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Andrew Humphries. *D. H. Lawrence, Transport and Cultural Transition: "A Great Sense of Journeying".*
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Reviewed by Neil Roberts

So many of the most memorable scenes in Lawrence's novels – Paul recklessly freewheeling home on his bike from Willey Farm, Ursula's tram journey on her first day as a teacher, Gerald forcing his horse to stand still as the train passes, Kate's journey by train and boat to Sayula, Connie's car journey to Uthwaite – entail transport of one kind or another, that it is surprising no-one before Andrew Humphries has thought to write a book on this topic. Humphries has done justice to his theme, combining a historical and biographical approach with a smattering of theoretical perspectives to investigate both the literal and the metaphorical presence of transport in Lawrence's work.

He has chosen to focus on what he calls the five major novels: *Sons and Lovers*, *The Rainbow*, *Women in Love*, *The Plumed Serpent* and *Lady Chatterley's Lover*. Not every reader might think these are Lawrence's five best novels, but they are arguably the major ones in terms of ambition, and his choice allows him to range across the oeuvre both chronologically and in fictional mode.

Humphries's central argument, which generates a mostly nuanced approach to the work, is that Lawrence was constantly negotiating imaginatively between means of transport – especially technologically advanced ones – as agents of development and liberation for the characters, and as means of entrapment in a mechanical existence. Often the same journey lends itself to both interpretations.

He takes a gendered approach to *Sons and Lovers*, in which transport favours the male protagonist, while conspiring to entrap the major female characters – Gertrude, Miriam and Clara – in various ways, “connecting Paul Morel [as a Bildungsroman hero] to a mobile and mobilising male culture” (49). This is a productive approach, especially illuminating Paul’s relationship with Miriam. However, Humphries rides his feminist horse rather hard: class is at least as important a factor in *Sons and Lovers* as gender, and Walter Morel is arguably more trapped than any of the female characters – as Lawrence recognised in his late poem ‘Red-Herring’: “at six in the morning they turned him down / and they turned him up for tea” (*Poems* 424).

It is in the chapter on *The Rainbow* that Humphries’s argument about the ambivalence of transport in Lawrence is most fruitful. Again and again we see the development of Ursula, in particular, being enabled by means of transport which simultaneously embody the threat of repetitive, pointless mechanisation that is personified by Skrebensky. This is epitomised in the incident near the end of the novel when Ursula views from a height a train journeying through the South Downs: “The blind, pathetic, energetic courage of the train as it steamed tinily away through the patterned levels to the sea’s dimness, so fast and so energetic, made her weep. Where was it going? It was going nowhere, it was just going” (*R* 429). Humphries comments: “The train is simultaneously the vulnerable indomitable traveller and the agent of male imperial territorialisation” (113).

With *Women in Love* the threat of mechanisation is sharpened by Lawrence’s response to the war. Humphries develops his theme well to encompass the subtext of war in this novel, and the way in which “the characters appear to reflect a collective internalization of the machine” (140). However, his argument is made less persuasive than it might be by his conviction that this subtext largely concerns submarines. It is true that submarines loomed large in Lawrence’s consciousness because of his proximity in Cornwall to the site of two submarine attacks, and in the national consciousness because of the sinking of the Lusitania. It is also true that the submarine would seem a natural metaphor in a novel so concerned with subconscious processes as *Women in Love*.

Humphries quotes a passage about Hermione: "Only her indomitable will remained static and mechanical, she sat at a table making her musing, stray remarks. But the darkness had covered her, she was like a ship that has gone down" (*WL* 99), and comments, "The imagery of the submerged 'mechanism' working away beneath the conscious surface, waiting to rise and strike, is metaphorically suggestive of the impact of this very modern and specific wartime threat [the submarine] upon contemporary consciousness" (137). This interpretation calls for a very active contribution from the reader. As an isolated suggestion it is interesting, but an accumulation of similarly strained interpretations distracts from an otherwise perceptive account of the role transport plays in the war's presence in the novel.

One of Lawrence's greatest *tours de force* of travel writing is the account of Kate Leslie's journey by train and boat from Mexico City to Sayula. Humphries rises to the occasion and his account of this passage of *The Plumed Serpent* is one of the highlights of his book. He demonstrates how Kate, especially on the Pullman train, occupies a borderline position between the tourist recoiling from genuine otherness and the traveller who seeks, albeit problematically, to embrace it. As Kate progresses from the Pullman to the rowing boat on the lake, he also shows how transport in Lawrence "increasingly enhances the real and everyday outing into a mythic journey of symbolic movement" (162).

In the case of *Lady Chatterley's Lover* Humphries struggles with the fact that this novel's method of signification is more blatant and binary than its predecessors', and that means of transport tend accordingly to play a more straightforwardly negative role. He makes an interesting connection between the validation of Mellors's static position in "the regenerative pastoral-phallic power of Wragby Wood" (260) against the mobility of characters such as Connie's sister Hilda, and the ailing Lawrence's desire to settle in one place, frustrated by his restless search for a place where he could feel healthy. Even in this novel, however, Humphries finds a more nuanced and polysemous instance in Connie's car journey to

Uthwaite. “What begins as Clifford’s car of territorial ownership becomes Connie’s car of exploration” linking “a conscience about the social world to her ‘core of self’”, and making her story “not simply one of sexual awakening in a wood but one of wider commentary upon cultural transition that is the novel’s true focus” (252–3).

There are of course many other instances of transport in Lawrence’s shorter fiction, travel writing and his other novels, that it would be rewarding to discuss. Humphries’s careful and discriminating analysis encourages us to pay closer attention every time a character steps into a car, tram or train.

Peter Balbert, *D. H. Lawrence and the Marriage Matrix: Intertextual Adventures in Conflict, Renewal, and Transcendence.*

Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2016.
Pp. 345. £52.99 (hardcover). ISBN 978 1 4438 9305 3

Reviewed by Marina Ragachewskaya

Peter Balbert’s book provides a new and refreshing outlook on Lawrence’s work, a suggestive bridge between century-old considerations about marriage and contemporary echoes and resonances. Dwindling in popularity, relevance and esteem today, and losing its legal and social value, the institution of marriage cries out for renewal – a key term in Balbert’s book, which identifies the “marriage matrix” as the motif, the basis, the foundation from which conflict, renewal and transcendence spring, and describes how this matrix shapes Lawrence’s work. “Marriage thus functions, in effect”, he argues, “as both the obsessive subject and the thematic center of Lawrence’s writing” (1). Marriage is not idealised in Lawrence’s work. It may lead to depression, codependency, destruction and atrophy. The methodological approach is accordingly quite complex, as it incorporates psychoanalysis, psychobiography, rhetorical analysis, historical