
Reviewed by Christa Jansohn

Carl Krockel’s reassessment of Lawrence’s relation to Germany and her cultural heritage starts from the pertinent observation that “Lawrence takes up contradictory positions in his novels as a deliberate strategy to achieve a dynamic expression of reality” (10). Unfortunately, the title of the book has led the author towards a rather less cautious concept of influence and what he understands as its politics. Though he criticises Anne Fernihough (*D. H. Lawrence: Aesthetics and Ideology*, 1993) with some justification for paying insufficient attention to Lawrence’s sometimes erratic intellectual development, his own, less sophisticated “historical” or, in fact, more positivistic account is not free of unsupported claims and suggestions; in particular, there is a heavy-handed and rather uncritical introduction of Nazi writings in the criticism of the novels.

The spectre of Lawrence’s alleged fascist leanings, hopefully long exorcised in Lawrence criticism, is once more re-excavated and granted undue and inappropriate attention. As one would expect it is the familiar suspects, from Friedrich Nietzsche and Richard Wagner to Sigmund Freud and Otto Gross, who make their appearance; to them are added Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Thomas Mann, Max Weber, Hermann Hesse, Martin Buber, Adolf Hitler, and Franz Rosenzweig, as well as the modernist painters Wassily Kandinsky and Franz Marc, to name but a few of the “influences” mentioned in this book. Some of them figure to some extent in Lawrence’s literary biography, of course, but Krockel’s method is all too often marred by sweeping (and unhelpful) statements like the following: “In Lawrence’s novel [*The Rainbow*] and Kandinsky’s paintings the religious imagery of arches and
rainbows both succeeds and fails to unify the diverse characters and forms, and avoids the idealism of Goethe, Marc and Germany at war” (153-4). This kind of “interpretation” is dangerously close to the kind of “only connect” school of criticism that has deservedly fallen into disrepute.

The nine chapters of the book follow Lawrence’s career novel by novel, with glances at the shorter narratives, essays and correspondence, wherever appropriate. Throughout the book, some interesting and suggestive, if often rather speculative ideas are developed, such as the use of Wagner’s Leitmotif-technique in *The White Peacock* and *The Trespasser*, or the affinities between *Sons and Lovers* and Thomas Mann’s *Buddenbrooks*. There is also a close reading of *The Lost Girl* as “rewriting *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*”, and an analysis of *The Plumed Serpent* as a reflection of “The Völkisch Ideologies”.

The author’s familiarity with Lawrence’s writings, including early versions and drafts, and Lawrence criticism, is truly impressive, though he appears surprisingly unaware of the considerable amount of German criticism past and present, which seems rather strange and unfortunate, considering the subject of his study and the easy access to relevant information (e.g. in the D. H. Lawrence Collection at the University of Nottingham, and other British university libraries). On the whole, the book, for all its admirable thoroughness, suffers from the indiscriminate accumulation of material relating to Lawrence’s often superficial personal and intellectual German connections, without careful and sensitive integration into a less limited perspective on the novels. For critical readers, Krockel’s engagingly presented study will provide useful material to (re-)consider and, quite often, disagree with.