

LAWRENCE AND GENDER

There is not and cannot be any actual norm of human conduct. All depends, first on the unknown inward need within the very nuclear centres of the individual himself, and secondly on his circumstance. Some men must be too spiritual, some must be too sensual. Some must be too sympathetic, some must be too proud. We have no desire to say what men ought to be. We only wish to say there are kinds of ways of being, and there is no such thing as human perfection (Fantasia: 47).

Lawrence's awareness of the contemporary feminist issues such as difference, *écriture féminine* and so on has been the focal point of our study in the preceding chapter. These issues are intimately connected with the contemporary gender study. Contrary to Kate Millett's assumption that for Lawrence the relation of sex and gender is fixed and irrevocable, we have shown how he is a champion of just the opposite. Fluidity rather than fixity is basic to all his thoughts including gender. Millett herself has, perhaps inadvertently but truthfully, recognized it in Lawrence's scheme of things as she observes, "One is always struck by the sexual ambiguity in Lawrence" (82). In Millett's conception, sex and gender are all of a piece and she finds, mistakenly of course, the same in Lawrence. That it is not the case is evinced in her own statement that "it is through a feminist consciousness that his masculine message is conveyed" (Millett, 71). It may be due to her overwhelming preoccupation with the cause of women that Millett fails to see Lawrence's difference despite her occasional awareness of it.

But this sense of Lawrence's radicalism about gender has not escaped the critical gaze of contemporary Lawrence criticism. Lawrence's gradually changed view of women- changing from a positive view as expressed in his letter to Edward Garnett "Women becoming individual, self-responsible, taking her own initiative"¹ to a later disillusioned one- has been historicized by Hilary Simpson. But Fiona Becket in the "Lawrence and the Feminists" segment of her book, has rightly argued that

Lawrence's positive views about women does not express his support for the feminist politics of his time, as Hilary Simpson has taken it to be. On the other hand, this positive view of Lawrence and his later changed view are indicative of Lawrence's "idiosyncratic approach to the relations between men and women" (Becket, 144). This 'idiosyncratic approach,' supposed to be characteristic of Lawrence, is loaded with suggestions for a vital correspondence between Lawrence and the contemporary feminists who question gender identity and view gender as fluid as against given fixity and hence domination of the 'heterosexual matrix'², to use Judith Butler's term.

Lawrence's ambivalence about gender has also been pointed out by Mark Spilka. In her "On Lawrence's Hostility to Wilful Women: The Chatterley Solution", Spilka argues that Lawrence's accommodation of 'tenderness' and 'vulnerability' as aspects of Mellor's 'maleness' is an antidote to old ideas of aggressive masculine dominance in his writing (Becket, 148). Spilka is right. This provisional and contingent approach to gender is significant and more so because it is in a later novel that such an uncertainty and tenuousness of gender is fictionally posited. This aspect of Lawrence's conception of gender has also been pointed out by Janet Barron: "In Alison Light's phrase, this is an attempt at 'ungendering' and Lawrence did consistently try to develop the female point of view, however provocative the results at times" (Brown, 19). This deliberate attempt to unsettle and disrupt the established notions of gender not only justifies our study, but also calls for a full-length study which is beyond the scope of this one. We agree with Fiona Becket's observation that "gender remains the key issue for Lawrence critics" (Becket, 149) and as such we will read and review Lawrence's 'idiosyncratic' and 'ambiguous' attitude towards gender in the light of gender theory of the contemporary feminists like Judith Butler, Donna Haraway, Elizabeth Grosz, Gayle Robin, Marjorie Garber, Susan Bordo, Stevi Jackson and Sheila Benhabib. The mention of all these feminists together without mentioning the specificity of their respective approaches to gender does not mean that all of them subscribe to unanimous view of the main issues in gender study. We do not want to say that Lawrence shares all their concerns in regard to gender. Lawrence would certainly have agreed with them on most of the central issues raised by contemporary feminists. We have already pointed out that

Lawrence critics in recent times have concentrated mostly on gender studies. But they have restricted their discussions to Lawrence's fictions. We here shall explore the relation, if any, of Lawrence's attitude to gender with that of the contemporary feminists in Lawrence's non-fictional writings. We shall also explore how much Lawrence the critic of culture has anticipated and approximated to the central ideas in contemporary gender study.

