

LAWRENCE AND FEMINISM

The close correspondence between Lawrence's concept of the body and that of the contemporary feminists opens up the scope for a fresh reckoning of Lawrence as a critic of culture in relation to feminism. Lawrentian emphasis on man-woman relationship and his 'priest of love' image built on the primacy of this relationship by Mark Spilka have made Lawrence the grist to the mills of the second-wave feminists in the late sixties and the early seventies. But with the onset of the third wave feminism that almost coincides with postmodernism, Lawrentian assumptions were put to fresh scrutiny in terms of contemporary issues like sexual difference, gender, the body, 'écriture feminine' and sexuality. In this chapter, we shall briefly review the second wave feminists' reading of Lawrence and proceed to assess the worth of the key ideas of Lawrence the critic of culture in relation to the major concerns of the third wave feminism. Since a full-length study of all the areas of feminism is beyond the scope of this single chapter, the issue of gender will be taken up in the next one. Here in this chapter, our main focus is, besides the review of Lawrence-Beauvoir-Millet interaction, on the leading issues of third wave feminism like sexual difference, sexuality, 'écriture feminine', performativity, essentialism in feminist perspective and 'semiotic'.

"Some of the most developed and influential political critiques of Lawrence are the product of feminist literary criticism", says Fiona Becket. (143). Kate Millet's Sexual Politics is the most influential of the 'political critiques of Lawrence' that Fiona has in mind. Kate Millet's blanket condemnation of Lawrence partly derives its sting from Simon de Beauvoir's The Second Sex. Beauvoir has pointed out the tendency in Lawrence, among other such, to offer woman who accepts being defined as the 'Other'—the categorization that is unacceptable to her but which gives a firm ground to the third wave French feminists like Luce Irigaray and Helene Cixous. "Lawrence," says Beauvoir, "believes passionately in the supremacy of the male." (1972, 248). Beauvoir's eclecticism is a politically determined one as it is that of Kate Millet. Millet's attack on Lawrence is more stringent as she goes further to expose the phallogocentric and misogynistic tendencies in Lawrence. In her highly

influential book, she calls Lawrence “the most talented and fervid of sexual politicians” and comments that Lawrence “is the most subtle as well, for it is through a feminine consciousness that his masculine message is conveyed” (Millett, 71). The question of gender involved in the comment quoted here has escaped the critical gaze of Millett herself. Millett is aware of the “feminine consciousness” in Lawrence but instead of trying sincerely to understand the question of gender contained in it, she unfortunately views it as the subtle tool of a sexual politician. We shall explore a possible correspondence between this “feminine consciousness” and ‘écriture féminine’ of the French feminists later on in this chapter.

In Millett’s attack on Lawrence, the focus is mainly on those aspects of Lawrence’s thought that serve the purpose of exposing the oppressive operations of patriarchy in Lawrence. Her approach is typically one of second wave feminism.— she has excluded the question of gender from her discourse and the point of radical indeterminacy and provisionality in Lawrence. ^{is left out} Yet she is not totally unaware of them. Millett’s offhand comment is: “One is always struck by the sexual ambiguity in Lawrence” (Millett, 82).

But this issue of ambiguity is sidetracked for the attainment of a predetermined objective. So much preoccupied is Millett with sexual politics that she has diluted even Lawrence’s attack on egocentrism. In the same book she says,

Critics are often misled to fancy that he recommends both sexes cease to be hard struggling little wills and egoists. Such is not the case. Mellors and other Lawrentian heroes incessantly exert their wills over women and the lesser men in their mission to rule (Millett, 76).

She draws her arguments from her identification of Lawrence with Mellors and other heroes. Lawrence by the same token may also be identified with the heroines like Connie, Alvina, Ursula and others. Lawrence’s critical corpus contains ‘sexual ambiguity’¹ but no ambiguity is there in his denunciation of the ego-ideal. Throughout his non-fiction Lawrence has denounced in unequivocal terms the ideal

ego. In Phoenix, he says, "Nothing in the world is more pernicious than the ego or spurious self, the conscious entity with which every individual is saddled." (710).

