
M. Elizabeth Sargent and Garry Watson, eds. *Approaches to Teaching the Works of D.H. Lawrence*. New York: MLA, 2001. 270p.

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The passionate and turbulent nature of Lawrence's life has perhaps been equaled only by the passionate and turbulent nature of the reception of his artistic and literary work. Feminist, psychoanalytic (both Freudian and Jungian), Marxist, postcolonial, and critical race theorists have at various times found much to be excited about in Lawrence's work. For the teacher, the problem with Lawrence is twofold: first, how to address the work itself; and second, how to open a path into this work for students. This collection of essays provides rich and specific answers to both these questions and will help a teacher integrate Lawrence into interdisciplinary, survey, seminar, and even composition courses at any level.

Do students still read Lawrence? A survey done by the editors of this volume suggest that they do not, or that, if they do, they quickly learn to reject him as antifeminist and politically incorrect. Keith Sagar, who has been teaching Lawrence for nearly fifty years, notes that students no longer find Lawrence's openness about sexuality—a central issue in the '60s—shocking or even interesting. But issues that have emerged as postmodern crises await us in Lawrence's work, including his concerns over the changing role of women, the consequent changes in marriage, the whole perplexing issue of gender relations. This book develops approaches to Lawrence that incorporate the emergent issues of our times.

The best offerings of this book are in the areas of feminist considerations, and reconsiderations, of Lawrence. The question of Lawrence's misogyny, documented so thoroughly by Kate Millett in *Sexual Politics* (1970, reissued in 2000) still arises in any study of his treatment of gender issues. Carol Siegel's long and thoughtful essay in this collection complicates feminist readings of Lawrence that dismiss him as a simple misogynist. Her essay touches on a deep rhetorical fissure in current feminist criticism and theory. One camp advocates rights for women and dismisses men and works by men as inherently complicit with patriarchal oppression; this group often characterizes women as victims. Another camp interrogates social constructions of gender—*both* genders—and undermines assumptions in works by men (and by women) rather than the men themselves. Siegel's sympathies, similar in many ways to those of the first feminist Lawrentian Anaïs Nin, lie with this second camp.

Because of Lawrence's challenging depictions of gender and sexual relationships, his work may shock a class into polarized reactions: pro-Lawrence antifemi-

nists and anti-Lawrence feminists. Siegel works through the dangers of these reactions by placing Lawrence in context and by questioning some feminist assumptions (which oddly resemble the most conservative of our cultural assumptions); for example, that men value autonomy while women value relationship. Feminist readers, disturbed by antifeminist sadism and phallic hypertrophy in Lawrence's work, have too often overlooked his many conflicting or divergent layers of consciousness. A willingness to enter more deeply into Lawrence's work reflects the growing complexity of feminist analysis.

Psychoanalytic theory is also well represented in this collection. Since Lawrence's own views on psychoanalysis permeate his work, psychoanalytic criticism is an especially rewarding perspective on Lawrence. However, psychoanalytic theory is still hampered to some extent by the tatters of Freud's conception of the Oedipal drama. Feminist psychoanalytic theory in recent years has revisited the mother-infant relationship at more levels, relating that bond to the anxieties of adult gender roles and relationships. Jorgette Mauzerall's essay in this collection senses the power in Lawrence's treatment of women and the ambiguity in his numinous sense of Woman. In fact, the essay works in parallel with the feminist analyses to interrogate a simplistic understanding of Lawrence's work as an explanation of male power.

One missing element in these essays is Marxist or materialist analysis. Although there is a grouping called "cultural criticism" and several brief mentions of the possibility of seeing Lawrence as a fascist, there is no thorough consideration of the class and economic factors presented in Lawrence's work. These factors were important to Lawrence and are important for a contemporary understanding of his context. One essay briefly incorporates a materialist approach by linking the postcolonial struggles of third-world students to the class identities and economic struggles in the world of *Sons and Lovers*. This omission reflects a history of resistance to Marxist readings of Lawrence's work, but it is still regrettable.

Lawrence criticism overall has suffered from a resistance to theory. This situation may derive from a certain resistance to theory embodied in modernist criticism in general—at least so a modernist scholar of my acquaintance suggested. This collection of essays, while including many pragmatic suggestions, embraces theory as a means to unfolding the complexities of Lawrence's work. The great strength of this collection is that it welcomes politically incorrect issues and finds in them points of entry that are meaningful and exciting to contemporary students and teachers. ✱