Gender, as defined by Peter Brooker in his A Glossary of Cultural Theory, "is a term for the social, cultural and historical construction of sexual difference" (110). Feminists from the sixties and the seventies of the preceding century had stressed the distinction between biological 'sex' and socially constructed 'gender'. According to them, gender operates as a set of hierarchically arranged roles in society for men and women. Men are associated with the spheres of labour, sport and physical combat and the public sphere in general whereas women are associated with the sphere of home where they are to play the twin roles of mother and the object of male desire. This set of hierarchically arranged roles of men and women are constituted by the 'heterosexual matrix' which is at work within the patriarchal culture. The feminists of the seventies and later had challenged and rejected this practice of mythologizing women's 'nature' and they had formulated their own theories of gender. Lawrence had died in 1930, much before the emergence of these new theories of gender. Yet from such a historical distance, Lawrence has shown his awareness of the central issues of contemporary gender study.

Lawrence's concept of gender is less identifiable with that of Freud or Lacan than with the feminist object relations theory of Melanie Klein and Nancy Chodorow and those of Butler and others who have emphasized the constructedness of gender. Lawrence's concept of gender is something contingent, provisional and performative. The 'fluidity' of gender in Lawrence's schema, opens up immense scope of study. For Freud, the 'polymorphously perverse' child of both sexes with its unstructured libido is one with the mother. The child enters the gendered space when it separates itself from its mother and its sexual desire is formed. In Freud's view, the male child forms a strict and strong super-ego by repressing his desire for the mother and this super-ego gives him greater access to culture. But the girl takes a

different route. She first identifies herself with the mother and her drives are focused on the 'clitoris,' the penis substitute. Subsequently she develops self-hate and resentment towards the mother when she discovers that she has no penis. She develops penis envy and replaces the erotic zone of the clitoris with the female vagina—from sexual pleasure to reproduction. Women, for Freud, do not have castration anxiety that develops the super-ego and therefore have limited participation in culture.

The biological determinism of Freud is challenged by the feminists and Lawrence. Although Lawrence has viewed man and woman in their inescapable duality in matters of sex, his conception of gender defies Freudian determinism. For Freud, gender is constructed once and for all, but for Lawrence, it is more a role rather than an inescapable 'given'. Freud has viewed gender as a fixed identity which Lawrence opposes by constantly shifting his emphasis from one gender to another. Lawrence has not emphasized separation of the child from its mother in order to become a gendered male/female in a patriarchal society. Rather he points to the leakiness of the watertight compartments of the male and the female. For Lawrence a child is born sexed, acquires maleness or femaleness after puberty and receives the standard of gender from the culture in which he lives. In his schema, gender is more performative than an identity. Lawrence the critic of culture is against all kinds of fixed norms, and the norms of gender are no exception. In Fantasia of the Unconscious, he says while speaking about the standard body of man: "There is no such thing as an actual norm, a living norm. A norm is merely an abstraction, not a reality" (47). This contention is also applicable to Lawrence's concept of gender as his argument on the same page confirms:

Some men must be too spiritual, some must be too sensual. Some must be too sympathetic, some must be too proud. We have no desire to say what men ought to be. We only wish to say there are all kinds of ways of being, and there is no such thing as human perfection (47, my emphasis).

Lawrence's ambiguity about maleness is pronounced here. Elsewhere, in "Cocksure Women and Hensure Men", Lawrence deplors the fact that men, against the grain

of their 'nature', have become 'sympathetic', leaving their 'role' to be performed by women who have become 'cocksure'. In the extract quoted above from Fantasia, Lawrence speaks about the possibility of men's becoming 'sympathetic' sometimes in some individual males. But what is more important for us is the contention that "there are all kinds of ways of being". This polymorphous concept of gender is the central proposition common to almost all the feminist theorists of gender.