Lawrence's non-fiction focuses on his quarrel with the Cartesian ego. This firm stance of Lawrence the critic of culture in respect of 'ego' and the projection of anti-feminist ego through Mellors the game keeper in Lady Chatterley's Lover, as Millett views it, are two incompatible things. Millett has sidetracked this incompatibility. Otherwise she would have found in Lawrence a radical uncertainty and provinciality even in respect of male superiority over the female in man-woman relationship. As regards the question of identification of Lawrence with Mellors, Millett's mistake is pointed out by Alison Light who argues that "novels, as constructs of the imagination, might be attempts at 'ungendering' and however unsuccessful at dispersing or even transgressing the gendered experience of an author and its unusual restraints" (Light, 176).

Alison Light is one of the many feminists who have defended Lawrence against the blanket condemnation of him by Kate Millett. Others include Sheila Macleod, Carol Dix, Hilary Simpson, Lydia Blanchard—all of whom share a pro-Lawrence stance opposing that of Millett. Sheila Macleod in her Lawrence's Men and Women (1985) takes a stand countering that of Millett and makes a plea for a balanced view of Lawrence's treatment of man-woman relationship. Carol Dix argues that Lawrence offers as many positive views of woman as negative (Becket, 147). Hilary Simpson in her D.H. Lawrence and Feminism has set Lawrence's changing attitudes to women in the perspective of the contemporary women's movement. Simpson historicizes Lawrence and in so doing does not only show the limitations of Millett's approach but also opens up areas for us to develop new assimilations of Lawrence's conflicting concerns in respect of man-woman relationship. She gives an account of Lawrence's shift "from a liberal, pro-feminist position before the first world war to the rabid post-war vision of women as a destructively dominant sex, and of programmes for masculinist revolution" (Simpson, 90). Although the trajectory of Lawrence's attitude to women culminates in, in Hilary's account, 'programmes for masculinist revolution', we cannot identify her stance with Millett's because the latter lacks the detached standpoint of a historian. What makes her study profitable

for us is that it points to the provisional character of Lawrence's disillusionments with women after the war and it reveals her penetrating insight into Lawrentian concern: "he must have felt that women in whom he had much of his hope for the future had merely become more like men"(Simpson, 94). The provisionality, perhaps inadvertently suggested here, lies in the fact that Lawrence sincerely believed that the men are incapable of any becoming because of their wholesale adoption of Judeo-Christian culture and the only hope of reconstruction lies with women. The fixity of the male culture can only be disrupted by the female, this concern is corroborated by the 'abstract' male and female principles in the exploratory prose of Lawrence. Lawrence's view of the female as the 'unknown' is the source of his provisionality. The principle of the female, the source of creativity, renders all 'fixity' of the male provisional, indeterminate and inconclusive. This association of the female with the 'unknown'—the 'difference' that facilitates 'becoming', is shared by the contemporary French philosopher, Giles Deleuze. The affinity of Lawrence with Deleuze and Guattari is one of the major concerns of our study in the last chapter. Here we limit our discussion to their consensual attitudes towards women.

In A Thousand Plateaus, Deleuze and Guattari argue that becoming woman is a privileged position (Colebrook, 139). The very concept of man, according to them, stands in the way of our thinking the difference of life—the difference that ensures becoming. Both Lawrence and Deleuze and Guattari agree that man, the subject, functions as a stable being or identity. In Deleuze's view, the status of becoming woman is privileged because woman is the opening away from the closed image of man (Colebrook, 140). Lawrence's view of woman is similar to that of Deleuze. Lawrence has denounced the 'stable ego' and its 'One-and-Allness' in the post-Cartesian Western thought. In his "Study of Thomas Hardy", Lawrence has said that the tragedy of Jude

(I)s the result of over-development of one principle of human life at the expense of the other; an over-balancing; a laving of all the stress on the Male, the Love, the Spirit, the Mind, the Consciousness; a denying, a

blaspheming against the Female, the Law, the Soul, the Senses, the Feeling (Phoenix: 509).

