Nietzsche's Zarathustra says, "Once the soul looked contemptuously upon the body: and then the contempt was the supreme good- the soul wanted the body lean, monstrous, famished. So the soul thought to escape from the body and from the earth" (Nietzsche: 42). The antithetical attitude of Western philosophy to the body and the spirit in Judeo-Christian culture is therefore the main target of Lawrence's attack as a critic of culture. Lawrence has a strong distrust in the Cartesian ego and has decried its exaltation over the body. He looks upon this Cartesian exaltation of mind over the body as the epiphenomenon of Judeo-Christian culture. He has reversed the status of the body in the Cartesian binary by emphasizing the primacy of being over knowing: "In his adventure of self-consciousness a man must come to the limit of himself and become aware of something beyond him" (Phoenix, 185). In Lawrence's schema, the mind and its "adventure of self consciousness" are subordinated to the limitless "beyond", which is the unconscious. An individual is a unit of the unconscious—an individual not in his mental consciousness but in his/her body. The "beyond" is therefore represented by the body that continuously renews itself with the help of mind at its service. This subordination of mind to the body forms the central argument of Lawrence the critic of culture. In Fantasia of the Unconscious, Lawrence assigns a devalued status to knowledge attained through mind. He posits, "Knowledge is to consciousness what signpost is to a traveler: just an indication of the way which has been traveled before" (76). In the same book Lawrence elaborates on his point, emphasizing the need to subject mind to the body—the site and centre that enables man to live dynamically:

This supreme lesson of human consciousness is to learn how not to know. That is, how not to interfere. That is, how to live dynamically, from the great source, and not statically, like machines driven by ideas or principles from the head, from one fixed desire. At last, knowledge must be put into its true place in the living activity of man (76).

The idea of living dynamically, denied by the Western philosophical thought, aligns Lawrence with Trinh T. Minh-ha, one of the leading contemporary feminists. We shall elaborate on this correspondence later in this chapter.

That the body is the most important site in Lawrence's thought adventure is proved by the fact that Lawrence has strongly decried the crucifixion of the body in Judeo-Christian culture. He traces the roots of this denunciation of the body in this culture and says that this denunciation is synonymous with the denial of woman. In Phoenix, Lawrence says, "Christ rose from the supposed male spirit in Judea, and uttered a new commandment. He repudiated woman: 'who is my mother?'" (452). This repudiation of woman, the body, Lawrence argues, had continued in Europe throughout the Middle Ages and even in his own times because of the all-pervading influence of Judeo-Christian culture. Lawrence expresses a Foucauldian concern for the crucifixion, destruction of the body. In Phoenix, he says,

The history of our era is the nauseating and repulsive history of the crucifixion of the procreative body for the glorification of the spirit, the mental consciousness....The Renaissance put the spear to the side of the already crucified body, and syphilis put poison into the wound made by the imaginative spear. It took still three hundred years for the body to finish; but in the eighteenth century it became a corpse, a corpse with an abnormally active mind: and totally it stinketh (569).

The 'era' here is the era of Judeo-Christian culture in which Lawrence has detected the inordinate devaluation of the body. Lawrence has pointed out the inscription of Christian culture on the body. But unlike Foucault, Lawrence's analysis of the cultural inscription of the body is less systematic. Foucault's historically dynamic account of the manner in which the micro-political operations of power produce socially appropriate bodies, does not have any close resemblance with Lawrence as such. Yet, at the macro-level, Lawrence's concern for the crucifixion of the body largely corresponds with that of Foucault. Both Lawrence and Foucault focus on the destruction of the body by a historical process of inscription. In his essay, "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History", Foucault writes: "Genealogy, as an analysis of descent, is...situated within the articulation of the body and history. Its task is to expose a body totally imprinted by history and the process of history's destruction of the body"(148). For Foucault, the body is a 'site' for the complex interplay of

