

Professor Worthen points out, it soon became more complex and ambivalent. He chooses, consistent with his theme, to concentrate on the lesbian element in the novel, arguing that it is not lesbianism per se but the way it stultifies creativity that Lawrence condemns; that, and the illicit kinds of power Winifred exercises over Ursula. Perhaps: the chapter is extraordinarily subtle, and its title (as Professor Worthen rightly says) is not a simple condemnation; but it is an instance of that powerful and seductive Lawrencian transgression of the boundaries between the particular and the general, the descriptive and the normative, that will always leave many readers seething with rage. With *Women in Love* (1921) anal intercourse rears its ugly head: the latent homosexual in Lawrence codes the encounter with 'the unknown' in potentially psychotic terms (Lawrence was at times close to Eliot's kind of disintegration when he wrote this novel); but the novel itself ('never trust the artist, trust the tale') makes the bizarre thesis about male friendship almost acceptable by dramatising it through Lawrence's *persona*, Birkin, whose complex need for the kinds of 'connection' E. M. Forster, too, spoke of, and whose emotional blocks, are subtly delineated and counterbalanced.

Every Lawrence interpreter has to make some sort of sense of what happened to him after he had written his masterpiece. Professor Worthen's chapter title is 'The end of the line': the patriarchal line of assertive male sexuality, that is. *The Lost Girl* (1920) and *Aaron's Rod* (1922) are 'brash, often comic, polemical and offensive' (60), says Professor Worthen, and they play with comic narrative procedures of a popular sort. 'Sceptical' (65) is the apposite term Professor Worthen uses of them: sceptical, especially, of 'the last, perhaps highest, love-impulse' by which Lawrence had set such store. Parts of *Mr Noon* have a 'shocking arbitrariness' (67): Professor Worthen is too modest in his claims for this extraordinarily original, very funny, and desperately honest novel. The same honesty pervades *Aaron's Rod*, though it is shadowed by what Professor Worthen sees as a kind of paranoia, and is bleak and bitter in a way Lawrence had never quite been before. As usual, Professor Worthen is exceptionally precise and well-informed about the publishing history of this novel, which enables him to link it very closely to the 'censor-moron' theme of his study. In the end, the 'phallic' philosophy leads away from sex altogether, and Professor Worthen notes that *Kangaroo* (1923) is exceptionally lacking in erotic encounters (a different reading is possible of Somers's failure to respond to Victoria's sexual advances: one that might have something to say about the splendid 'Harriet and Lovat at Sea in Marriage' chapter). *The Ladybird* (1923) and *The Woman who Rode Away* (1925) are adduced as further instances of sexual bitterness: Professor Worthen defends the latter (surely unconvincingly?) against the charge that it is pornographic: it is actually very illuminating about the death wish in pornography, and why our society is so fascinated by it. Lawrence has moved, with Freud, 'beyond the pleasure principle' quite decisively, and in *The Plumed Serpent* imagines submission to an impersonal power (a sort of

confrontation of the death wish) as the answer to Kate's questionings. Professor Worthen frankly dislikes this, though he tells us that 'the treatment of sexuality is ... a perfect match for its fictional method' (98).

Death is taboo in Protestant cultures as it is not (for example) in Catholic cultures, where it is ritualised as part of life, and the dead commune intimately with the living. *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, and Lawrence's commentaries on it, link sex and death, the mansion of love pitched in the place of excrement, in ritual encounters that appealed strongly to W.B. Yeats; and Lawrence linked his novel with his idiosyncratic reading of Catholicism as kinder to the dark gods than our northern consciousness knows how to be. Professor Worthen gives a lucid and helpful account of the transformations the novel underwent in its three versions; but in the end it is the last version that matters, and Professor Worthen gets rather bogged down in the cunts and the fucks because he wants it all to match up with the lives of 'ordinary, imperfect, awkward but desiring people' (116). I do not think that Lawrence (unlike Eliot, after his psychotic episode) was ever able to accept that we live in a fallen world, and this (among other things) affects his attitude to women very deeply. But I do think that in his last two novels Lawrence was looking for a way of praying.

So: all credit to John Worthen for writing a book about Lawrence that sticks close to the themes of sexuality (some critics, especially since the initial feminist attack on Lawrence, write as if it were a side-issue). No one can know how Lawrence's ideas might have changed if he had lived longer, or if he had had children, or if Frieda had left him, which sometimes seemed on the cards. Lawrence against censorship is a major presence in our literary heritage; Lawrence on sex is a mixture of marvellous perceptiveness and arrogant disinformation. His self-righteous urge to pass judgement (cf. Leavis's brutal jibe at Eliot) is one of the less endearing English traits; but Lawrence more than substantiated his claim that the novel could take us into 'the secret places', as Professor Worthen demonstrates.

