
Michael Squires and Lynn K. Talbot. *Living at the Edge: A Biography of D.H. Lawrence and Frieda von Richthofen*. Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2002. 501p.

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In the preface to this study on D.H. Lawrence and Frieda von Richthofen, the authors promise to “present the Lawrences whole” and “to go beyond the standard biographical poses” (xiii). This promise is kept: the book goes far beyond the facts of the lives of Lawrence and Frieda. It conveys a thorough picture of society and art during the first decades of the 20th century and thus contributes to the authenticity of the study and a better understanding of the Lawrences, as their lifestyle, their thinking, and their problems are seen in the context of the whole era. The book, through following and discussing the Lawrences’ lives in a chronological order, portrays the struggle of these young Bohemians at all levels.

The study combines factual description and, in a cautious way, anecdotal narration. The introductory chapters focus on Lawrence and Frieda and their family and social backgrounds. From chapter 3 on the reader follows the couple on their numerous moves and trips around the world; we witness their restlessness, but also their being stimulated and enriched by the experience of other countries and their cultures, and through the many people they met.

Four major groups of source material which was researched and considered by Squires and Talbot account for a very thorough biography:

- Time and society before World War I and also between WWI and WWII were researched and provided the frame in which the Lawrences are discussed.
- Squires and Talbot traced contemporaries of the Lawrences who, as personal acquaintances or friends, would be able to comment on the couple and their lives. They provided some hitherto unknown features and facts that would shed new light on the relationship between Lawrence and Frieda.
- Throughout the biography there is mentioning of approximately 8,000 letters written by Lawrence and Frieda, which, over the years, had been collected by Squires and Talbot.
- The authors looked also at the history of Lawrence’s fictional works. The study shows how certain events and developments in the couple’s life frequently found their expression in Lawrence’s new works, primarily in his novels and short stories.

With the help of these sources Squires and Talbot created a biography of Lawrence and Frieda that covers every aspect of the couple’s life and gives us an interesting

insight into the Victorian and Wilhelminian Eras. Worthwhile mentioning are also the numerous black-and-white photographs so typical for the early time of photography. They make for a very attractive book and, at the same time, contribute to an atmosphere of Bohemian society. Moreover, index and bibliography as well as quotations (433-501) are an excellent source of information for further research, as they are proof of the overall accuracy in the scholarly work. ✱