knowledge and power. Lawrence is just aware of such an interplay which he has not developed. In her essay, "Lawrence, Foucault, and the Language of Sexuality", Lydia Blanchard has rightly pointed out: "Lawrence was certainly interested in the full conscious realization of sex, but that interest was, for him as for Foucault, part of a broader interest in the relation between language, sexuality, power and knowledge" (123). This comment on Lawrence's anticipation of the Foucauldian concept on the deployment of sexuality on the body is applicable to Lawrence's awareness of the modern forms of power which are exercised at the micro-level of the body, of course on a broad basis. Lawrence the critic of culture views the body, as Foucault does, as something that defies attempts at conceptualization—something fluid, inconclusive and contingent. For Foucault, it is only through discipline and confession that the discursive construction of the body is made possible. In Power/Knowledge Foucault says, "If it had been possible to constitute a knowledge of the body, this has been by way of an ensemble of military and educational disciplines. It was on the basis of power over the body that a psychological, organic knowledge of it became possible" (59). On the basis of his awareness of such discursive construction of the body, Lawrence emphasizes the need to renew our discourses continually by putting a limit to the pursuit of knowledge and by emphasizing at the same time the need to subject all knowledge to the unknown. We have already quoted to refer to this aspect of his thought. In The Symbolic Meaning, Lawrence insists on the same point: "When we know that the unique, incommutable, creative mystery of the self is within us and precedes us, then we shall be able to take our full being from this mystery. We shall at last learn the pure lesson of knowing not to know"(49). Foucault would certainly have agreed with Lawrence's emphasis on 'being', which is the Lawrentian term for the 'lived body' in its fluidity:

When the great Christian will-to-knowledge is fulfilled; and when the great barbaric will-to-power is also satisfied; then, perhaps, man can recognize that neither power nor knowledge is the ultimate man's attainment, but only being; that the pure reality lies not in an infinitude, but in the mystery of the perfect unique self, incommutable; not in any eternity, but in the sheer Now (The Symbolic Meaning, 48-9).

Lawrence the critic of culture attaches great importance to the process of learning: “the pure lesson of knowing not to know” (The Symbolic: 49). This emphasis, Lydia Blanchard has rightly argued, aligns Lawrence fundamentally with Foucault.

Lawrence’s concept of the body has affinity with that of the contemporary feminists in many respects. These feminists, like Lawrence, have exposed the somatophobia of Western thought. As Moira Gatens writes, “Recent feminist research suggests that the history of Western thought shows a deep hatred and fear of the body” (Price, 228). Right from the beginning the feminist project it is connected to the body. What has mattered to feminism is the insistence of the mind/body binary by the dominant culture and the enduring association of the devalued term with the feminine. The female body as it is viewed by the dominant culture, is intrinsically unpredictable, leaky and disruptive and is capable of generating ontological anxiety. As such, the early second wave feminists, especially Simon de Beauvoir, have regarded the body as something to be rejected in the pursuit of intellectual quality. Other feminist writers have developed theories which are explicitly embodied such as ‘écriture féminine’. Luce Irigaray, for example, has insisted on the centrality of the material body. Yet another group of the recent feminist writers have put into question the givenness of the natural body. Instead they have posited a textual corporeality that is fluid in its investments and meanings.

Lawrence does of course not share the theories of these three groups of feminists in their entirety. Yet he shares with them their major concerns. He associates the female with the body. But unlike Beauvoir, who has likened female genital sexuality to a ‘carnivorous swamp’ (Price, 4), Lawrence has celebrated the body in the female. In *Phoenix*, he says, “The true female will eternally hold herself superior to any idea, will hold full life in the body to be the real happiness” (481). Simon de Beauvoir’s comment on the reproductive aspect of the female body also underlines her dismissive attitude towards it: “It is impossible simply to equate gestation with a task, a piece of work, or with a service, such as military service. Woman’s life is more seriously broken in upon by a demand for children than by regulation of the citizen’s employment” (Beauvoir, 90).

What Lawrence has said about the female body a few lines back—that women ‘will hold full life in the body’—corresponds with the emphasis of Luce Irigaray on sexual difference. Similarly, Lawrence’s concept of the body embraces embodied sexual difference. In Fantasia of the Unconscious, Lawrence posits, “A child is born sexed. A child is either male or female; every single living cell is either male or female and will remain either male or female as long as life lasts” (96). The biological determinism suggested here is not Lawrence’s strong emphasis. Like Lawrence, Irigaray celebrates female embodiment. She emphasizes multiple forms of female embodiment, such as the self-touching two-lips that characterize female morphology: “Between our lips, yours and mine, several voices, several ways of speaking resound endlessly, back and forth. One is never separable from the other. You/I: we are always several at once” (Irigaray, 1985, 209). Irigaray’s emphasis is on the fluidity, which marks the inherent excess of the feminine, resonates with the sense of fluidity contained in Lawrence’s concept of the body. Her concern is, as pointed out by Janet Price and Margrit Shildrick, not with the female body as such but with the “feminine morphological imaginary”(Price, 6). In his concept of the body, Lawrence is also mainly concerned with the morphological imaginary, rather than with the lived body, at least in his non-fictional writings.

