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literary arguments can be developed. For instance, what exactly constitutes an American prose, poetry, literature, identity, citizen or intent? Lawrence did often write in an American tongue, for example, but often in a cheeky manner. Yet, for the same reasons that *The American Lawrence* cannot close the book on all the questions it raises, it has boldly put its foot in the door, and entices those interested in American Studies, American literature and Lawrence in general.

[END NOTES]

**John Beer, *D. H. Lawrence: Nature, Narrative, Art, Identity*.  
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*Reviewed by Terry Gifford*

John Beer cites Roger Ebbatson's *Lawrence and the Nature Tradition* (1980) as contextualising Lawrence's writing within a nature tradition much influenced by Richard Jefferies. Beer suggests that a narrative challenge followed from Lawrence's

awareness of the amorality of organic dynamics and the moral responsibility that complicated the dynamics of natural energies played out in human nature. Thus arise the four linked themes of Beer's subtitle: tensions of realism and art that involve nature and narrative are ultimately discussed in terms of identity in this reading of Lawrence's life and works. Beer's notion of nature, brought to his discussion of well-chosen passages from key texts, is closer to Ebbatson's first book, mentioned above, than to his ecocritically informed *Landscape and Literature 1830–1914* (2013) – or to Fiona Becket's recent essays on Lawrence's "green cultural critique" and Jeffrey McCarthy's ecocritical discussion of Lawrence in *Green Modernism* (2015). It is not that Beer's discussions are without insights into the texts; it is that they are not taken far enough in a book that tries to do too much. John Beer wants to tell the story of Lawrence's life through his exploration of four linked issues evolving through the major works – all within 232 pages.

Beginning with his discussion of *The Trespasser*, Beer makes an interesting link between women, suffrage and social, moral issues in changing conceptions of nature throughout the novels: "Women must abandon the idea that their role was to maintain 'the spiritual' in human nature and more particularly to tame the animal elements and behaviour of men" (51), Beer says. But the narrative struggle for a recognition of human organic vitalism in both gender roles and relationships which leads, in Beer's reading to a subsequent resolution in "a fully adequate symbol" (89) of the rainbow, also leads to the counter challenge of the recognition of the energies of decay and corruption in *Women in Love*. (At times Beer's book can seem like a journey through selected Lawrence criticism from Roger Ebbatson to Michael Bell to Colin Clarke to F. R. Leavis.) The chapter on *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, which is titled 'Tenderness and Modes of Energy', concludes:

This collapse of tradition set up a case for pursuing the relationship between the vegetative and the animal aspects of

nature that had long been Lawrence's theme. His long-term consideration of them had also made him aware that any account of love between two human beings must involve further questions – of class and society, for example – that must lead on to issues ultimately cosmic. (200)

Running through Beer's commentary is a tension between material nature (the horses Ursula encounters in *The Rainbow* are not symbolic but "actual horses" [86]) and what Beer calls the "esoteric" in nature, by which I think he means "mystical", or "ultimately cosmic", or "the implications of the vitalism explored by the biological sciences concentrating on the wonderful ways of organic life" (182). Generally Beer manages to balance Lawrence's interest in biological and evolutionary science with his questions about "modes of energy" in flowers, humans and the cosmos pursued in narrative (and, in one chapter, poetic) forms. Unsurprisingly perhaps, sometimes the relationship between Beer's themes is not maintained. Questions about nature are suspended in his discussion of "the Tales". He quotes Richard Somers's first experience of the bush in *Kangaroo* but fails to give this a role in discussion of the social issues and Harriet's sea / bush / nature-associated critique of Richard. In a strange final chapter Beer unnecessarily attempts to resolve these conundrums in a brief reflection upon Lawrence's "elusive identity" (216).

Finally, it is disappointing that an author approaching ninety should have been given such poor support in copyediting and proofing from his publisher. This would have avoided the idea that Mexico is in South America (166) and the various repetitions, for example of the same quotation (194 and 205) and of a whole paragraph (139). But this ambitious book by a distinguished senior scholar reminds us just how relevant Lawrence's central themes and artistic challenges are to us in the twenty-first century.