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## D. H. Lawrence and Feminism

### D. H. ロレンスとフェミニズム

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#### 概要

D・H・ロレンスは思ったり感じたりしたことを率直に文字にする傾向があるため、女性への否定的な感情や、女性を支配したい欲求などもしばしば文章中に見られ、「女嫌い」と評されることがある。特に『性の政治学』(*Sexual Politics*)でケイト・ミレットが彼を男性優位主義者と批判して以来、彼はフェミニストの攻撃の的になった。ミレットは彼が「女性を完全に支配することを欲望する」と論じる。しかし、そのようなロレンス像は、伝記や手紙などから伝わる彼のイメージと一致しない。

『性の政治学』は人気を博したが、一方で、ロレンスの作品や人生をよく知る批評家たちはミレットに反論している。また、最近ではミレットの論に批判的な立場をとるフェミニストも存在する。本論ではそのような状況を理解したうえで、女性に対するロレンスの態度や考え方などを、伝記や手紙、作品を参考にしながら探る。そして、彼が男性優位主義者ではなく、むしろ女性への共感が当時の他の男性たちよりも強かったことを示す。最終的に、ミレットの論がロレンスの一面しか扱っておらず、彼女のロレンス像には偏りがあることを証明する。

#### Keywords

D. H. Lawrence, Feminism, Kate Millett, *Sexual Politics*

#### I. Introduction

Critics have often accused D. H. Lawrence of being a misogynist. Especially, Kate Millett, in her influential book, *Sexual Politics* (1970), fiercely attacked Lawrence as a male supremacist, and damaged his public image and reputation. He became, at least to some women, an abhorred sexist. Anne Smith, in “A New Adam and a New Eve—Lawrence and Women: A Biographical Overview”, explains how controversial and unpopular Lawrence became again with the rise of feminist criticism in the 1970s, after the notoriety of the Lady Chatterley trials around 1960.

It is not so long ago that hidebound old ladies were carrying copies of *Lady Chatterley's Lover* out of bookshops with tongs, to burn it on the pavement, and now liberated young women are all but doing the same. (7, Smith)

This paper contends that Lawrence should not be considered a chauvinist, and that Millett's presentation of Lawrence as a male supremacist is inaccurate. This paper further demonstrates that Lawrence was much more sympathetic to women than many other men of his time.

## II. Before Kate Millett

The accusations of chauvinistic tendencies in Lawrence can be traced back to Simone de Beauvoir, a French feminist. In *The Second Sex* (1949), she argued that, even though it seemed like Lawrence treated men and women equally in his work, this was not actually the case. She wrote:

Lawrence passionately believes in male supremacy. The very expression 'phallic marriage,' the equivalence he establishes between the sexual and the phallic, is proof enough. Of the two bloodstreams that mysteriously marry, the phallic stream is favored. 'The phallus is the connecting link between the two rivers, that establishes the two streams in a oneness.' Thus man is not only one of the terms of the couple, but also their relationship; he is their surpassing: 'The bridge to the future is the phallus.' (275, Beauvoir)

She thus emphasised that, for Lawrence, the phallus was the most important connection between the two sexes. She further argued that Lawrence tried to "substitute the cult of the phallic for that of the Goddess Mother" (275, Beauvoir), noting his theory that the sexual nature of the cosmos is portrayed "through man's virility rather than woman's womb" (275, Beauvoir). According to Beauvoir, in order to become part of the cosmic order, man can be autonomous and independent, but women must be subordinate to men. She argued that Lawrence's novels were like "guidebooks for women" (279, Beauvoir): they teach female readers how they need "the mediation of the male" (279, Beauvoir). Beauvoir concluded that, for Lawrence, woman "is not evil, she is even good: but subordinate" (280, Beauvoir). Further, for Lawrence, the "real woman" is "the woman who unhesitatingly assents to defining herself as the Other" (280, Beauvoir).

## III. Kate Millett's *Sexual Politics* and Some Critical Responses

With *Sexual Politics*, Millett entered the debate with an even more hostile argument against Lawrence. *Sexual Politics* originated as the 1969 doctoral dissertation that Millett submitted to Columbia University. The book was published in 1970 and it became a huge success in both the academic and non-academic worlds. Indeed, Millett's obituary, published in *The Guardian* on 7th September 2017, introduced her as the "author of the ground-breaking bestseller *Sexual Politics*". Another obituary on Smithonian.com, noted that "*Sexual Politics* sold 80,000 copies in its first year alone". *The New York Times* called *Sexual Politics* "the Bible of Women's Liberation" (6th September 1979), and Millett's portrait was featured on the 31st August, 1970 cover of *Time* magazine. However, Camille Paglia, herself a feminist, criticised Millett's attacks on male writers, claiming that her critiques had harmed American intellectual society. In *The Chronicle of Higher Education* (25th July 1997), Paglia wrote "Kate Millett's *Sexual Politics* (1970), reduced complex artworks to their political content and attacked famous male artists and authors for their alleged sexism" (Paglia, B4). Paglia called Millett's book "atrocious" and blamed it for driving talented young intellectual women away from the women's movement. She further declared that Millett was responsible for "the current eclipse of D. H. Lawrence, Earnest Hemingway, and Henry Miller in the college curriculum" and that she did "enormous damage to American cultural life" (Paglia, B4). As Paglia indicates, Millett's attack on Lawrence greatly damaged his public image. This can be seen in the previously noted example of liberated young women burning copies of his works.