Sigmund Freud and Jacques Lacan, the two great psychoanalysts, have preferred to present a psychic body map, a morphological imaginary, to giving a concept of the flesh and blood body. For Freud, the biological body is overlaid with psychical and social significance. In the schema of Freud and Lacan, the infant does not have a unified, hierarchical relation to the body as it does not yet occupy a fixed and bounded space. Both of them link the genesis of the ego with the formation of the body. The ego is produced through a series of identifications and introjections of the image of the others. It is also produced by the rechanneling of the libidinal impulses in the subject’s own body. In Lacan’s terms, the child experiences its body as disunified and disorganized, a fragmented body. Lacan describes this body as a ‘Lommelette’, a subject-to-be. For Lacan, the ego is not a projection of the real body, the body of anatomy, but of an imaginary anatomy. The imaginary anatomy is not an internalized image of the meaning that the body has for its subject, for others

in the social world and for its culture as a whole. Lawrence's concept of the biological body is inseparably linked up with the concept of the psyche. In his Fantasia of the Unconscious, Lawrence traces the development of the body through the development of the four primary centres of the psyche: "From these centres develop the great functions of the body" (Fantasia, 58). The coordination of these four primary centres in the grown-up individual, according to their respective primacy, gives primacy to the body. Immediately after its birth, the child, in its 'solar plexus', the primary centre of the psyche, is aware of himself and is conscious of—

An awareness also that outside this quiet gate, this navel, lies a whole universe on which you can lay tribute. Aha—at birth you closed the central gate for ever. Too dangerous to leave it open. There are eyes and mouths and ears and nostrils, besides the two lower gates of the passionate body and the closed but not locked gates of the breasts (Fantasia, 28).

There is no 'introjection' and 'projection' in Lawrence's schema. The individual comes to terms with the outside world with the development of another important psychic centre in him—which Lawrence calls 'lumber ganglion': "At the lumber ganglion I know that I am I, in distinction from a whole universe, which is not I am this is the first tremendous flash of knowledge of singleness and separate identity" (Fantasia, 35). In Lawrence the Real and the Imaginary are closely linked up unlike what we find in Lacan:

The actual evolution of the individual psyche is a result of the interaction between the individual and the outer universe. Which means that just as a child in the womb grows as a result of the parental blood stream which nourishes the vital quick of the foetus, so does ^every man and woman grow and develop as a result of a polarized flux between the spontaneous self and some other self or selves. It is the circuit of vital flux between itself and other being or beings which bring about the development and evolution of every individual psyche or physique (Fantasia, 246).

For Lawrence, the body is 'given', but it lacks fixity and stability. It is never separated from the maternal plenitude, as it renews itself continuously by surrendering itself to the unconscious, the unknown. This continuous renewal ensures its fluidity. Like Freud and Lacan, Lawrence emphasizes the role of psychic processes on the body, but does not accept Lacan's concept of the rupture from the mother (the 'Real') for the formation of the ego (the 'Imaginary') which, in Lacan's schema, is not a projection of the real biological body. In the Fantasia of the Unconscious, Lawrence says about the solar plexus, "From the first great centre of sympathy, the child is drawn to a lovely oneing with the mother" (71). Through this solar plexus, the child continues to have maternal plenitude even when he grows up.

Freud, Lacan and the feminists like Melanie and Nancy Chodorow—all have a degree of alienation from the maternal body. But for Lawrence the solar plexus, the primary centre of the psyche, where a child feels at one with the mother, is never separated and the grown-up individual continues to draw his vitality. Lawrence, however, posits that the central gate, the naval, of the gender-neutral body that opens on to the 'whole universe', is closed for ever at the time of birth. But the other gates such as eyes, mouths, ears, nostrils and two lower gates of the passionate body remain open. But as regards the central gate, Lawrence is categorical: "Too dangerous to leave it open" (Fantasia, 28). This 'central gate' in Lawrence's schema thus corresponds with the 'Real' in Lacan's.