This 'laving of all the stress on the Male' and a 'blaspheming against the Female' have constituted the concept of 'man'. This male principle is the principal target of Lawrence's attack in his discursive writings. Deleuze and Guattari argue that ~~Western~~ thought is built on the idea of the prohibition of incest, on the idea that we must renounce our desire for our mother in order to become social and human. In their view,

Woman, therefore is reduced as an impossible, lost and prohibited origin—as what must be repressed and excluded in order for human history to begin. Therefore, they regard becoming- woman as the opening for a new understanding of desire that does not begin with the loss or repression of an original object (Colebrook, 140).

The second reason for the importance of becoming-woman has to do with the impersonal and unbounded nature of sexual desire. In Difference and Repetition, Deleuze insists on the inhuman character of sexuality. The 'inhuman' here suggests something 'human'. Lawrence's way of looking at the sexual act is similar to that of Deleuze: "But the act, called the sexual act, is not for the depositing the seed. It is for the leaping-off into the unknown, as from a cliff's edge like Sappho into the sea" (Phoenix, 441).

According to Deleuze, desire is pre-personal and pre-human -it is free flow, creative difference and becoming (Colebrook, 142). In his view, thinking a desire beyond the prohibition of woman, thinking a desire that traverses the human body, means thinking of the becoming of woman, not as a sex but as the opening to 'a thousand sexes'(143). In the same vein and with the same emphasis, Lawrence has said in Apocalypse, not in one of his pre-war writings and therefore contrary to Hilary Simpson's observation: "The woman is one of 'wonders'" (123). Lawrence is aware of the pre-personal and pre-human character of desire. In The Symbolic Meaning, Lawrence says, "we must wake and sharpen in ourselves the subtle faculty

for perceiving the greater inhuman forces that control us" (19). Deleuze's association of woman with 'a thousand tiny sexes' finds a correspondence in Lawrence, who, in the "Crown", says: "It is thus seeking consummation in the utter darkness, that I come to the woman in desire: she is the discovery, she is the gate to the dark eternity of power, the creative power" (Phoenix II, 377).

It is true that Lawrence does not share Deleuze's concept of the dissolution of sexual difference into an inhuman flux. Lawrence's identification of woman with the 'creative power', the 'unknown' parallels Deleuze's identification woman with literature (Colebrook, 145). In Phoenix, Lawrence says, "A woman is a living fountain whose spray falls delicately around her....A woman is a strange soft vibration of the air, going forth unknown and unconscious and seeking a vibration of response" (191). Deleuze is aware of such correspondence or perhaps he is just an admirer of Lawrence. "In his (Deleuze's) Essays: Critical and Clinical(1997)", says Colebrook, "we can also look at Deleuze's use of Lawrence, Melville and other writers who make language 'stutter' in order to produce new actualizations from the power of literature" (Colebrook:151).

The parallelism of Lawrence's conception of woman and that of Deleuze and Guattari points to Lawrence's creative options. Lawrence's pre-war hope with women has been recorded by Hilary Simpson. She has cited excerpts from letters Lawrence wrote to his male and female friends. In such letters quoted by Simpson, Lawrence speaks about the need of getting the souls 'fertilized by the female' for 'getting of a vision' (Simpson: 93), "I still have the hope of the woman" (93), and about the crucial role for women in the reconstruction of the state which he envisaged with Bertrand Russell (93). Simpson points out Lawrence's change of attitude towards woman again by quoting a letter by Lawrence to Katherine Mansfield in November, 1918: "I do think women must yield some sort of precedence to a man, and he must take the precedence" (93). This shift of ground in Lawrence is not only because of his ailing health and the consequent desperate bid to grab male grandeur, as Millett has pointed out. Simpson's explanation is more balanced, although it is limited by her assumed role of a historian. The war has certainly shaken Lawrence's hope for women but the larger issues like

identity/difference, being/becoming are also involved here. Mark Spilka's division of Lawrence's career into three sections—early sympathy for women, strengthening of the male to match the female and ultimately the desperate need to insist on male superiority²—is identical with Simpson's study. Sheila Macleod's emphasis on Norman Mailer's comment on Lawrence's slightly uncertain masculinity and the consequent insecurity is again biographical like that of Millett. Mailer's comment on the tyranny of the male over the female in some of Lawrence's later fictions dwells on this biographical aspect. In Mailer's view, domination over women was not tyranny to Lawrence but equality (Brown, 19). Lawrence's criticism of the stranglehold of Judeo-Christian culture, the culture that thrives on the principle of the male, shows his concern for women. To criticize Lawrence for this shifting attitude towards women is to mistake the thought-adventurer in him for a misogynist. The metadiscourse of patriarchy in Lawrence, if any, is deliberately constructed for the love of construction and this illustrates an adventure of Lawrence's thought.