The flaw of Millett's argument is that she examined only Lawrence's masculinist side, not Lawrence as a whole. In fact, in both his work and his daily life, Lawrence was a very complicated and contradictory individual. In her memoirs of her husband, *Not I, but the Wind* . . . (1935), Frieda Lawrence details his quick changes of mood and thought. On one occasion, she said "But Lawrence, last week you said exactly the opposite of what you are saying now", and his reply was "And why shouldn't I? Last week I felt like that, now like this. Why shouldn't I?" (Frieda Lawrence, 40-1). Lawrence allowed himself to change his mind based on his feeling and did not care much about inconsistency. Anaïs Nin, in *D. H. Lawrence: An Unprofessional Study* (1932), explained that "Lawrence has no system, unless his constant shifting of values can be called a system: a *system of mobility*. To him, any stability is merely an obstacle to creative livingness" (Nin, original emphasis. 14). In "Eros and Metaphor: Sexual Relationship in the Fiction of Lawrence" (1978), Mark Kinkead-Weekes emphasised the importance of considering Lawrence's work as one continuous flow:

[B]ecause Lawrence is so uniquely exploratory a writer, concerned with the development, flux, and change of relationship, one can only see him truly by seeing his art as a continual process of discovery, not only within each novel,

but from novel to novel. One cannot generalize about 'Lawrence's treatment of sexual relationship' at any stage, without both superficiality and distortion. One has to try to account intensively for moments, and simultaneously for the fact that they are momentary, partial arresting of a flowing exploration, always moving beyond. (Kinkead-Weekes, 102)

Kinkead-Weekes also argued that, for Lawrence, "sex is a way of talking about something else, so that Eros becomes Metaphor. Sexual activity and consciousness become the vehicle for exploring wider and wider relationships, within people, between them, throughout society, and the connection of man to the universe" (Kinkead-Weekes, 102). Millett examined Lawrence and his male characters exclusively from the viewpoint of chauvinism, which limited and distorted her understanding of his work and personality. Norman Mailer, an American novelist and journalist, who was another victim of Millett's attacks in *Sexual Politics*, fired back at her in his 1971 book, *The Prisoner of Sex*. He explained the way in which Millett was wrong about Lawrence, even though, as Sandra Gilbert in *Act of Attention: The Poems of D. H. Lawrence* (1990) noted, he did not always seem to be on Lawrence's side.<sup>1)</sup>

Harry T. Moore argued against Millett in "Bert Lawrence and Lady Jane" (1978), pointing out her misunderstandings and misinterpretations. He explains that Lawrence lived at a time when male chauvinism was dominant, and, unlike the majority of his male contemporaries, Lawrence was often aware of chauvinism and fought against it. Moore also mentions Lawrence's bitter experiences with powerful and domineering women, especially his mother, whose influence was psychologically damaging. He then argues against Millett's interpretation of Ursula in *The Rainbow* as a dangerous "new woman". Millett used the scene in *The Rainbow* in which Ursula destroys Anton Skrebensky, to claim that Lawrence disliked revolutionary new women. However, Moore contends that Ursula is an idealized young woman with whom Lawrence identifies, as he reflects himself in her through their shared teaching experience. In response to Millett's argument that Lottie in *Aaron's Rod* is cruelly abandoned by her husband, Moore argues that "on the three occasions when she is present, she is portrayed as a bully and a scold" (Moore, 182). Moore further claims that Millett's interpretation of Somers in *Kangaroo* as a homosexual and a fascist is definitely wrong, since "Somer's (sic) interest in Kangaroo and his personality does not in any way seem sexual, and his rejection of fascism, as well as socialism, is clear" (Moore, 183).

Millett quoted an episode that Frieda included in a 1951 letter to Middleton Murry, to demonstrate Lawrence's domineering inclination. In the letter, Frieda states that Lawrence put his hands on her throat, pressed her against the wall, and insisted that he was the master. However, Moore contends that Millett did not include what happened after this episode in her argument. According to the letter, after the episode,

Frieda said “Is that all? You can be master as much as you like, I don’t care”, and Lawrence’s hands dropped away (Moore, 187). Therefore this does not represent Lawrence’s forcing patriarchal roles onto his helpless wife, as Millett would have us believe, but shows a fight between a husband and wife who were equally aggressive. Moore cites another episode in which Frieda bumped her head against a shutter and was astonished to see Lawrence in “an agony of sympathy and tenderness” while nobody else seemed to care (Moore, 187). Moore concludes that Lawrence, who was socially, physically, and psychologically handicapped, tried to be “right” in his relationship with women, even though sometimes he was “wrong” (Moore, 188).

#### IV. Lawrence’s Attitudes to Women

To understand Lawrence’s attitudes towards women, we must remember that his weak constitution and sensitive personality led him to adopt himself to what was traditionally considered “feminine roles” such as performing housework, and in that way he shared, to some extent, daily experiences with women. Lawrence was a delicate child in the coal mining village of Eastwood where strong masculinity was expected for working-class men. The following sentence in his letter to Frieda on 9 May 1912 conveys how strikingly fragile he appeared to others and how he used to be treated “with care” by his male friends. Lawrence wrote to her how a man in the hotel he stayed in Trier, Germany, tried to look after him, saying “He would do what my men friends always want to do, look after me a bit in the trifling, physical matters” (*The Letters of D. H. Lawrence I*, 396). Smith points out that “What is not so often noticed is the evidence that his physical weakness as a child caused him to be cast in a feminine rôle, by himself perhaps as much as by others” (Smith, 10).