This question of 'danger' here reminds us of Julia Kristeva's theory of the "abject". "The abject is what the subject seeks to expel in order to achieve an independent identity but this is impossible since the body cannot cease both to take in and expel objects" (Brooker, 1). In Kristeva's schema, the abject is always ambiguous: desirable and terrifying, nourishing and murderous. "It is violent, clumsy breaking away with the constant risk of falling back under the sway of a power as securing as it is stifling" (Kristeva, 1982: 13). The abject threatens the corporeal and psychic boundaries of the embodied self. This intrinsic but unstable part of the self corresponds with the unease of the Judeo-Christian culture with the bodily, and especially female bodily, fluids. Women, associated with the abject are both dangerous and excluded others. At the same time, they are, as mothers, an

originary presence. For Kristeva, abjection is a process by which the child takes up its own body image through detaching itself from the improper and unclean connection with the body of the mother.(Price, 103) In Powers of Horror, Kristeva argues that the female body is quintessentially the “abject” body because of its procreative functions.

For Lawrence, the presence of the mother is often dangerous as it threatens to devour the child. But in such cases, the mother deviates from her ‘originary presence’ and is prompted instead by her ‘will’ from the upper centre of her consciousness, from her ‘ego’. That is why Lawrence emphasizes that the mother-child “communication must be impersonal” (Phoenix, 625). The abject of Kristeva corresponds with Lawrence’s concept of the unconscious in so far as the unconscious is posited in Lawrence’s schema as the originary principle/site. But unlike Kristeva’s abject, Lawrence’s unconscious is “the spontaneous life-motive in every organism” (Fantasia, 212). “The true unconscious is the well-head, the fountain of real motivity” (Fantasia, 207). In Psychoanalysis and the Unconscious, Lawrence affirms, “We must discover, if we can, the true unconscious, where our life bubbles up in us, prior to any mentality. The first bubbling life in us, which is innocent of any mental alteration, this is the unconscious. It is pristine, not in any way ideal” (Fantasia, 212). Kristeva’s abject is certainly not ‘ideal’, but it is not ‘pristine’ either. The child, in Lawrence’s conception, does not have to alienate itself gradually from its mother for the appropriation of its well-defined body. The abject always poses a threat to stability, identity and fixity of the materialized body. Lawrence’s unconscious also ensures, because of its connection with the body throughout the lifetime, a renewal of the already formed subject and stands as a disruptive force for any kind of fixity. The ambiguity of desirability and horror that characterizes Kristeva’s abject is alien to Lawrence’s concept of the unconscious.

Lawrence’s concept of the unconscious can be aligned with Judith Butler’s theory of the ‘constructive outside’. But Lawrence’s unconscious, the source and support of all our being, is less concrete than either Butler’s ‘constructive outside’ or Kristeva’s ‘abject’. In this respect, both the feminists are preoccupied with the quest for the process in which femininity is constructed by culture. In Butler’s case, the

'constructive outside' is associated with the feminine body and Kristeva's 'abject' is related to the feminine body in the same way. But Lawrence's unconscious is gender-neutral. In Butler's view, the bodies that fail to materialize provide the necessary 'outside' for materialization of bodies that matter. ("Bodies That Matter", 243) Lawrence's emphasis on women's close association and almost identification with the body that the Judeo-Christian culture has devalued opens up new perspectives of his association with Kristeva and Butler. Lawrence would certainly have agreed with Kristeva's concept of the 'abject' on a broad basis and with Butler's theory of the 'constructive outside', since he has always exalted body over mind, being over knowing.

Butler's 'bodies that matter' and Kristeva's 'subject' that is formed by a process of constant exclusion of the 'abject' are not the real bodies that have been devalued by Judeo-Christian culture. Lawrence is, on the other hand, concerned with bodies that are always in the process of change, mutation and even transformation because of its inseparable link with the unconscious. It is the link that the Judeo-Christian culture has attempted to cut off. Lawrence the critic of culture has celebrated the fluid constituent of the body that disrupts and enables being to renew itself and be reborn like the mythological bird, phoenix.