George Hyde

***D.H. Lawrence and the Authoritarian Personality* by Barbara Mensch (Basingstoke and London: Macmillan, 1991; pp. 276; cloth £40.00).**

D.H. Lawrence and the Authoritarian Personality traces the development of Lawrence's ideas about totalitarianism, fascism and liberalism in a wide range of works written after *Women in Love*, but particularly the novels of the so-called 'power period' – *Aaron's Rod*, *Kangaroo* and *The Plumed Serpent*. Beginning with a detailed account of how critical discussion of Lawrence's politics has been characterised by imprecision and emotive generalisation, Mensch makes a strong case for a more sympathetic reassessment of Lawrence's later works. Her analysis

distinguishes between the terms authoritarianism, totalitarianism and fascism, condemning the slack way that critics hitherto have collapsed each into the other: specifically, critical discussion of Lawrence's 'fascism' has facilitated the marginalisation of the texts primarily under discussion here.

Mensch is, then, one of the few writers to take seriously – in the sense of establishing or refuting links and definitions in a clear and scholarly manner – the charge of fascism in Lawrence's work, and her analysis of theories of fascism is important beyond the specific context of Lawrence scholarship within which this book will generally be read. Considering the emotive nature of the subject, this writer is laudably rational, defining her terms clearly and historicising her discussion of the texts, and specifically, establishing an historical link between writers in pre-World War Two Germany read as contemporaneous with the novels here under discussion. For her theoretical context she turns particularly to the Frankfurt School philosopher T.W. Adorno who becomes a central voice, and it is also good to see Wilhelm Reich taken seriously, when Mensch maps out the links between this thought and Lawrence's surely this connection deserves much stronger attention. More negatively, she does spend much of the book being astonished at Lawrence's political-psychological prescience: his apparently uncanny ability to predict the psychological state which will provoke fully fledged fascism as an historical system, and his sketching of (what Adorno was later to call) 'the authoritarian personality'.

However, the main problem with this book for me is the direct connection it makes between the psychological theories Mensch is using and Lawrence's characters: this often turns into quite simplistic character analysis of, say, Don Ramón or Gerald Crich as 'authoritarian people'. The statement 'One of Lawrence's remarkable strengths as a novelist turns out to be the sharpness and validity of the psychological portraits he creates' (54) is hardly original, but serves as the foundation for a range of bland character portraits; for instance, since Ramón demonstrates some tenderness toward his children, he cannot be the authoritarian father suggested by the theoretical models which Mensch takes up as rigid templates. This is the pattern of much of her argument: she takes a range of theoretical definitions as her co-ordinates (particularly definitions of the authoritarian personality), maps Lawrence onto these in a positive way (his characters do or do not match the given character-types), and thus theory and fictive representation meet to Lawrence's advantage. For all her critical theory grounding, a question continues to hover over the whole work: Is Mensch's application of a standard 'psychological profile' to Lawrence's characters any better than any other form of character analysis?

Having said this, her reading of Gerald as an individual figure goes further, when Gerald's 'personality' is interpreted through the lens of a clearly useful and intriguing marriage of Adorno and Reich, and her chapter on *Women in Love* is

consequently one of the strongest in the book. Gerald is, however, read more as a symptom than as a 'real person' magically inscribed with due prescience onto the pages of a 'great book'. The notion of 'cultural despair' isolated by Fritz Stern in the writings of Paul Lagarde, Julius Langbehn and Moeller van den Bruck, whose work collectively formed the foundation of the ideology of the Third Reich, is used particularly lucidly in relation to Lawrence's representation of Gerald.

Consequently, Mensch is better when she suggests an authoritarianism which exists in relationships, across characters, in the (im)balance of power between represented selves. Her discussion of Lawrence's ambivalent attitude toward socialism in *Aaron's Rod* as an effect of his specific class position which causes him to identify himself simultaneously as working class and bourgeois is interesting, and could have been extended to account for ambivalences in a wider range of texts. When this is left behind in favour of a description of the class-dynamic between characters as an explanation for an index of their tendency to authoritarianism, Mensch is less successful. In essence, however, this point bases her argument: liberal characters, such as Kate (discussed in the later chapter on *The Plumed Serpent*), survive as fully-rounded human beings, whilst authoritarian characters fall flat: 'roundness' is an index of moral worth, and 'good' (for Mensch, liberal) characters are consequently fleshed out by Lawrence whilst authoritarians are starved of features. Bad characterisation equals bad politics, and so Mensch's wealth of complex political and psychological analysis is finally used in service of a revived argument *against* flat and *for* rounded characters, backed up with a deferential awareness of Lawrence's polemical uses of both.

I am also unhappy with Mensch's blank refusal to bring this form of political analysis together with the findings of the wealth of sexual political analyses which have been brought to bear on Lawrence's work in recent times. This is particularly telling in her argument about Aaron's desertion of his wife, celebrated in fairly unqualified terms as an act of 'protest against ugly mediocrity' (128). Since so much incisive work has been done recently on Lawrence's sexual politics this is a glaring omission, or preference, on Mensch's part, and a work which reads Lawrence's analysis of authoritarianism in these books in the context of his sexual politics is long overdue. This book, however, is not it. The *Aaron's Rod* chapter is also the one in which her character analyses become most absurd: 'One wonders whether or not a real self that loves and hates can exist underneath the conventional exterior' (149), and 'Robert, like Gerald, cannot relate to others in a complete way, cannot share that "reciprocity of tenderness" .. that is so characteristic of Lawrence's work' (149). Similarly, in the chapter on *The Plumed Serpent* Carlota is deemed a 'bad character' because

she is 'a stereotyped pattern of fanaticism, rather than a complex human being' (223), whilst Kate is 'good' – liberal rather than authoritarian, and consequently a well-rounded character who is almost a real person – because she occasionally questions the virulent sexism of Cipriano, and is kind to animals.