Lawrence does not share the Lacanian concept of gender either. For Lacan gender is a part of linguistic network that precedes and structures the formation of the linguistic subject. He insists that the subject itself is formed through a subjection to sexual difference. Sex and gender are therefore fixed identities. In Lacan's version of Oedipus, both men and women are deprived of the Phallus, both have lost the sense of plenitude experienced in the early symbiosis with the mother. The child enters the Symbolic order with its specific gender distinction. Lacanian concept of gender lacks fluidity and therefore leaves almost no scope for any change or modification of gender. Sexual difference, which is synonymous with gender difference in Lacan, appears to constitute the very matrix which gives rise to the subject itself. For Lawrence, the formation of the subject is never complete and sexual difference does not influence subject formation in any significant way. In Lacan's scheme of things, gender comes first as it is associated with 'culture' and the Symbolic order, whereas 'nature' or the Real remains always elusive. Both men and women mistake the other for the Other. For Lawrence, the maternal plenitude is not lost for ever but men and women have an access to it through the sympathetic centre of consciousness, the solar plexus.

Lawrence's concept of gender has more affinity with the feminist 'object relations theory' that emphasizes socialization and the internalization of norms. For theorists of 'object relations' such as Klein and Chodrow, children consolidate their gender identity in the first two years of life, before the time the Freudian Oedipus complex sets in (Cranny-Francis, 54). Maternal identification is the initial orientation for children of both sexes. The girls sustain the primary identification with the mother, while the boy repudiates it (Cranny-Francis, 54). For these theorists,

gender is a set of roles and cultural meanings acquired in the course of ego formation within family structures, and the significant changes in child-rearing practices and kinship organization can alter the meaning of gender and close the hierarchical gap between the genders of man and woman (Cranny-Francis, 3-4).

Lawrence agrees with them in respect of the sexed-but-not-gendered child's identification with the mother and about the cultural construction of sex as gender. But he also differs from them in his view that a child identifies itself as much with the mother as with the father that helps the balanced growth of the child. Unlike them, Lawrence has not envisaged a social reconstruction of gender. Lawrence is interested in destabilizing the 'heterosexual matrix' that dictates some fixed roles to men and women in the name of gender and therefore he is not very far from the agenda of Klein and Chodrow.

Lawrence's concept of gender as fluid and provisional aligns him with Judith Butler who argues that gender is a process of repeated performance of the acts of gendering. In this respect Lawrence has further correspondence with Elizabeth Grosz. Grosz suggests a Lawrentian fluidity in her notion of gender as she says, "Women's corporeality is inscribed as a mode of seepage" (1994: 203). Lawrence of course has not associated women's fluid corporeality with gender, but he posits that gender is nothing more than a 'role' to be played by men and women—a notion that underlines the fluidity of gender. In Fantasia of the Unconscious, Lawrence says, "the man is male, the woman is female. Only they are playing one another's parts, as they must in certain periods" (97). In the preceding chapter we have discussed the same emphasis of Lawrence on the feminization of experience. Freud's later definition of the lesbian as the one suffering from penis-envy (Price, 115) shows an attitude to gender which is totally different from that of Lawrence. For Lawrence, it is as much natural for a woman to desire a woman as it is for a man to desire a woman. But for Freud, it is a negative desire.

The closest parallelism that Lawrence's concept of gender has is with Butler's theory of the performativity of gender. This theory of Butler is based on Foucault's conception of the discursive construction of the body. Foucault makes clear that sexuality in the post-Enlightenment thought is the overloaded focus of the discursive strategies of power and knowledge, and women's bodies, he asserts, are saturated with sex (Price, 79). In her "Bodily Inscriptions, Performative Subversions", Butler explains how the deployments of the body through reiterated acts and gestures of gendered sexuality, are productive of discursive identity. For Butler, neither gender nor sex is inherent biological feature and that heterosexuality is a term that constructs rather than simply classifies human sexuality and gendering of individual subjects. She says that "gender is not a fact, the various acts of gender create the idea of gender and without these acts, there would be no gender at all" (Price, 420). For Lawrence, gender is discursive, though not sex. In *Fantasia of the Unconscious*, Lawrence says, "A child is born with one sex only, and remains always single in his sex. There is no intermingling, only a great change of roles is possible. But man in the female role is still male" (102, my emphasis). Lawrence destabilizes his apparent biological determinism by speaking of the possibility of "a great change of roles", of men and women as the bearers of two cosmic principles which he sees as the cause of creation. His concept of duality in man-woman relationship is to be understood as 'morphological imaginary': "Man and woman, each is a flow, a flowing of life" (Phoenix, 192). It is the notion that compels the feminist psychologist Luce Irigaray to dwell on difference. For the same reason, Lawrence has to keep the purity of sex (not gender) intact:

The great thing is to keep the sexes pure. And by pure we don't mean an ideal, sterile innocence of similarity between boy and girl. We mean pure maleness in a man, pure femaleness in a woman.... Women and men are dynamically different in everything (Fantasia, 188).

But this notion of 'purity' of sex is not emphasized in the case of gender. Like Butler, Lawrence suggests that gender is not a fact but inherently performative.

For Butler, the performativity of 'sex' and 'gender' is not a singular or deliberate 'act', but is "the reiterative and citational practice by which discourse produces the effects that it names" (Price., 236). In her view, sex is "an ideal construct which is forcibly materialized through time" (Price, 236) and the construction of sex itself a 'temporal process' which operates through the reiterations of norms (Price, 239). Performativity, in Butler's view, "conceals or dissimulates the conventions of which it is a repetition" (Price, 241). This act like status of gender performativity is anticipated by Lawrence. In his essay "We Need One Another" (Phoenix), Lawrence explains how through the reiterative act of various models women are forced to play their gender roles by 'compulsory heterosexuality'.³

There are many popular dodges for killing every possibility of true contact: like sticking a woman on a pedestal, or the reverse, sticking her beneath notice; or making a 'model' house-wife of her, or a 'model' mother, or a model help-meet. All mere devices for avoiding any contact with her. A woman is not a model of anything (191).

The Deleuvian concept of woman that Lawrence formulates here conforms to Elizabeth Grosz's emphasis on the corporeal fluidity of women which we have pointed out earlier. The compulsory heterosexual imperative has it that women are to act up to models to which Lawrence is opposed. Lawrence's argument here shows his awareness of the 'reiteration' and 'citational practice' through which individuals must have acted up to the discourse or model given to them. In the same essay, Lawrence elaborates on this act of playing roles and denounces the 'fixity' that it imposes on women. He says,

We only know a few crude forms—mistress, wife, mother, sweet-heart. The woman is like an idol, or a marionette, always forced to play one role or the other: sweet-heart, mistress, wife, mother. If only we could break up this fixity, and release the unsizable reality of real woman: the woman is a flow, a river of life, quite different from man's river of life (Phoenix, 194).

Lawrence here seeks to disrupt the fixity of gender, as Butler does, but not sex. Sex is, in Lawrence's schema, given, but in Butler's schema, constructed.

Butler's notion of performativity implies *that* there is no preexisting self who performs. Such a notion is a reflection of the fundamental lack of any grounds of truth. For Butler, performing the body fabricates identity in all sorts of ways, of which gender is one important component. She says, "That the gender is performative suggests that it has no ontological status" (Price, 417). She also denies the existence of any 'gendered core'. She elaborates on her concept of gender,

acts and gestures, articulated and enacted desires create illusion of an interior or organizing gender core, an illusion discursively maintained for the purpose of the regulation of sexuality within the obligatory frame of reproductive heterosexuality (Price, 417).

Lawrence, as we have pointed out in our first chapter, is opposed to the concept of fixed self or identity. He also distrusts "the interior and organizing gender core", (Price, 417) as Butler does. This distrust is implied in his argument against the various roles assigned to women by the 'heterosexual matrix'. Lawrence's disbelief in any fixed identity is reiterated in his Apocalypse where he says, "We become, alas, what we think we are" (71). The idea of the constructedness of self is deeply related to Lawrence's concept of the constructedness of gender. His concept of the unconscious as the ground of all our identity also focuses on the constructedness of identity. In his view, the unconscious is

beyond all law of cause and effect in its totality, yet in its processes of self-realization it follows the laws of cause and effect. The processes of cause and effect are indeed part of the working out of this incomprehensible self-realization of the individual unconscious (Fantasia, 216).