Lawrence's concept of the ego as 'spurious self' that denies life contained in the body, his concept of theory and above all his concept of the solar plexus as the primal spontaneous centre of consciousness—have vital correspondence with those of T. Minh-ha, a leading contemporary feminist. We have referred to the feminist project of writing the body, 'écriture féminine', of the French feminists like Helene Cixous and Luce Irigaray in our chapter on Lawrence and feminism. Minh-ha's reading of Cixous's project reminds us of Lawrence's emphasis on body in writing, as she comments: "Woman, as Cixous defines her, is a whole—'whole composed of parts that are wholes'—through which language is born over and over again." (Minh-ha, 260).

Minh ha's concept of the ego is essentially Lawrentian. She argues: "Ego is an identification with the mind. When ego develops, the head takes over and exerts a

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tyrannical control over the rest of the body” (Minh-ha, 261). Unlike Julia Kristeva and Judith Butler, Minh-ha emphasizes the tyrannical sway of mind over body, which is, like that of Lawrence, gender-neutral. In Lawrence’s schema, cognition takes place in mind as a result of the perfect polarized circuit established between the first four poles of dynamic consciousness: “The moment there is a perfect polarized circuit between the first four poles of dynamic consciousness, at that moment does the mind, the terminal station, flash into cognition” (Fantasia, 74). The ‘circuit’ is established through ‘the whole body’ (75). But when the mind, the ego, takes over the rest of the body, it perversely provokes responses. Life loses its vitality and turns mechanistic by living from a fixed idea. The mind on its own can only give us a set of fixed ideas that have no dynamic value. In *Phoenix*, Lawrence argues that the mind subtly provokes and dictates our feelings and impulses (629). Lawrence the critic of culture warns against the fixity of ego that denies all spontaneous vitality of life: “But once we fall into the state of egoism, we cannot change. The ego, the self conscious ego, remains fixed, a final envelope around us” (Phoenix II, 396).

Lawrence’s concept of the solar plexus as the first psychic centre in man of the profound and pristine consciousness quite significantly corresponds with Minh-ha’s similar postulation. This centre (the solar plexus) is the closest one to the body in Lawrence’s schema. In her essay “Write Your Body”, Minh-ha draws on the procedures prevalent in Asia according to which there are three centres in our psyche: the intellectual, the emotional and the vital. She concentrates on the vital centre and writes,

This centre, located below the navel, radiates life. It directs vital movement and allows one to relate to the world with instinctual immediacy. But instinctual here is not opposed to reason, for it lies outside the classical realm of duality assigned to the sensible and the intelligible (Minh-ha, 262).

Lawrence’s concept of the solar plexus is also located below the navel. The ‘vital movement’ and ‘instinctual immediacy’ that this centre provides are very close to Lawrence’s concept of the function of solar plexus. Lawrence’s concept of the

whole consciousness begins from one sympathetic centre and is achieved through its polarization with its corresponding voluntary centre and finally through the correspondence of the complete dynamic flow in one plane with the other. Minh-ha's concept of 'body consciousness' corresponds with Lawrence's whole consciousness in which the mind/body binary is transcended. Minh-ha relates this vital centre with women's body-writing:

So does certain women's womb writing, which neither separates the body from the mind nor sets the latter against the heart...but allows each part of the body to become infused with consciousness. Again, bring a new awareness of life into previously forgotten, silenced or deadened areas of the body (Minh-ha, 262).

To this centre of the body Minh-ha attributes the capacity to infuse the whole body with consciousness. Lawrence likewise emphasizes the qualitative difference of the knowledge provided by the solar plexus from mental knowledge:

Primarily we know, each man, each living creature knows, profoundly and satisfactorily, and without question, that I am I. This root of all knowledge and being is established in the solar plexus; it is dynamic, pre-mental knowledge, such as cannot transferred into thought (Fantasia, 34).

Minh-ha would certainly agree with Lawrence that women's body-writing does not concern itself with mere 'thought' with all its fixity as is suggested by Lawrence here. Minh-ha's emphasis on the unknown in the writing of women is again Lawrentian: "the writing of women is really translated from the unknown, like a new way of communicating rather than an already formed language" (Minh-ha, 264).