Smith further quotes Lawrence’s sister Ada’s comment that he “preferred the company of girls”, Mabel Collishaw’s memory of Lawrence helping her make bread, and Ada’s comment about “how naturally he slipped into the feminine rôle . . . and . . . how he identified with his mother”, making potato cakes in his mother’s blue apron (Smith, 11). In letters to his friends, Lawrence revealed that he enjoyed housework. For example, in a letter to Arthur McLeod on 17 January, 1913, he wrote, “I got the blues thinking of the future, so I left off and made some marmalade. It’s amazing how it cheers one up to shred oranges or scrub the floor” (*The Selected Letters of D. H. Lawrence*, 55). As Smith points out, scrubbing floors can be a man’s task, but not making marmalade (Smith, 12). In another letter to Mary Canaan on 12 December, 1920, he wrote “Did I tell you we’ve got such a good *oven* in our kitchen. Being Sunday, roast beef, baked potatoes, spinach, apple pie. Also I made heavenly chocolate cakes and dropped them . . . also exquisite rock cakes, and forgot to put the FAT in!!” (*The Letters of D. H. Lawrence III*, original emphases. 637). Middleton Murry and Hilda Brown Cotrell,

respectively, reported that Lawrence trimmed a hat for Frieda, and that he designed and sewed an evening dress for his sister (Smith, 12). Barbara Weekley Barr, Frieda's daughter, wrote that "[Lawrence] did not have the ordinary man's domineering dependence on his womenfolk, but could mend, cook, and find his own possessions" (Smith, 13).

Such remarks of his own and those by his family and friends, all prove that he was different from patriarchal men who were unwilling to take up domestic work that women were expected to do, and who demanded that women should do all housework for them. Lawrence's willingness for housework implies that he was emotionally closer to women than other men. Moreover, his physical weakness limited his outdoor activities, which often confined him indoors with women. In this way, his life experience was closer to those of women in the sense that his health obliged him to be dependent on others, and he tried to cover for his lack of masculinity by actively engaging in housework. The situation Lawrence was in appears to have helped him see the problems faced by women and empathise with them. In a letter to Sallie Hopkin on 23 December 1912, for example, Lawrence expresses his sympathy for women, by writing "I shall do a novel about Love Triumphant one day. I shall do my work for women, better than the suffrage" (*The Letters of D. H. Lawrence I*, 490). Here, he was willing to help women through his literary works. Carol Siegel in *Lawrence among Women* (1991), citing this letter, suggests that "Lawrence's goal could perhaps best be described as helping women articulate their deepest emotions" (Siegel, 12).

As early as in 1915, Lawrence's attitudes towards women were quite modern. In his letters to Bertrand Russell, he described the role of women in an ideal society Lawrence hoped to build with Russell. On 12 February 1915, he wrote about women's wages and social care: "Every woman shall have her wage to the day of her death, whether she work or not, so long as she works when she is fit—keeps her house or rears her children" (*The Letters of D. H. Lawrence II*, 286). The comment illustrates Lawrence's ingrained belief that women's roles involved keeping a house and rearing children. However, considering that it was written in 1915 when the patriarchal system was de facto, and women were expected to do housework for nothing as a matter of course, his ideas radically sympathise with women's situations. He also wrote about women's roles in the government on 16 July 1915: "There must be women governing equally with men, especially all the inner half of life . . . . The women's share must be equal with the men's" (*The Letters of D. H. Lawrence II*, 365). On 26 July 1915, he continued: ". . . as the men elect and govern the industrial side of life, so the women must elect and govern the domestic side. And there must be a rising rank of women governors, as of men, culminating in a woman Director, of equal authority with the supreme Man" (*The Letters of D. H. Lawrence II*, 371). Again, Lawrence's plans to assign women to the domestic sphere reveal the cultural influence of the time.

However, his propositions—that women should have the authority to govern the society and be treated equally with men in respect of earnings, promotions, and social standing—seem to align with what twentieth-century feminists were trying to achieve.

The recent discovery of an unpublished article by Lawrence supports Moore's argument that Lawrence was, or tried to be “right” in his relationship with women. On 11 April 2013, *The Guardian* reported finding an article written by Lawrence, in which he responded to a short article by “JHR” in *Adelphi* in April 1924. In the article entitled “The Ugliness of Women”, JHR argued that “in every woman born there is a seed of terrible, unmentionable evil: evil such as man—a simple creature for all his passions and lusts—could never dream of in the most horrible of nightmares, could never conceive in imagination” (11 April 2013, *The Guardian*). JHR challenges the readers to explain the reason why the most beautiful woman appeared ugly and repellent to him at certain moments. Lawrence replied to this, saying, “the hideousness he [JHR] sees is the reflection of himself, and of the automatic meat-lust with which he approaches another individual” (11 April 2013, *The Guardian*) and that “Even the most ‘beautiful’ woman is still a human creature. If he [JHR] approached her as such, as a being instead of as a piece of lurid meat, he would have no horrors afterwards” (11 April 2013, *The Guardian*). As Andrew Harrison—while commenting on Lawrence’s newly-found article—points out, Lawrence presented a very modern attitude towards women, which more or less aligns with the feminist ideology that opposes female objectification and commodification.

Related to this point, Siegel argues that Lawrence was eager to integrate female opinions or ideas into his works. She maintains that Lawrence was heavily influenced by Victorian female predecessors such as George Eliot, Charlotte and Emily Brontë, and Olive Schreiner. He identified himself with these female writers, experienced their female views and emotions through their works, and adopted the experience into his own works. Reflecting on his approach to writing, Lawrence is said to have told his friend, Jessie Chambers, that “[t]he usual plan is to take two couples and develop their relationships . . . . Most of George Eliot’s are on that plan. Anyhow, I don’t want a plot, I should be bored with it. I shall try two couples for a start” (Chambers, 103). He also often asked his female friends to read his works and give some feedback. He asked Jessie Chambers to read *The White Peacock* and *Sons and Lovers* multiple times, and Frieda began reading for him from the last version of *Sons and Lovers* and onward. According to Siegel, both Chambers and Frieda seem to have contributed to *The Rainbow* (Siegel, 15). It should also be noted that Lawrence collaborated with female writers. He worked on *The Trespasser* with Helen Corke and *The Boy in the Bush* with Mollie Skinner. The fact that he had many female friends seems to prove that, despite Millett’s claim, at least he was not an extreme male supremacist who hated and despised women. Gilbert points out that H. D., a feminist



female writer and Lawrence's contemporary, regarded Lawrence as one of her initiators and that that her work, *Bid Me to Live* was a tribute to him (Gilbert, xiii). Katherine Mansfield wrote that Lawrence was "the only writer living whom I really profoundly care for" (Gilbert, xiii).