The processes of 'cause and effect' that partly work out the self-realization of the unconscious, imply the famous Lacanian proposition that the unconscious is structured like a language.⁴ For Lawrence, the individual is a unit of the

unconscious and as such this cause and effect process has a vital role in identity formation including that of gender. This process of 'cause and effect' is central to Foucault's and Butler's concept of 'sex' and 'gender' as constructs. As Butler says,

The category of 'sex' is, from the start, normative; it is what Foucault has called a 'regulatory ideal'. In this sense, then, sex not only functions as a norm, but as part of regulatory practice that produces the bodies it governs, that is whose regulatory force is made clear as a kind of productive power, the power to produce—demarcate, circulate, differentiate—the bodies it controls (Price, 235).

The unconscious of Lawrence may be seen as a site for the 'regulatory ideal' where deployments may take place. The self-realization of the unconscious depends on the process of cause and effect, whereas the materialization of sex, in Butler's view, depends on deployments. In both cases the materialization of sex and of the self-realization of the unconscious, the process is never complete. In Lawrence's case, the unconscious is never fully accessible to the consciousness, and in Butler's case, as she argues, "That this reiteration is necessary is a sign that materialization is never complete" (Price, 236)

The sense of fluidity in Butler's concept of identity—a fabricated identity lacking in 'ontological status'--is similar to Lawrence's. In the "Crown", Lawrence posits his concept of fluid identity: "If I say I am, this is false and evil. I am not...Our readymade individuality, our identity is no more than an accidental cohesion in the flux of time" (Phoenix II, 384).

Again, in his Forward to the Fantasia of the Unconscious, Lawrence says, "Man live and see according to some gradually developing and gradually withering vision" (15-16). The influence of the pre-Socratic philosophy on Lawrence especially that of Heraclitus' concept of flux is well known and seems to be active here. In fact his philosophy of love and existence is built on it. This profound influence of Heraclitus points to and emphasizes the provisionality and contingency of human identity in Lawrence's scheme of things. Lawrence's destabilization of gender identity is thus

basic to his philosophy. In "Cocksure Women and Hensure Men", Lawrence's focus is again on the confusion of gender roles. The natural (heterosexual) mode of gender is described by Lawrence in his own terms in the Fantasia, "in what we call the natural mode, man has his positivity in the volitional centres, a woman in the sympathetic" (Fantasia, 97). Lawrence focuses on the confusion of the 'natural mode' and says that in 'the vast human farmyard'—

nowadays all the cocks are cackling and pretending to lay eggs, and all the hens are crowing and pretending to call the sun of bed....Men are timid, tremulous, rather soft and submissive....The tragedy about cocksure women is that they are more cocky, in their assurance, than the cock himself (Selected Essays, 33-34).

Lawrence the critic of culture has argued for the disruption of the fixed parameters of gender. Although he sometimes deplors the assumption of male roles by female as in the lines quoted above, his emphasis on the reorientation of male-female roles is insistent in his criticism of culture. He denounces the emphasis on the male principle in Judeo-Christian culture. We have explored in the preceding two chapters Lawrence's project of making reevaluation of the values of man-woman relationship. Like him, Luce Irigaray also is occupied with the project of exploring a positive model of femininity that may help "establish the condition necessary for the production of new kinds of discourse, new forms of knowledge and the new modes of practice" (Price, 225).

Contemporary feminists of gender study have focused on 'constructedness of gender' and have invaded the eternally unchanging, asocial and trans-historical nature of sex. Theorists like Donna Haraway have argued that the body of the late twentieth century and beyond is determined neither by biological givens, nor by discursive regimes of power on a Foucauldian model, but constitutes a field of conflicting and unstable flows that partake of the revolution in informatics (Price, 11). Haraway contributes to a non-hierarchical and non-binary construction of gendered subjectivity. In the field of cyberfeminism, the dispersal of the normative body is taken for granted, and the distinctions between human and machine, between

male and female, actual and virtual, lose currency. This specified project of queering what counts as natural and the more recent Queer theory are deliberately transgressive and unsettling for the stability of gender norms.