In spite of his great concern for the body, Lawrence has not defined the body as such. The contemporary feminist Luce Irigaray has celebrated the multiple forms of female embodiment but has not defined normative body. The slipperiness of the body proves that it is fluid, dynamic and contingent—the point on which both

Lawrence and the feminists agree. Lawrence focuses on this elusiveness of the body in his Fantasia of the Unconscious metaphorically:

It is no good looking at a tree to know it. The only thing is to sit among the roots and nestle against its strong trunk, and not bother. That's how I write all about these planes and plexuses—between the toes of a tree, forgetting myself against the great ankle of the trunk (43).

Spivak and Butler are of the same view, although their respective emphases are different. Butler says, with her characteristic insistence on performativity/discursive construction of the body: “There is no reference to a pure body which is not at the same time a further formation of that body” (Butler, 1993, 10). Spivak’s emphasis is more general than that of Butler and therefore closer to that of Lawrence: “There are thinkings of the systematicity of the body, there are value codings of the body; the body as such cannot be thought” (Spivak, 149). This definition or the negation of it by stating its indefinability reminds us of what Lawrence has said about the ‘dynamic pre-mental knowledge’ to which one has access through the solar plexus. It is the knowledge which ‘cannot be transferred into thought’ (Fantasia, 34). Lawrence the critic of Judeo-Christian culture has focused on its deadening fixity because of its dismissal of the body. This culture, Lawrence argues, has rendered all thoughts of the post-Cartesian Western philosophy meaningless. He seeks to escape from this cul-de-sac by celebrating the fluid body as the contemporary feminists are doing, although sometimes for a different purpose.

Lawrence’s celebration of fluidity of the body is shared by Giles Deleuze and Félix Guattari in A Thousand Plateaus. In this book these two influential thinkers of the late twentieth century have used the term ‘rhizome’ to characterize the difference and multiplicity of the body. ‘Rhizome’ is the botanical form of growth seen, for example, in an iris and which, unlike a single root form, produces different points of equal growth across a lateral path. These governing principles of multiplicity and flow or ‘lines of flight’ are opposed to the tyranny of the One and the Same. For Deleuze and Guattari, “A rhizome has no beginning or end; it is always in the middle, between things, interbeing, intermezzo” (1987, 25). In their schema, the

rhizomatic growth of the body underlines its 'in-human' character. Lawrence's similar emphasis on the 'unknown' in respect of the body to underline its difference and multiplicity opens up vistas of vital correspondence between him and these thinkers. Both Lawrence and these thinkers seek to 'deterritorialize' the static and fixed model of Western thought by celebrating the body in its multiplicity.

Lawrence's celebration of the fluid body once again aligns with the more recent form of feminism—cyberfeminism. Cyberfeminists like Donna Haraway have emphasized the radical fluidity of the body by arguing that the body of the late 20th century and beyond is determined neither by biological givens and boundaries nor by discursive regimes of power. For Haraway, the body constitutes a field of conflicting and unstable flows that ushers in revolution in informatics. As she has it, "Sociological stories depend on a high-tech view of the body as a biotic component or cybernetic communications system" (1991, 169). Lawrence certainly does not fully share this view of the body posited by Haraway. Lawrence was historically at a distance from the cybernetics communications system. Yet he can be said to have dimly anticipated Haraway's ironic configuration of the half-organic, half-mechanic cyborg: "The moment man learned to abstract, he began to make engines that would do the work of his body" (Phoenix, 29). With Haraway and her cyberfeminism the body has transcended the anatomical difference between the sexes—the difference that has been emphasized by Luce Irigaray. Janet Price and Margrit Shildrick have rightly pointed out that "a large part of Haraway's own project has been to problematize the category not just of the female but of the human itself" (Price, 11). This concept of the gender-neutral body again aligns her with Lawrence. But the most important point that Lawrence shares with Haraway is the concept of the gender-neutral body marked by fluidity. Lynda Birke's reading of Haraway's vision emphasizes this point. She says, "Donna Haraway's vision of the cyborg also implies fluidity. She speaks of polymorphous, intuitive systems, emphasizing rates of flow across boundaries rather than bodily integrity" (Birke, 46).