Anaïs Nin was another contemporary feminist female writer who was fascinated by Lawrence. In *D. H. Lawrence: An Unprofessional Study*, Nin argues that Lawrence's works involve androgynous characteristics, and claims that the "intuitional quality in Lawrence resulted in a curious power in his writing which might be described as androgynous" (Nin, 57). She further suggests that Lawrence "had a complete realization of the feelings of women", and that "very often he wrote *as a woman* would write" (Nin, 57, original emphasis), referring to the fact that one critic mistook the author of *The White Peacock* as female. Gilbert argues that, as a working-class artist in late-Victorian England, Lawrence was "a radical outsider and a rebel" (Gilbert, xiv), and, consequently, he was "in many ways politically radical and egalitarian" (Gilbert, xvi). In this way, Lawrence had plural reasons to feel close to women. His physical weakness led him to stay with women rather than with men, and he voluntarily took up the domestic works which were regarded as women's job. The letters and article, which are quoted above, all demonstrate his compassion to women. He was influenced by female writers and tried to reflect female voices in his works, by asking for feedback from his wife and female friends, or writing with women. Plural female feminist writers declared that Lawrence was especially influential on them. This implies that these talented feminist writers found Lawrence fundamentally "right" in relation with women.

## V. Millett's Arguments

Millett called Lawrence the evangelist of "phallic consciousness" for whom "the transformation of masculine ascendancy into a mystical religion, international, possibly institutionalized" was essential (Millett, 238). However, this image does not reflect Lawrence who was willing to cook, clean and sew with and for women, who did not have overbearing attitudes towards women, and who wrote letters that demonstrated his consideration for the conditions of women's lives. Considering this, Millett's argument about Lawrence's desire for "the perfect subjection of women" (Millett, 241) seems incongruent:

An admirably astute politician, Lawrence saw in this [sexual revolution] two possibilities: it could grant women an autonomy and independence he feared and hated, or it could be manipulated to create a new order of dependence and subordination, another form of compliant to masculine direction and prerogative. The frigid woman of the Victorian period was withholding

assent, the “new woman,” could, if correctly dominated, be mastered in bed as everywhere else. (Millett, 241)

It is inaccurate to say that he hated women or that he did not want them to be autonomous and independent. In his letters to Russell, he proposed the creation of systems to promote female independence, though he might have had some fears about it. His sentiments must have been mixed with sympathy. According to Millett, Lawrence believed that “the world will only be put right when the male reassumes his mastery over the female in that total psychological and sensual domination which alone can offer her the ‘fulfilment’ of her nature” (Millett, 242). However, Lawrence depicts many of his heroines as energetic, assertive, independent, and strong.

Female characters, like the Brangwen sisters or Connie Chatterley, give readers the impression that Lawrence prefers assertive women to submissive ones, like Miriam Leivers in *Sons and Lovers*. Ursula refuses to marry Skrebensky at the end of *The Rainbow*, and the Brangwen sisters struggle for independence in *Women in Love*, acquiring professions, boldly speaking up, and acting on what they feel or think is right. This implies that these characters have self-confidence and independent spirits. Though Connie in *Lady Chatterley’s Lover* is often considered somewhat passive in her relations with Mellors, she is also a strong-willed woman who refuses to obey her husband. Indeed, she decides to leave behind her socially privileged status as the mistress of Wragby Hall, in order to live the life she chooses, that is, to be with Mellors. This is a rebellious act in the patriarchal society, since Mellors, without power, status, or financial security, is a social outsider. In *Kangaroo*, Somers’s wife, Harriet, is another assertive character. She frequently quarrels with Somers, trying to make their relationship reflect her will. Siegel remarks upon the strong personalities of Lawrence’s female characters, saying “Lawrence consistently depicts the natural female state as furious rebellion. For Lawrence the female voice must always undercut rather than affirm the male author’s message” (Siegel, 16) and “[t]he experiences of Lawrence’s female characters cannot be understood in reference to traditional visions of woman as man’s subordinate or victim” (Siegel, 18).

In his personal life, Lawrence fell in love with Frieda Weekley, his future wife, who had a very strong and assertive personality. Once, when annoyed by his comment that women had no souls and couldn’t love, Frieda broken a plate over Lawrence’s head (Smith, 31). Lawrence and Frieda seem to have fought frequently, and Lawrence considered it an important way to revitalise their relationship. On 11 October 1916, he wrote to Murry saying:

Frieda and I have finished the long and bloody fight at last, and are at one.  
It is a fight one has to fight—the old Adam to be killed in me, the old Eve in

her—then a new Adam and a new Eve. Till the fight is finished, it is very honourable to fight. But, oh dear, it is very horrible and agonising. (*The Letters of D. H. Lawrence II*, 662)

This letter reveals that Lawrence did not fight with Frieda in order to control her, but to destroy their relationship in order to rebuild it, like a phoenix being reborn from its own ashes. On the other hand, in her memoirs, *Not I, but the Wind* . . . , Frieda referred to their fights from her perspective. She wrote “[t]here was the ordinary man-and-woman fight between us, to keep the balance, not to trespass, not to topple over. The balance in a human relationship was one of Lawrence’s chief themes” (vi). This verifies that she did not believe that Lawrence fought with her to either subjugate or control her. It should also be noted that many of Lawrence’s female friends were independent-minded feminists. For example, Blanche Jennings, one of Lawrence’s most frequent correspondents in his young days, was an active feminist. Other friends such as Jessie Chambers, Louie Burrows, Alice Dax, and Helen Corke were also all “connected with the suffragette movement” (Smith, 18). Smith explains that his mother was a “strong woman”, and that his relationships with his female friends and his mother “inevitably shade into that of the “masculine” woman” (Smith, 18).