The mixed response of the second wave feminism to Lawrence's view of women and their cause points to its underlying uncertainty. It is the element of ambiguity pointed out by the third wave feminism. Fiona Becket calls it Lawrence's "idiosyncratic approach to the relations between men and women" (Becket, 144). This issue of sexual ambiguity in Lawrence's narratives together with the other central questions with which the third wave feminism is engaged such as radical alterity, sexual difference, 'écriture feminine', 'semiotic', female sexuality are also the major concerns of Lawrence the critic of culture.

Lawrence has not lived to interact directly with the third wave feminism but his ideas about man-woman relationship, his radical evaluation of sexual values, shares many of the major concerns of this contemporary criticism. Lawrence's adventure of thought in this regard corresponds with that of the contemporary French feminists like Luce Irigaray, Helene Cixous and Julia Kristeva whom Julie Rivkin and Michael Ryan consider as 'essentialists' (Rivkin, 528). Contemporary feminism has come a long way from its slogan 'the personal is the political' and the political agenda of the emancipation of woman. Feminism has diversified its interest so much

that it has now become a 'chameleon-like organization', as Imelda Whelehan calls it (Brooker, 100). Feminism now concerns itself with questions of women's role in consumer societies, its political debt to the Enlightenment project, as much as its tensions between the contradictory agendas of white middle class Western women on the one hand and those of the third world women of colour on the other. It is further exacerbated by the new agendas within Lesbian studies and Queer Theory. This sense of fragmentation is intensified by post-feminists like Wolf, Paglia, Roiphe who celebrate fragmentation as a new phase that feminism must enter (Brooker, 100). Lawrence has no point of affinity to speak of with questions of difference of the white intellectual feminists from the third world ones. However, Lawrence's awareness of the ambivalence of sexual identities, as revealed and represented in fictional narrative of his tale 'Fox', aligns him with the proponents of Queer Theory, although remotely. As regards the question of the constructedness of gender emphasized by the Queer Theory, we find meaningful awareness of it in Lawrence's criticism of culture. We shall explore this awareness in a subsequent chapter on gender.

The most important correspondence between Lawrence the critic of culture and the third world feminism is the attitude to sexual difference. The French feminist theory, of Helene Cixous, Luce Irigaray and Julia Kristeva, emphasizes sexual difference. The difference is defined differently by each of these three feminists. Cixous locates sexual difference in sexual pleasure and speaks for the liberation of sexuality. She emphasizes the need of a transformation of our relationship to our body which is a distinctly Lawrentian emphasis. In Lawrence's scheme of things "the body is not an instrument, but a living organism" (Phoenix, 618). Cixous seems to associate femininity with the body and seeks to liberate it from its marginalized status in patriarchal ideology. For Cixous, the conception of and the difference between man and woman are not definable in feministic terms as the conception itself is derived from phallogentric conceptualization. She says,

We can no more talk about 'woman' than about 'man' without getting caught up in an ideological theatre where the multiplication of representations, images, reflections, myths, identifications constantly transforms, deforms,

alters each person's imaginary order in advance, renders all conceptualizations null and void (Cixous, 268).