In Lawrence's concept, the body is always marked by inconclusiveness, fluidity and contingency. In his Preface and Introduction to Books, an essay included in Phoenix, Lawrence has celebrated a sense of inconclusiveness, immediacy and "the

quality of life itself" in painting where "everything is left in its rapid, fluid relationship with the rest of things" (Phoenix, 220). The qualities of 'mutation', 'haste', 'inconclusiveness', 'immediacy' and 'fluidity' that Lawrence speaks of here² are the qualities of life with which the body, a unit of life, is invested. Therefore, at a deeper level, Haraway's concept resonates with that of Lawrence.

Lawrence's concept of the body as an unknown site, a unit of the unconscious, that defies attempts at conceptualization. It is further illustrated by his comparison of the body with the 'darkest Africa'. This comparison again brings to the fore the elusive aspect of the body: "In the darkest continent of the body there is God. And from him issue the first dark rays of our feelings, wordless, and utterly impervious to words" (Phoenix, 759). His insistence is on the continuous renewal of the body from its source and therefore the conception of it is radically contingent. This point is touched upon by Elizabeth Grosz: "The stability of the unified body image, even in the so-called normal subject, is always precarious. It cannot be simply taken for granted as an accomplished fact, for it must be continually renewed" (Grosz, 1994, 43-44)

Long before the contemporary feminists have launched their attack against 'biological determinism' and 'biopolitics' on the ground that the truth claims of biological science is basically false, Lawrence has expressed his distrust of the truth-claims of science in matters relating to the human body. In Fantasia of the Unconscious, Lawrence says, "Science is wretched in its treatment of human body as a sort of complex mechanism made of numerous little machines working automatically in a rather unsatisfactory relation to one another" (55). This distrust of Lawrence is reflected in the destabilization of the biological body as a universal, stable entity in the writings of contemporary feminist theorists such as Emily Martin, Jane Sawicki, Donna Haraway and Susan Bordo who have offered new readings of the body. They have taken the concept of the body beyond Enlightenment claim to reveal the truth of bodies in their gross materiality.

Lawrence's concept of blood-consciousness, of 'dynamic consciousness' and of 'physical psyche' threaten the Cartesian mind/body split. He tries to overcome this

binary by putting the mind into its place and by insisting on an alternative awareness that incorporates the wholeness of the body. All these three concepts discussed above aim at overcoming the hierarchical relation in the Cartesian binary that is a product of the Judeo-Christian culture. In this respect Lawrence's theory of the body invites comparison with that of the phenomenologist Maurice Merleau-Ponty. Merleau-Ponty posits a subject who knows because the body knows. His work rejects the Cartesian duality of mind and the body for a notion of subjectivity as the lived body. Merleau-Ponty argues, "You are your body and your body is the potential of a certain world" (1962, 106). His phenomenological approach sees the growing infant as embarking on the construction of its subjectivity through its relations with the world. In his schema, the gradual accrual of personal and largely unconscious habitual bodily attitudes towards the world, organize sense impressions, and structure the meaning of lived experience. In Merleau-Ponty's conception the body produces and enables social interaction. He says, "It is through the body that I understand other people, just as it is through my body that I perceive things" (1962, 186).

Lawrence's exaltation of dynamic consciousness over mental consciousness emphasizes his affinity with Ponty. This "dynamic consciousness", Lawrence writes, is "pre-cerebral consciousness"³ and is therefore associated with the body. Lawrence's concept of 'blood consciousness' reveals the extent of his affinity with Ponty's concept of the conscious body. Again in The Symbolic Meaning, Lawrence makes a very significant exposition of his concept of an alternative consciousness which is corporeal:

The blood is awake: the whole blood-system—system of the body is a great field of primal consciousness. But in the nervous system the primary consciousness is localized and specialized. Each great nerve centre has its own peculiar consciousness, its own peculiar mind, its own primary precepts and concepts, its own spontaneous desires and ideas (135).