In this way, both in fiction and in real life, Lawrence liked self-assertive and independent women. His heroines do not submit to men. They often refuse men’s suggestions and fight against male wills in order to live the way they want. This liberated image of women produced by Lawrence in his fiction seems incongruous with Millett’s argument that “Lawrence considered that total psychological and sensual domination alone can give female the ‘fulfilment’ of her nature” (Millett, 242). If Lawrence believed in the total psychological domination of a woman to realise the fulfilment of female nature, he would have preferred using heroines who are completely dominated by men, to demonstrate how women should be. Such “total domination” does not apply to his relationship with his wife in his personal life either. Both Lawrence and Frieda understood that their fights were not for Lawrence to dominate his wife, but to readjust the balance in their relationship.

Millett also tends to treat Lawrence’s male characters’ words and deeds as if they were the author’s own. She blames Lawrence for what his male characters do or say. For example, she regards the character of Mellors as Lawrence’s ideal self, saying that he is “the very personification of phallic divinity” (Millett, 242).<sup>2)</sup> Millett considers Paul Morrel to be an “idealized self-portraiture” (Millett, 250), Rupert Birkin to be “Lawrence himself” (Millett, 262), and Aaron Sisson and Rawdon Lilly as the “two versions of Lawrence himself” (Millett, 269). She maintains that Richard Lovat Somers “is so transparently David Herbert Lawrence” (Millett, 280), and Ramon and Cipriano “are Lawrentian men and mouthpiece” (Millett, 284). She analyses these characters, saying,

“Mellors and other Lawrentian heroes incessantly exert their wills over women and the lesser men it is their mission to rule. It is unthinkable to Lawrence that males should ever cease to be domineering individualists” (Millett, 244). It is true that the Lawrentian heroes try to take over some control over their lovers, but so too do many Lawrentian heroines. These characters struggle trying to find a middle point. The process of building up a balanced relationship through struggles is one of Lawrence’s main interests, as Frieda rightly observed.

Millett further blames Lawrence for what his male characters do to women. For example, in *Sons and Lovers*, Millett examines the scene in which Paul teaches Miriam, and argues that “[t]he scenes of his condescension are some of the most remarkable instances of sexual sadism disguised as masculine pedagogy which literature affords until Ionesco’s memorable *Lesson*” (Millett, 253). She does not blame Paul for his aggressive behaviours towards Miriam: she blames Lawrence for creating such a “sadistic” scene. This is made obvious by her reference to Ionesco, and his novel, *Lesson*, in parallel with Lawrence and his novel. She treats Ionesco and Lawrence as the same kind of authors who wrote “sadistic” novels, and directs the readers’ focus on the writers themselves, instead of their characters.

Millett also critiques Lawrence for the scene in which Aaron leaves his wife and children in *Aaron’s Rod*. She explains:

Lawrence’s picture of her [Lottie] has that surprising disdain and malice that is typical of his treatment of women from the class he escaped. When Aaron decides that to stay in the cramped and sordid world of the poor would only mean to drown, he cheerfully leaves Lottie and his little girls to sink or swim . . . . Aaron is never ashamed to admit that he first beat his wife, then experimented with being systematically unfaithful, and finally resorted to utterly ignoring her presence. Lottie is said to deserve all this because of her detestable ‘female will’ (Millett, 274).

Here, again, Millett blames Lawrence for the way Lottie was treated. She criticises Lawrence’s portrayal of Lotti for its “surprising disdain and malice”, and she also criticises Lawrence for Aaron’s treatment of Lottie. She claims that Lawrence believes that “Lottie . . . deserve[s] all this because of her detestable ‘female will’”. Though Lawrence often incorporated biographical elements into his works and spoke through his characters, they are, ultimately, fictional characters. It is misguided to treat all their words and deeds as if they were exactly what Lawrence would say or do.

## VI. Lawrence’s Desire to Control Women

In some of Lawrence's comments, it is possible to detect signs of chauvinism. They seem to reveal his annoyance with women or his desire to control them. For example, on 5 December 1918, he wrote to Katherine Mansfield:

I do think a woman must yield some sort of precedence to a man, and he must take his precedence. I do think men must go ahead absolutely in front of their women, without turning round to ask for permission or approval from their women. Consequently the women must follow as it were unquestioningly. I can't help it, I believe this. Frieda doesn't. Hence our fight. (*The Selected Letters of D. H. Lawrence*, 163)

This quotation sounds like a typical male supremacist comment. However, the phrase, "without turning round to ask for permission or approval from their women", alludes to the fact that, in reality, he has to ask his woman for permission or approval. Though he might wish to have more strength and control over his woman, in reality, his woman is strong enough to refuse his control. They are on an equal footing in their fight.

In *Kangaroo*, Lawrence's fretting over some control over his woman is well depicted in the chapter, "Harriet and Lovat at Sea in Marriage". In this chapter, Lawrence presents Somers as comically pathetic, a man who tries and fails to take control over his wife. By laughing at this male character's inability to become the master of his wife, Lawrence seems to caricature the male desire to dominate and control his woman. In this chapter, Somers says to Harriet, "I will be lord and master, but ah, such a wonderful lord and master that it will be your bliss to belong to me" (*Kangaroo*, 192), but she only laughs at him by saying "You! . . . You a lord and master! Why, don't you know that I love you as no man ever was loved? You a lord and master! Ph! you look it! Let me tell you I love you far, far more than ever you ought to be loved, and you should acknowledge it" (*Kangaroo*, 192). Somers tries to show her a new flag, which he has been sewing himself, as a symbol of his new status as a master, but Harriet won't even look at it. Somers's chauvinistic desire to control his wife is contrasted with his incongruous willingness to carry out what was traditionally considered the "feminine work" of sewing. The incongruity makes him comical: a feminine man facing his masculine wife and trying, in vain, to gain control over her. He uses timid expression to address his wife: "I would rather . . . that you deferred your loving of me for a while, and considered the new proposition" (*Kangaroo*, 192), which contradicts his impudent proposition in "We shall never sail any straight course at all, until you realise that I am lord and master, and you my blissful consort" (*Kangaroo*, 192).

