

philosophical anthropology of Cassirer, Lawrence's fluid conception of time, sexual responsiveness in women, politics and journalism in *Kangaroo* and chatter in *Lady Chatterley's Lover*.

The style reflects the complexity of Michael Bell's thought. I found myself constantly re-reading his densely-constructed sentences and often reaching for the dictionary. There are a number of repetitions as the ontological theme is hammered out. One is relieved to be presented with passages of Lawrence's limpid prose, but always grateful for the insights with which we are able to make a fresh approach to Lawrence's work.

Rosemary Howard

**David Holbrook, *Where D.H. Lawrence Was Wrong about Woman* (London and Toronto: Associated University Presses, 1992; pp. 380; cloth £36.50).**

From the title of this book one might imagine that it was going to be another of those great feminist tomes that would re-open (if it has ever closed) the debate on Lawrence's attitude to women. However, I can only say that if this is what you hope for then you can only be disappointed. David Holbrook has a bee in his bonnet about Lawrence and in this book he is determined to prove it at all costs.

Holbrook immediately sets us straight in his introduction. He believes that Lawrence had an intense hatred of women and in all his writing attempted to dominate the female characters and carry out 'an exorcism of the dreaded woman' which had been caused by the good old Oedipal complex and the continuing dominance of his mother over his life even after her death. Thus in his lengthy chapters on each of the major novels, Holbrook's approach focuses upon what he sees as Lawrence's attempts to keep women under control. For Holbrook all Lawrence's novels are filled with domination fantasies from what Holbrook sees as the emphasis on sodomy in *Women in Love*, where he claims that Lawrence is fulfilling a narcissistic act in which woman's individuality is denied, to the so-called leadership novels in which he sees women characters forced to admire men for their 'murderousness' and 'nihilism'. In his criticism of the novels Holbrook takes little account of the individuality that Lawrence gives his heroines and regards them as mere victims of Lawrence's 'demented fantasies of power'. He hardly acknowledges, for example, Ursula's unwillingness to submit to Birkin. In the same way he cannot see that Kate has to make her own decision and is left to do so. Holbrook has decided to read the novels from a certain perspective and refuses to be swayed.

The root of these 'domination fantasies' Holbrook glibly locates in Lawrence's fear

of his mother, his resentment of Frieda's sensuality and affairs, and his failing health and impotence, so that by the end of the book Lawrence has been variously described as 'schizoid', 'perverted' and 'misogynist' as well as unreasonably misanthropic – Holbrook can't understand Lawrence's despair with England – and even revealed to be 'secretly, a religious fanatic'.

Even in the chapter on his short stories Lawrence fares no better. From 'The Fox' it appears that Lawrence condones murder if it is of someone who stands in the way of one's fulfilment, while 'The Woman Who Rode Away' is an expression of 'what he would unconsciously like to do to a woman'. As for *St. Mawr*, it contains 'pages of mumbo-jumbo which end in a paroxysm of paranoia' about the world in general.

In the pursuit of proof for his view of Lawrence Holbrook often is drawn into easily pointing out characters he believes to be 'Lawrence' or highlighting details he claims are 'biographical' despite the fact that he himself draws attention to the danger of this approach. Throughout his book Cyril, Paul, Birkin, Will, Ursula in both *The Rainbow* and *Women in Love*, Gudrun, Gilbert Noon, Alvina, Mr May, Aaron, Somers, Cipriano, and the three stages of Mellors are described as 'being' Lawrence or embodying elements of his personality, while other characters vary between 'being' Frieda or Mrs Lawrence – Winifred Inger (or Unger as Holbrook insists she is called) is a means of giving his mother 'a meaningful sex life by proxy'.

Holbrook does look at *Mr Noon*, for which he deserves some commendation, as this is a work which is too easily forgotten, yet to which he gives a larger share of Chapter 5 than he gives to *Aaron's Rod* or to *The Lost Girl*. However this discussion is also marred by a biographical reading of fictional material and becomes simply 'a devastating record of Frieda's infidelity on honeymoon' in which Frieda's ideas of 'German sexual revolutionism' learned from Otto Gross are expounded. Holbrook too readily sees Lawrence's preoccupation with sexual relationships as evidence of the influence of Grossian amoralism; but to describe Lawrence as condoning sensuality blatantly ignores his lasting puritanism and evident antipathy to promiscuity.

This is a book riddled with misreadings of Lawrence's novels which could have been avoided if some reference to Lawrence's essays or at least some sense of Lawrence's development throughout his life had been taken into account. The misreadings are not aided in any way by the frequent typesetting errors, misspellings of names and even incorrect titles, giving the impression that this book was dashed off in a hurry. Its only lasting impression is that it should be retitled *How David Holbrook Was Wrong About Lawrence*.

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