For Cixous, the difference between man and woman lies in sexual pleasure. Like Deleuze, she almost dissolves sexual difference into an inhuman flux: "Men or women, complex, mobile, open beings" (Cixous, 269) echoing almost Lawrence who says, "Man or woman, each is a flow, a flowing of life" (Phoenix, 192). In regard to sexual difference Cixous says that "it is at the level of sexual pleasure in my opinion that the difference makes itself most clearly apparent in as far as woman's libidinal economy is neither identifiable by a man not referable to masculine economy" (Cixous, 268). Lawrence expresses his awareness of "woman's libidinal economy" as identifiable by a man only with adjectives of indefiniteness like 'deep' and 'exquisite': "A woman reaches her fulfillment through love, deep sensual love, and exquisite sensitive communion" (Fantasia, 124). Again in Fantasia, Lawrence says, "In love it is the woman naturally who loves, the man who is loved. In love, woman is positive, man is negative" (98). Helene Cixous looks upon woman's libidinal economy as distinguished from masculine economy. This difference, in her view, is the source of all creativity: "The difference would be a crowning display of new differences" (Cixous, 269). For Cixous, the emancipatory aspect of feminism is concerned only with repressed libidinal economy of women. With the distinction between man and woman almost destroyed, she finds some exceptional poetic beings in whom "the component of the other sex makes them at once much richer, plural, strong, and to the extent of this mobility, very fragile" (Cixous, 269). This 'homosexual component', in her view, is to be found in the "philosophers of the Nietzschean sort, inventors and destroyers of concepts, of forms, the changers of life." (Cixous, 269). Her quarrel is not with man but with the phallogocentric Western metaphysics that identifies woman with the body and dismisses her. She has emphasized the 'feminisation' of experience, an emphasis which, as Simpson observes, forms the very basis of Lawrentian thought: "he (Lawrence) had urged for the feminization of experience, the necessity for men to take women, and the feminine side of their own natures, seriously" (Simpson, 94). Cixous' version of the Lawrentian concept of the 'feminization of experience' runs thus: "there is no invention possible whether it be philosophical or poetic, without

the presence in the inventing subject of an abundance of the other, of the diverse: persons detached, persons thought, peoples born of the unconscious." (Cixous, 269,).

I have underlined the last part of the last sentence quoted above to show the close correspondence of ideas between Lawrence and Cixous. Lawrence has always spoken of the consignment of knowledge to the unknown—the 'unknown' that he identifies with woman. In The Symbolic Meaning, Lawrence says, "The goal is to know how not to know" (196). In Lawrence's schema, like that of Cixous, a balance of the male and the female is necessary for creation. In the draft of Le Gai Savairi, Lawrence writes, "We start from one side or the other, from the female side or the male, but what we want is always a perfect union of the two (quoted in Brown, 90). In his "Study of Thomas Hardy", Lawrence also speaks for a balance between the male and the female principles.

Lawrence shares with Cixous her emphasis on creativity that can be achieved through incorporation of the other represented by woman without destroying the difference. Lawrence the critic of culture is disillusioned with the Western metaphysics and seeks to oppose it by opening up other horizons of thought than those of the Judeo-Christian culture. Cixous, too, associates it with the phallogocentric drive from which she seeks liberation by championing the body—"the immense material organic sensual universe that we are" (Cixous, 269).

Both Lawrence and Cixous view women as 'minoritarian'³ in the sense of Giles Deleuze. For all of three, women, by virtue of their position outside 'majoritarian'⁴ oneness, ensure difference and becoming. These commonality of thought as evinced in Lawrence and Cixous can be located in the major ideas of the feminist French philosopher, Luce Irigaray.

Luce Irigaray's emphasis on difference as against identity and her covert biologism form the basis of the charge of essentialism brought against her. With Lawrence she shares her acceptance of difference and her rejection of equality. She writes, "Woman exploitation is based upon sexual difference; its solution would