The odd combination of his timidity and impudence can also be seen when Somers compares himself to Roman Gods and simultaneously admits to Harriet that he is not

as great as they are: “Supposing, now, you had the real Hermes for a husband, Trismegistus. Would you not hold your tongue for fear you lost him, and change from being a lover, and be a worshipper? Well, I am not Hermes or Dionysus, but I am a little nearer to it than you allow” (*Kangaroo*, 192). Harriet laughs at his proposition and mockingly calls him “Mr Dionysus and Mr Hermes and Mr Thinks-himself-grand” (*Kangaroo*, 192-3). She declares, “I’ve got one thing to tell you. Without *me* you’d be nowhere, you’d be nothing, you’d not be *that*” (*Kangaroo*, original emphases. 193) and snaps her fingers under his nose. This episode is not about male supremacy. It is about the struggle between a man and a woman for dominance, in which the latter holds a superior position over the former. This passage is not representative of the author’s desire for male supremacy. Rather, it shows his humorous view of the power struggle between a sensitive man and a strong and assertive woman.

In “A Propos of Lady Chatterley’s Lover” (1929), Lawrence discusses that the good old England of Defoe and Fielding is gone, and blames Jane Austen for starting such a change, as he calls her “this old maid”.

This, again, is a tragedy of social life today. In the old England, the curious blood-connection held the classes together. The squires might be arrogant, violent, bullying and unjust, yet in some ways they were *at one* with the people, part of the same blood-stream. We feel it in Defoe or Fielding. And then, in the mean Jane Austen, it is gone. Already this old maid typifies ‘personality’ instead of character, the sharp knowing in apartness instead of knowing in togetherness, and she is, to my feeling, thoroughly unpleasant, English in the bad, mean, snobbish sense of the word, just as Fielding is English in the good, generous sense. (“A Propos of Lady Chatterley’s Lover”, original emphasis, 333)

Calling a woman an “old maid” is surely derogatory. However, contrary to this abusive expression, his attitude towards Austen before the publication of *Lady Chatterley’s Lover* in June 1928, was consistently positive. For example, in a letter on 29 June 1914 to Catherine Jackson who aimed to be a writer, he wrote, “You must be willing to put much real work, hard work into this, and you’ll have a genuine creative piece of work. It’s like Jane Austen at a deeper level” (*The Letters of D. H. Lawrence II*, 188). The letter shows that Lawrence considered Austen’s work “a genuine creative piece of work”.

The essays, “John Galsworthy” and “Introduction to *The Mother* by Grazia Deledda”, published in March and May of 1928 respectively, further indicate Lawrence’s admiration for Austen’s skills as a writer. In the former, he argued that Galsworthy’s characters, the Forsytes, cannot be considered human beings, and wrote:

Why can't we admit them as human beings? Why can't we have them in the same category as Sairey Gamp for example, who is satirically conceived, or of Jane Austen's people, who are social enough? We can accept Mrs. Gamp or Jane Austen's characters or even George Meredith's *Egoist* as human beings in the same category as ourselves. (*Phoenix*, 540)

In this quotation, Lawrence acknowledges Austen's skill of depicting fictional characters as real human beings. In the latter essay, Lawrence shows admiration for Austen as a novelist, by saying, "we respond again quite vividly to the emotions of Jane Austen or Dickens, nearer a hundred years ago" (*Phoenix*, 263). This sentence indicates Lawrence's understanding that Austen's fictional worlds are great enough to transcend time. These quotations prove that Lawrence's evaluation of Austen's skills as a writer was high.

In order to consider what changed Lawrence's attitude to Austen after the publication of *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, let us look at the situation he was in when he wrote "A Propos of Lady Chatterley's Lover" in 1929. When *Lady Chatterley's Lover* was published in Florence late in June 1928, many reviewers attacked the novel for being obscene. The reviewer in *Sunday Chronicle* on 13 October 1928 attacked the novel as "one of the most filthy and abominable ever written . . . an outrage on decency" (*The Letters of D. H. Lawrence VI*, 13), and another in *John Bull* on 20 October 1928, ridiculed Lawrence for being a writer who had become obsessed with sex and ruined his career (Draper, 278). Many copies were refused to be handled by booksellers or confiscated by authorities in England and America. In his letter to Laurence Pollinger on 30 July 1928, he wrote "I hear that a miserable firm of booksellers in London have refused their 36 copies ordered" (*The Letters of D. H. Lawrence VI*, 482), and in another letter to Aldous and Maria Huxley on 31st July, 1928, he explained the situation as "the booksellers have hastily written to say we must take back their copies at once, they couldn't handle the *Lady*, and I must cancel their orders, and will we remove the offence at once. That is in all 114 copies we have to fetch back. Of course, these children of God haven't paid" (*The Letters of D. H. Lawrence VI*, 484). Calling the booksellers "these children of God", Lawrence bitterly satirised these booksellers' decisions to maintain their middle-class Christian respectability by rejecting his book.