Since Mensch is otherwise careful to historicise her observations about Lawrence's politics, her final celebration of Lawrence suggests only that he possessed visionary insight, a point which is uncharacteristic of the careful historical account which takes place elsewhere in the book. An example of this is her discussion of the historical links between Lawrence's representation of authoritarianism in *Aaron's Rod* and the contemporary situation in the Italy in which some of the novel is set, which locates the appearance of the novel in 1922 in the context of Mussolini's rise to power in the same year. The disappointment is that Mensch's tone oddly dehistoricises her meticulous evidence, since she is finally satisfied to applaud and celebrate Lawrence's uncanny powers of prediction rather than overtly situating his writing as a product of its historical moment. This is in line with her general sense of Lawrence's continuing importance as an individualist who finally rises above the history she shows him to be constantly engaging with. Whilst trying to argue that Lawrence is attracted to and simultaneously afraid of totalitarianism, it is Lawrence as Utopian Individualist that she finally argues for, her conclusion being that 'Lawrence cannot ... justly be labelled as right-wing or authoritarian. Instead, he possesses the characteristics of the "genuine liberal"' (260). Other readers will no doubt continue to question the 'justice' of this.

Linda Ruth Williams

Michael Bell, *D.H. Lawrence: Language and Being* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992; pp. ix + 246; cloth £35.00).

The title of this important new book on Lawrence neatly epitomises the two main themes of the work – the growth of Lawrence's narrative technique in the novel and the development of his 'metaphysic' or philosophy of life. But the thrust of the book is rather to merge these strains and to examine them as a single entity, thus unravelling the progress of Lawrence's search for a language that would embody or 'enact' his ontological view of the world. This book is the culmination of two decades of study but the argument now appears, in the author's words, 'with a new polemical edge'.

Of course, Michael Bell is not the first to repudiate T.S. Eliot's famous jibe that Lawrence was incapable of 'what is ordinarily called thinking'. John Remsburg, as early as 1967, compared Lawrence with the French phenomenologist Merleau-Ponty and in 1971 remarked that 'Lawrence is at his best as a philosopher when he is at his

best as a writer'. James Boulton made Lawrence's sophisticated rejection of Cartesian dualism the theme of his Westminster Abbey address in 1987. Michael Bell now refers to Lawrence's 'profound philosophical intelligence' and remarks that 'his presentation of states of being subsumes an ontological understanding every bit as subtle as Heidegger's'.

The comparison between the thought of Lawrence and that of Heidegger seems to me the most original aspect of this study and underwrites the whole work. There is, however, no suggestion that Lawrence had ever read Heidegger and Michael Bell warns against pressing the parallels too far.

'Being' for Heidegger is not separate from consciousness. Thus he represents the shift in philosophy from epistemological to ontological concerns. This closely parallels Lawrence's comment in *Reflections on the Death of a Porcupine* that 'Being is not ideal, as Plato would have it, nor spiritual: it is a transcendent form of existence, and as much material as existence is'. Michael Bell refers to Heidegger's difficulty in finding a discourse in which to describe this openness to Being, 'because our very language, the inescapable medium of thought, is radically imbued with post-Socratic, especially post-Cartesian assumptions'. This is the problem which underlies Lawrence's struggle to find his mature voice in the novel.

How Lawrence ultimately fulfils this search for a language in which to express his ontological vision is the subject-matter of the key chapter of this study – Chapter III, entitled '*The Metaphysic of The Rainbow*' – which presents a detailed analysis of how the characters in the novel come to be described impersonally, and with great sensibility, against a background of pre-dualistic awareness, as the Spinner is depicted in *Twilight in Italy*. But as *The Rainbow* advances into *Women in Love*, it becomes impossible for Lawrence to reconcile his ontological vision with the self-conscious individualism of modern society, which leads to a gradual fragmenting of the novel-form in his hands. Those who grasp the essence of this argument, presented with fascinating analysis of selected passages, will understand more clearly the criteria by which Michael Bell judges Lawrence's earlier 'failures' and later excesses – the sentimental personification of nature in *The White Peacock*, romantic self-projection in *The Trespasser*, and the strident primitivism of *The Plumed Serpent*. *Sons and Lovers* is seen as an advance in the struggle to arrive at an impersonal treatment of his personal theme, a struggle which in places achieves the matchless success of his mature work. But even his failures and falsifications 'acquire a significant resonance within the larger context of his oeuvre'.

In a review of this length it is impossible to do justice to the many passages of wide-ranging critical comment which illuminate this study – as, for example, the role of music in *The Trespasser* and *Aaron's Rod*, the social construction of the self, the