come only through difference” (1993, 12, 13). Like Lawrence, she has also validated human nature. In her je, tu, nous, she praises pre-existent, ‘natural’ virtue: “(woman’s) choices tend more toward maintaining peace, a clean environment, goods we really need in life, humanitarian options” (1993: 12). Lawrence likewise sees man and woman as belonging to two different principles forming an eternal duality which is pre-personal. This duality is sometimes metaphorical: “The love between man and woman is the perfect heart-beat of life, systole, diastole” (Phoenix, 153). In the same essay, Lawrence speaks for total difference as the goal of man-woman relationship: “I am in the beloved also, and she is in me. Which should not be, for this is confusion and chaos. Therefore I will gather myself complete and free from the beloved, she shall single herself out in utter contradistinction to me” (Phoenix, 153). Lawrence’s denunciation of equality or sameness corresponds well with Irigaray’s: “Now-a-days, alas, we start off self-conscious, with sex in the head. We find woman who is the same” (Fantasia, 126). Other emphases of Irigaray such as biologism and validation of human nature are also to be found in Lawrence. Lawrence is an essentialist as Irigaray is. In Fantasia of the Unconscious, Lawrence says, “A child is born sexed. A child is male or female; in the whole of its psyche and physique is either male or female and will remain either male or female as long as life lasts” (96). The difference emphasizing essentialism here is further intensified by Lawrence’s insistence on irreducible difference at the level of communication:

Woman will never understand the depth of the spirit of purpose in man, his deeper spirit. And man will never understand the sacredness of feelings to woman...the whole mode, the whole everything is really different in man and woman....for the magic and dynamism rests on otherness (Fantasia, 103, my emphasis).

It is this difference, the affirmation of which is insisted by Luce Irigaray. Like Cixous, Irigaray attempts to theorize the feminine outside the phallic economy (Jackson: 172). We have pointed out similar emphasis in Lawrence. Patricia Waugh in her essay “Postmodernism and Feminism” has pointed out the tendency in Luce Irigaray to regard “alterity as the sublime space outside the law recoverable through madness, hysteria, or some metamorphosed return to the body” (184). This tendency

in Irigaray identifies femininity with a mysterious, irrational and unrepresentable otherness in an affirmative sense as in Lawrence. In a letter written to Cynthia Asquith in the autumn of 1915, Lawrence writes: "If only the women would get up and speak with authority" (quoted in Widdowson, 93). This utopian space outside rationality, consciousness or language is what Lawrence has identified woman with and has explored in his great body of non-fictional writings. His identification of femininity with the unknown and Irigaray's with the 'sublime space' are illustrative of their similar line of thinking, which they together share with Giles Deleuze.

For Irigaray, "feminine pleasure has to remain inarticulate in language, in its own language" (Rivkin, 571). Lawrence is also for keeping the feminine and its pleasure beyond definition. In The Symbolic Meaning, Lawrence says, "She (woman) can never give expression to the profound movements of her own being" (145). Irigaray has also affirmed that femininity has the power to disrupt the patriarchal univocity. This attitude is profoundly Deleuvian as well as Lawrentian. In "The Power of Discourse and Subordination of the Feminine", Irigaray writes, "the feminine finds itself defined as lack, deficiency or as imitation or negative image of the subject, they should signify that with respect to this logic a disruptive excess is possible on female side" (Rivkin, 571). Irigaray's idea of the "disruptive excess" of the feminine is not very far from Lawrence's attitude towards woman. Lawrence looks upon woman as "the sacred mystery of otherness" (The Symbolic Meaning, 128). He says, "When the self is broken, the mystery of the recognition of otherness fails, the longing for otherness becomes a lust" (The Symbolic Meaning, 125). Lawrence's emphasis on otherness and becoming in regard to man-woman relationship, like that of Irigaray's, involves a strong opposition to 'oneness' and identification. We have already quoted lines from Lawrence in support of our view. The reduction of all things to terms of oneness, in Lawrence's view, results in the impoverishment of life (The Symbolic Meaning, 65). For Lawrence the critic of culture, the body enjoys primacy over the spirit. He has consciously privileged the body in order to disrupt the metadiscourse of Judeo-Christian culture that exalts the spirit and its oneness.