In the same letter, Lawrence implied the seriousness of the situation by writing, "there are rumours that the police are going to raid the shops" (*The Letters of D. H. Lawrence VI*, 484), and then continued "I suppose people hope they will", revealing his sense of isolation. He confessed to the Huxleys that he had lost most of his friends because of this trouble, and expressed irritation by writing, "But, oh, your friends, Lorenzo! By their reactions shall you know them!" (*The Letters of D. H. Lawrence VI*, 484). His anger was against those who avoided him so as not to be involved in the



troubles themselves. He laughed at his own misery by writing to the Huxleys, “I . . . felt perfectly wretched, and made design for my tombstone in Gsteig churchyard, with suitable inscription: ‘Departed this life, etc., etc.—*He was fed up!*’ (*The Letters of D. H. Lawrence VI*, original emphasis, 483). Another letter by Lawrence to Mabel Dodge Luhan on 9 August 1928, indicates that the police were actively hunting out the copies, saying, “police were reported to have a warrant to search for [*Lady Chatterley’s Lover*]” (*The Selected Letters of D. H. Lawrence*, 402). According to Frieda in her letter to Richard Aldington on 31 July 1928, “Lawrence was lying on his bed, looking furious and furious every minute” (*The Letters of D. H. Lawrence VI*, 485).

Due to this effective banning of *Lady Chatterley’s Lover*, the novel was widely pirated, which further infuriated Lawrence. In a letter to Laurence Pollinger on 20 July 1929, Lawrence wrote, “I hear there is another edition (pirated) of *Lady C.* about to appear in Philadelphia, illustrated this time. My hat! What will it be like. If only I could hash that novel up into sausage-meat for Mr Mead (*The Letters of D. H. Lawrence VII*, 381-2).<sup>3)</sup>

Another blow for Lawrence was the confiscation of his paintings by the police. The exhibition of his paintings started in London from 15 June 1929. He was too frail to go in person, so Frieda went to London to attend the exhibition in his place while he stayed in Italy. On 5 July, the police came to the gallery and confiscated 13 paintings, claiming that they were too obscene to be exhibited. Lawrence, having heard the news, angrily wrote to Edward Huelin on 15 July 1929, that “Yes, they’ve got 13 of my pictures in gaol, and want to burn them—don’t suppose they’ll dare—dirty hypocrisy” (*The Letters of D. H. Lawrence VII*, 373), and later to Early Achsah and Harwood Brewster on 10 July 1929, that “I suppose you heard my picture show was raided in London—after over 12,000 people had been to it—and the police seized 13 pictures as being obscene—which pictures now lie in gaol under threat of being *burnt*. England my England! Did ever you know such hypocrisy? That *Accident in a Mine* which I did in Gsteig seized for obscene—it is too crassly stupid. But now the police hate me—for *Pansies* too . . .” (*The Letters of D. H. Lawrence VII*, original emphasis, 379).

In these ways, Lawrence and his works were repeatedly rejected and humiliated by British and American intellectual societies. Lawrence associated these troubles with the dominant middle-class bourgeois values. After all, *Lady Chatterley’s Lover* became heavily pirated because people could not get an authorised copy. He was angry with the hypocrisy of the bourgeois tendency to ignore the physical side of human beings, especially sexuality, in order to maintain a semblance of respectability. He regarded Jane Austen’s world as representative of such middle-class values, which would not allow sexuality to be discussed frankly, and which labelled his works obscene. In the statement quoted above from “A Propos of *Lady Chatterley’s Lover*”, Lawrence compares Defoe and Fielding to Austen. The main difference he discusses is whether



they are “at one with the people” or not. Even though he criticises the old England of Defoe and Fielding to some extent such as the existence of arrogant squires, he still considers the period positively, looking in favour what he describes as “the curious blood-connection held the classes together”. On the other hand, he blames the more recent England that Austen represents, for upholding class divisions, which he characterises as Austen’s “sharp knowing in apartness instead of knowing in togetherness”. Lawrence further calls her “thoroughly unpleasant, English in the bad, mean, snobbish sense of the word” in contrast with Fielding, whom he describes as “English in the good, generous sense”. For Lawrence, the contrast between “snobbish” and “generous” is connected to the contrast between “separateness” and “oneness”. Therefore, “snobbishness” here can be understood as a belief in narrow-minded middle-class values to the exclusion and denigration of the values espoused by other classes.

After the publication of *Lady Chatterley’s Lover*, Lawrence was thus persecuted by the police and severely frustrated and angered by the middle-class values that had been brought to bear on his novel. He felt that the bourgeois were unfairly hostile to him and his works. Calling Austen “this old maid” was a way to vent his rage against hypocritical bourgeois respectability. Given that Austen also satirised bourgeois hypocrisy, Lawrence’s insult is arguably unfair as well as inaccurate. At the same time, however, labelling Lawrence a chauvinist based on only this comment seems equally unfair to him, especially because he appears personally to have been both considerate of and sympathetic to women overall.

*The Oxford English Dictionary* (2nd edition) defines “chauvinism” as “excessive loyalty to or belief in the superiority of one’s own kind of cause, and prejudice against others” (62), and “Supremacist” as “One who believes in the supremacy of one of the races or of either of the sexes or of any other social group” (274). The key to deciding whether Lawrence was a chauvinist or male supremacist lies, therefore, in understanding whether he considered men to be superior to women, and whether he was prejudiced against women. His general attitudes towards women, discussed above, cast doubt on this possibility. Lawrence was close to women, had many female friends, and was willing to take up the role traditionally considered a woman’s, by performing housework with and for women. His willingness to help women was not limited to housework, but extended to the realm of politics. He promised Sallie Hopkin that he would do his part to work for women, and proposed Russell to work with him towards building a society in which women could have financial independence with stable incomes and social positions of authority and responsibility equal to men. He valued female views and actively accommodated them in his works by asking women for feedbacks, and by collaborating with women writers. Carol Siegel argues that his works, as well as his biographies, prove that he was greatly influenced by female writers.