Lawrence cannot be said to share this deliberately transgressive aspect of gender theory. Yet Lawrence's awareness of the possibility of going against the 'nature' of sex through the intense upper excitement of the body—back to its polymorphous state- is very much an awareness of the cyborg: "Introduce any trick, any idea, any mental element you can into sex, but make it an affair of the upper consciousness, the mind and eyes and mouth and fingers" (Fantasia, 123). The sense of fluidity in gender, emphasized in the radical and Queer Theory is also implied in Lawrence. The primacy of fluidity over fixity is a Lawrentian priority. Lawrence the thinker and the critic of culture is committed to a certain inconclusiveness that gives priority to fluidity as against fixity. In Phoenix, Lawrence says,

"There must be the rapid momentous association of things which meet and pass on the forever incalculable journey of creation: rapid, everything left in its own fluid relationship with the rest of things" (220, emphasis mine).

Lawrence the critic of culture has also criticized the Judeo-Christian ethics which claimed that sex was meant for procreation. The sexual act, in Lawrence's view, is not for the "depositing of the seed", but for "leaping off into the unknown" (Phoenix, 441). In Fantasia of the Unconscious, Lawrence has exalted pleasure over procreation: "after all our experience and all our poetry and novels, we know that the procreative purpose of sex is, to the individual man and woman, just a side show" (106). This primacy of pleasure over procreation is a strong point that Lawrence shares with the contemporary feminists: "It is no primary need of the begetting of children" (Phoenix, 442).

Lawrence also destabilizes the strict heterosexual parameters of gender role by advocating the coexistence of heterosexuality and homosexuality. The Birkin-Gerald relationship in Women in Love apart, Lawrence speaks in favour of a space for homosexuality within heterosexual matrix in his non-fictional writings. Foucault has

the same emphasis on homosexuality. In "Polemics, Politics and Problematizations: an Interview with Michael Foucault", Foucault says, "The problem is not to discover in oneself the truth of one's sex, but rather, to use one's sexuality henceforth to arrive at a multiplicity of relationships. And no doubt, that's the real reason why homosexuality is not a form of desire but something desirable" (Ethics, 135-6). In Phoenix, Lawrence reiterates:

Marriage and deathless friendship, both should be inviolable and sacred, two great creative passions, separate, apart, but complementary: the one pivotal, the other adventurous; the one marriage, the centre of human life; the other, the leap ahead (665).

The 'deathless friendship' spoken of here is undoubtedly between man and man, as Lawrence himself says a few lines back in the same essay, "Let there be again the old passion of deathless friendship between man and man" (665). This issue of bisexuality is taken up by contemporary feminist Marjorie Garber. In her book Vice-Versa: Bisexuality and the Eroticism of Everyday Life, she says that bisexuality is "a sexuality that undoes sexual orientation as a category, a sexuality that threatens and challenges the easy binaries of straight and gay, queer and 'het', and even through its biological and physiological meanings the gender categories of male and female" (1995, 65).

Bisexuals, who have sex with both the same sex and opposite sex partners, found themselves excluded by both homosexual and heterosexual society. Long before the formulation of the theory of bisexuality, Lawrence has expressed his distrust for the heterosexual rigid parameters because of their inadequacy.

Contemporary gender theorists have extended their study to the analysis of emotions and feelings in historical perspective. Stevi Jackson, for example, stresses the need to analyze 'love' as a culturally constructed emotion. She says, "Love is not a fixed, unchanging emotion, and that its stifling meanings are the outcome of gendered struggles" (1995, 52). She has shown how the notion of romance is implicated in maintaining a cultural definition of love, which is detrimental to

women (Cranny-Francis, 231). Lawrence's strong dislike of love as fixed emotion aligns him with Stevi Jackson:

The bond of love! What worst bondage can we conceive than the bond of love? It is an attempt to wall in the tide; it is a will to arrest the spring, never to let May dissolve into June, never to let the hawthorn petal fall for the berrying (Phoenix, 151-152).