Lawrence's thought adventure can also be evinced in Julia Kristeva's apolitical discourse. Kristeva's originality as a feminist thinker rests mainly on her concept of

the 'semiotic' and its power to disrupt. Kristeva has employed the term "semiotic" "to name the pre-linguistic drives and impulses associated with the pre-oedipal experience of the infant" (Brooker, 228). Kristeva has associated the maternal symbolic realm with creativity. She suggests that this realm appears to be superseded by the realm of law and language, but continues to exert pressure on it from within (Jackson: 167). Lawrence's concept of the primal consciousness has many aspects in common with Kristeva's 'semiotic'. The primal consciousness in Lawrence is "pre-mental and nothing to do with cognition...the primal consciousness is always dynamic and never like mental consciousness, static" (Fantasia, 34). For Lawrence, this realm of primal consciousness is not so much associated with creativity and the realm of the mother, although it is as disruptive as the 'semiotic' of Kristeva. Kristeva sees femininity as the non-essential, non-biological attribute, a social rather than a natural construct. The feminine, Kristeva argues, is marginal to the symbolic order. The feminine, like other marginal groups, have greater access to the semiotic, which is also marginal to the symbolic. These groups, including woman, exert pressure on the symbolic order and as such they have a revolutionary potential⁵. She argues that "women's struggle cannot be divorced from revolutionary struggle, class struggle and anti-imperialism" (Jackson: 170). Lawrence's pre-war view of women, as pointed out by Hilary Simpson, suggests Lawrence's faith in woman's capacity to disrupt the established order. The Bakhtinian concept of carnival as a disruptive event and its application to women is, however, opposed by some feminists. Juliet Mitchell says, "this type of disruption is contained within the patriarchal symbolic. To me this is the problem" (Mitchell, 390).

Kristeva, Irigaray, and Cixous are generally put in one group—the group of the French feminist psychoanalysts. Despite their differences, these feminists have many points in common like the emphatic assertion of the feminine. All of them are concerned mainly with theorizing the feminine rather than the feminist political movement. Lawrence emphasizes the same: as a critic of culture, Lawrence is more interested in the concept of the feminine than the real life problems of women. This brings us to the concept of 'écriture féminine' of the school of French feminism.

'Ecriture feminine' is a type of feminine writing advocated by Helene Cixous and Luce Irigaray. *Ecriture feminine* "challenges the discourse of the SYMBOLIC order in a counter language appropriate to feminine DESIRE and DIFFERENCE" (Brooker, 85). "The concept of *écriture féminine*, the inscription of the female body and female difference in language and text, is a significant rhetorical formulation in French feminist criticism, although it describes a utopian possibility rather than a literary practice," says Showalter (Showalter, 312). Although Lawrence's conscious concern as a critic of culture has not much to do with *écriture féminine*, his awareness of such a possibility is very significant. Many critics of Lawrence have pointed out that Lawrence has assumed female consciousness in many of his fictions. Even in his non-fictional writings we find Lawrence the critic of culture speaking of female consciousness and its role in creative writing. The fiercest of all the critics of Lawrence, Kate Millett, has spoken of Lawrence's conscious act of assuming 'female consciousness' in The Lady Chatterley's Lover. She says, "He (Lawrence) is the most subtle as well, for it is through a female consciousness that his masculine message is conveyed (Millett, 71). Likewise, Hilary Simpson finds in Lawrence the urgings for the feminization of experience. We have already referred to it.

In Irigaray's view, the source of *écriture féminine* lies in the "biological female BODY and, second of 'feminist', since it is evidently antagonistic to the operations of patriarchy inscribed in conventional writing" (Brooker, 85). Lawrence's optimistic outlook on women has found woman as "becoming individual, self-responsible, taking her own initiative" 6 and he would approve obviously of Irigaray's view. The search of speaking corporeal in Irigaray's theory is a new one: "We have to discover a language(*langage*) which does not replace the bodily encounter, as paternal language(*langue*) wants to do, but which can go along with it, words which do not bear the corporeal, but which speaks the corporeal" (Lodge, 421). Lawrence is aware of the limitations of 'paternal language' and its capacity to speak adequately of what a woman is. Without a language of her own, woman cannot speak of herself. Lawrence writes in The Symbolic Meaning,

What woman knows, she knows because man has taught it to her. What she is that is another matter. She can never give expression to the profound movements of her own being. Man is the utterer, woman is the first cause. (145).

Luce Irigaray and Helene Cixous have taken up the challenge and have attempted the apparently impossible task of speaking corporeal. The awareness of the difficulty of the speaking corporeal has not stopped Lawrence from making explorations in the Fantasia of the Unconscious where Lawrence offers a very sensitive and informal approach towards speaking corporeal.