These prove that Lawrence considered women to be intelligent, and that he valued and paid respect to both their literary and political capabilities. Therefore, in a strict sense, Lawrence should not be labelled a chauvinist.

## VII. Lawrence as a Feminist

Some critics regard Lawrence as “a feminist”. For example, in *Reading D. H. Lawrence's Feminism*, Chiseki Asahi claims that Lawrence's feminism is based on the idea that both men and women have their soul's greatest impulse at the core of their masculinity or femininity. The former is represented by a phallus and the latter is represented by a womb, which are the broader symbolic meanings of man and woman. Asahi argues that Lawrence's feminist view of woman is based on his belief that a woman's independence can be achieved by the exertion of power from the very core of her femininity, which could be used to influence society. Carol Siegel also considers Lawrence close to a feminist arguing that he contributed to the development of female literature. In *Lawrence among the Women*, she argues that “there seems to be something about the feminism study of women's literature that brings us back again and again to Lawrence” (Siegel, 1), and suggests that he inherited and participated in the formative processes of women's literature (Siegel, 1). She further suggests that “recognition of Lawrence's connections to women's literary traditions can increase our understanding of the development and continuance of these traditions” (Siegel, 2). Sandra Gilbert considers his works “like a quasi-feminist” and, in *Acts of Attention: The Poems of D. H. Lawrence*, confesses that “One of the questions that has stopped and often stumped me over the last ten years has to do with D. H. Lawrence, and it usually goes more or less like this: *How do you reconcile your work as a feminist critic with your admiration for the art of D. H. Lawrence? In other words, how can you be a feminist and a Lawrentian?*” (Gilbert, ix, original italics).

Gilbert considers some of Lawrence's writings to be misogynist, including “Figs” and “Purple Anemones”, but she also claims that “[e]ven at his most overtly masculinist, I sensed that Lawrence did not quite fit into what I'd now call the ‘patriarchal modes’ in which I had been educated” (Gilbert, xii). She explains that Lawrence did not have “grandiose and authoritative authorial intentions” (Gilbert, xii). According to Gilbert, Lawrence has two sides: a sermonizing one that excoriated the women who won't submit to him, and one with “wonderful, desirable life-rapidity” (Gilbert, xii) to which he himself submitted. The latter charmed many female readers, including feminist writers such as H. D., Katherine Mansfield, and Anais Nin. Other female writers such as Amy Lowell and Catherine Carswell, and a wealthy female patron of the arts, Mabel Dodge Luhan, are also known to have been his supporters. This dual nature seems to explain the contradictory fact that some feminists consider Lawrence to be a male

supremacist and others view him as a quasi-feminist.

Nin and Gilbert both argue that, in his works, Lawrence equally depicted male and female thoughts and emotions. Nin remarks on the “truthfulness” of Lawrence’s writing: “In all the descriptions of conflict the man and the woman’s response is equally stated. He is absolutely conscious of the twofold currents, in even measures” (Nin, 59). Gilbert remarks that Lawrence has “an uncanny ability to transcribe with unusual clarity energies and emotions at the edge of consciousness” and that “Even his agonistic participation in . . . a ‘war of words’ with women, then, paradoxically reveals his awareness of gender issues in a society still struggling to marginalize such matters (Gilbert, xviii-xix). Gilbert interprets Lawrence’s battle against women as a battle against their fixed will “which would subordinate flesh and blood to an idealized authority” (Gilbert, xix), and argues that Lawrence severely criticised men for the same reason. Their arguments lead us to understand that Lawrence fairly presented the emotions and feelings of both men and women, paying attention to the marginalized position of women. Therefore, looking only at the way that Lawrence writes about male emotions, as Millett did, results in an inaccurate interpretation of him as a male supremacist. In contrast, analysing his writings about female emotions leads to an interpretation of Lawrence as a quasi-feminist.

## VIII. Conclusion

Beauvoir and Millett accused Lawrence of having male supremacist views, and their arguments have influenced many. Millett’s *Sexual Politics* was especially influential. The popularity of her book widely spread her influence: many women and men read her book and subsequently considered Lawrence a chauvinist. However, Millett constructed her argument using masculinist parts of Lawrence’s writings as evidence. It is impossible to draw conclusions about his general attitudes to women by looking at only parts of his works. Lawrence constantly shifted his ideas, and he valued straightforward honesty more than respectability or consistency. It is true that, when he was frustrated or angry, he became aggressive, but he was equally aggressive to both men and women. He included his frustrations and angers towards women in his novels, short stories, poems and essays. Years later, Millett used these sections to claim that Lawrence was a male supremacist who tried to dominate and control women. In fact, as demonstrated throughout this article, Lawrence’s situation was, in many ways, similar to that of women, and this enabled him to understand and sympathise with women in general. He was more sympathetic towards women than many men of his time, and his way of thinking was, in a sense, similar to that of a feminist.

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## Notes:

- <sup>1)</sup> Gilbert, in *Acts of Attention: The Poems of D. H. Lawrence*, points out that Mailer agrees in part with Millett's argument, in describing Lawrence as "never had a male novelist written more intimately about women . . . never had a novelist loved them more, been so comfortable in the tides of their sentiment, and *so ready to see them murdered*" (98, emphasis added).
- <sup>2)</sup> Millett also points out that Mellors is Lawrence's fantasy of the idealized version of his own father (Millett, 248).
- <sup>3)</sup> Frederick Mead (1847-1945) is the magistrate who authorised the raid to the police and who dealt with the case of Lawrence's paintings on 8 August 1929, at the Court of Summary Jurisdiction, Metropolitan Police District, Marlborough Street Magistrates' Court in London (*The Letters of D. H. Lawrence VII*, 361).

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