Lawrence's view of love is free from all notions of fixity, such as 'romance'. This is how he defines love: "The love between man and woman is the perfect heart-beat of life, systole, diastole" (Phoenix, 153). Lawrence the critic of culture is critical of the Christian doctrine of universal love, encapsulated in 'Love thy neighbour as thyself'. He insists that such an insistence of Judeo-Christian love is inherently faulty: "if you insist on loving humanity, then you insist that it shall be lovable: which half the time it is not....If you insist that they shall be, this imposes a tyranny over them, and they become less lovable" (Phoenix, 206). For Lawrence, Christianity's concept of brotherly love is thus a culturally constructed emotion. He would agree with Jackson's contention that the various notions of love have proved detrimental to women.

Contemporary theory and practice of gender is extraordinarily diverse. Issues like transexuality, transvetism, bisexuality have added new dimension to the feminists' attempt at destabilizing the norms of gender. The Queer Theory in its objective of destroying the homo-hetero binary has an essential point of affinity with Lawrence's concept of gender. Annamarie Jagose notes, "queer marks a suspension of identity as something fixed, coherent and natural" (1996, 98). Jagose in her book quotes Rosemary Hennessy's argument that the queer project is

an effort to speak from and to the differences and silences that have been suppressed by the homo-hetero binary, an effort to unpack the monolithic identities 'lesbian' and 'gay' including the intricate ways lesbian and gay sexualities are inflected by heterosexuality, race, gender and ethnicity (Cranny-Francis., 76).

Such a project is implied in Lawrence's view of gender. Lawrence's adventures of thought also show awareness of 'transvetism', the practice of dressing in the clothes of the opposite sex. Marjorie Garber notes in her Vested Interests: Cross Dressing and Cultural Anxiety, "Transvetism is a space of possibility, structuring and confounding culture".

Lawrence has explored this 'space' of the possibility of confounding culture in the tale, Fox. In this tale Benford and Marsh are women living together in a friendship and enjoying wartime independence. The independence of Marsh's 'transvetism' is cut short by the appearance of her lover into the scene and she is brought back from her role as an androgynous farmhand to 'proper' appearance in skirt and blouse. The gender ambiguities, alternating between male and female perspectives including 'transvetism', reveals Lawrence's adventurous, playful attitude towards gender. This exploration of the possible space where the fixed notions of gender can be confounded, is an attempt at 'ungendering' to use Alison Light's words⁵. Lawrence has not treated 'transvetism' separately as a conscious project to confound gender binaries and therefore his awareness of the disruptive power of transvetism can only be partly identified with the actual cultural practice.

One more point about Lawrence's view of gender is that for Lawrence, gender is constructed by culture. The duality of gender is destabilized in Lawrence's schema but the duality of sex is kept inviolable and pure. Sexual difference, involved as it is in gender study, remains embedded and necessarily untranscended in Lawrence's concept of gender. The latter-day feminists like Luce Irigaray and Cixous share this perception in clear terms. For them, as for Lawrence, the destruction of sexual difference would amount to the undesirable destruction of desire.

NOTES

1. Quoted in Hilary Simpson's "Lawrence, Feminism and the War" (P. 94).
2. Judith Butler uses the phrase "heterosexual matrix" to "designate that grid of cultural intelligibility through which bodies, genders and desires are naturalized"(Butler, 1990: 151).
3. Adrienne Rich's term. See her "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence" in Barbara Charlesworth Gelpi and Albert Gelpi (eds.) Adrienne Rich's Poetry and Prose, New York: W. W. Norton, 1993. pp. 203-23.
4. Lacan's proposition is, "The unconscious is constituted by the efforts of speech on the subject, it is the dimension in which the subject is determined in the development of the effects of speech, consequently the unconsciousness is structured like a language" (1977, 147).
5. We have noted Alison Light's comment on playful treatment of things relating to gender and her calling it an act of "ungendering" earlier in this very chapter.