. The 'utopian possibility' of *écriture féminine*, as Showalter calls it, is envisaged by Cixous in her famous essay, "Sorties". Such a possibility, if translated into reality, would transform the whole society. Cixous posits,

"Then all the stories would have to be told differently, the future would be incalculable, the historical forces would, will, change hands, bodies; another thinking as yet not thinkable will transform the functioning of all society" (Cixous, 266).

Lawrence would have as much exulted over the possibility.

Irigaray has referred to the relationship with the mother as the "dark continent" (Rivkin, 415). Lawrence has referred to the body as the 'dark continent' and to certain extent shares the agenda of Luce Irigaray. Lawrence says,

In the very darkest continent of my body there is god. And from him issue the first dark rays of our feeling, wordless, and utterly previous to words: the innermost rays, the first messengers, the primeval, honorable beast of our being, whose voice echoes wordless down the darkest avenues of the soul, but full of potent speech. Our own inner meaning (Phoenix, 759).

Lawrence here underlines the limitation of language, the language of a culture that has rejected or dismissed the body and its capability of speaking corporeal.

Contemporary feminism has come a long way from the emancipatory project of Kate Millet and recognizes that there is no universal woman for whom feminism can speak. It is skeptical about universal truth claims, doubtful about the idea of a stable, pre-social self and questions the pretensions of disembodied rationality. Lawrence's radical uncertainty and provisionality about universal truth claims and his overt destabilization of the Cartesian ego—all these align him in a community of concern with contemporary feminism. The recent emphases of feminism—the radical alterity, the feminine space outside of rationality and a fondness for images suggestive of fluidity or hybridity such as the cyborg or the nomad—all these are also found in Lawrence. Feminist theory hates the tantalization of patriarchal theory. It is now “a process of theorizing rather than as a privileged body of knowledge.” (Jackson, 8-9). The term ‘theorizing’ implies that the thinking is fluid and provisional, and continually being modified, whereas ‘theory’ implies something static—a fixed point of reference (Jackson, 8-9). In the same way Lawrence has also regarded theory as something fixed and therefore inadequate to fulfil the demands of life which is in constant flux: “Theory as theory is all right. But the moment you apply it to life, especially to the subjective life, the theory becomes mechanistic” (Phoenix, 318). Lawrence has exalted theorizing over theory by subjecting knowledge to the unknown. We have quoted earlier to show the Lawrentian emphasis on knowing how not to know. The fluidity and provisionality of Lawrence's theory is his central point of argument against the Judeo-Christian culture. Lawrence the critic of culture has privileged flux over form, being over knowing and fluidity over fixity which are the core issues of contemporary feminism. In the light of fluidity of the contemporary feminist thought, Lawrence is to be viewed not as a sexual politician, but as a thought adventurer deeply interested in the question of gender. “So it is that gender remains key issue for Lawrence critics”, says Fiona Becket (149). We, therefore, move on to our study of Lawrence's way of viewing gender.

NOTES

1. "One is always struck", says Millett, "by the sexual ambiguity in Lawrence"(Widdowson: 82)
2. Quoted in Keith Brown ed. Rethinking Lawrence (16).
3. The term 'minoritarian' is used by Deleuze and Guattari in A Thousand Plateaus as opposed to 'majoritarian'. "A minoritarian mode of difference, says Colebrook, "does not ground the distinction on a privileged term, and does not see the distinction as an already-given order" (Colebrook, 104). Deleuze and Guattari describe 'woman' as minoritarian (Colebrook, 108).
4. The term 'majoritarian' in Deleuze suggests a mode that presents the opposition as already given and based on a privileged and original term. So, 'man' is a majoritarian term and the opposition between man and woman is majoritarian in Deleuze and Guattari's schema.
5. Kristeva has said this in her 1974 interview published later on in 1985 in Marks and de Courtivron. Ours is the secondary source, quoted in Stevi Jackson and Jackie Jones ed. Contemporary Feminist Theory. P. 170.
6. Quoted earlier from Hilary Simpson.