In Merleau-Ponty's schema, the body knows and through its knowledge can come to terms with the outside world and other bodies. Lawrence makes the same

point in the extract quoted above. Lawrence illustrates the process of 'physical thought' formation by an analogy of the bees. He says,

When a bee leaves its hive and circles round to sense the locality, it is attending with the primary mind to the surrounding objects establishing a primary rapport between its own very tissue and the tissue of the adjacent objects. A process of rapid physical thought takes place, an act of the primary, not the cerebral mind: the sensational, not the ideal consciousness (The Symbolic Meaning, 135).

Lawrence's concept of the "physical thought" here almost provides the rock on which Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological account of the body is based. In Lawrence's view, "The foetus is... radically, individually conscious" (Fantasia, 218).

It is not surprising that some contemporary feminists have drawn on the ideas of Merleau-Ponty because he emphasizes the lived body. They are Iris Young, Catriona Mackenzie, and Ros Diprose (Cranny-Francis, 186). For Lynda Birke, "Living the body means experiencing it as transformable, not only as cultural meanings/reading but also within itself" (Birke, 45). After the disappearance of the fixed, biologically given, stable body, some of the feminists are attaching importance to this experience of the lived body. In doing so, they emphasize the fluidity, inconclusiveness and contingency of it. This emphasis, as we have already observed, is profoundly Lawrentian.

Lawrence the critic of culture has put great emphasis on the lived body. In his essay on Herman Melville, included in The Symbolic Meaning, Lawrence formulates his idea of the highest pitch of culture:

Melville knows how to live and living he knows life. This is the highest pitch of culture. He has really no purpose in mind, no scheme of life for himself. In his actual living he is quite spontaneous, non-moral. All the time he is the living quick of the moment (228).

In Apocalypse, Lawrence regrets the loss of dynamic consciousness of the ancients: “We have lost almost entirely the great and intricately developed sensual awareness, and sense knowledge of the ancients. It was a great depth of knowledge arrived at direct by instinct and intuition” (91).

For Lawrence, the famous book of seven seals, the Apocalypse, is “the body of man” (Apocalypse, 101). The seven seals are the seven centres or gates of the dynamic consciousness. The opening of these seals symbolizes the conquering of the greater psychic centres of the human body. In his adventure of consciousness, Lawrence thus explores the possibility of revival of the body by a movement deep down the body to end the domination of the Logos, the Word, and the Mind over the body in Judeo-Christian culture. In Apocalypse Lawrence draws on Pryse’s⁴ notion of a latent power within man that could be liberated through awakening of the seven principal nerve-centres or ‘chakras’ along the spine. In Yoga, this power, called ‘kundalini’, is symbolically represented as a serpent coiled at the base of the spine. When awakened, this serpent releases life-giving force by moving upward and gaining power with the conquest of each ‘chakra’ or ‘plexus’ in Lawrence’s version. Lawrence’s engagement as revealed in his Apocalypse with the project of liberation of the body shares a common agenda with the contemporary feminists. Their project of writing the body, “écriture feminine”, once again, is profoundly Lawrentian.

Lawrence’s exploration of the great power of life lying in the lower body and the possibility of its release is one of his seminal attempts at disrupting the Judeo-Christian culture in which the mind enjoys supremacy over the body. It legitimizes in the process male supremacy over the female. By seeking to liberate the body from its devalued status Lawrence does the pioneering work to pave a radical way for the cultural agenda of the contemporary feminists. He seeks to liberate the body from its devalued status—a project similar to that of the contemporary feminists. In “Why the Novel Matters”, Lawrence focuses on the centrality of the body, anticipating Merleau-Ponty and the feminists of our times:

“Oh, yes, my body, me alive knows, and knows intensely. As for the sum of all knowledge, it can't be anything more than an accumulation of all things I know in the body, and you, my dear, know in the body” (Phoenix, 534).

NOTES

1. Janet Price and Margrit Shildrick have used the term “somatophobia” to designate the masculinist fear and rejection of the body (Price, 4).
2. The original lines from which we have taken the phrases in quote are: “There must be mutation, swifter than iridescence, haste, not rest, come-and-go, not fixity, inconclusiveness, immediacy, the quality of life itself, without denouement or close (Phoenix, 220).
3. Page. 75 (The Symbolic Meaning).
4. James Pryse is a Dublin theosophist whose book on Apocalypse, The Apocalypse Unsealed had influenced Lawrence. (Apocalypse, 5).