

THE FORKED FLAME by H. M. Daleski. *Faber & Faber*, 45s.

Mr Daleski puts the major novels of D. H. Lawrence into a context we can now see to have been demanded from the first. His book should start a new phase in Lawrence criticism; the putting on the map is over, the detailed cartography begins. This kind of work cannot be done until the statute of its subject has been firmly established, but if Mr Daleski has Dr Leavis to thank for creating an audience which knows how to listen, he brings something well worth listening to: a pointer to first principles in the imagination of Lawrence, and a demand for a new detailed precision in the critic. *The Forked Flame* makes a great deal of Lawrence criticism, save the very best, look as vague as the 'here be monsters' of the old geographers.

The formulation of its method, it is true, is rather chilling. 'I have approached the novels by way of the ideas that are formulated in Lawrence's expository writings, and particularly by way of one of the central statements of his beliefs, the "Study of Thomas Hardy"'. The most striking feature of Lawrence's *Weltanschauung* is its dualism; and in the essay on Hardy, Lawrence sets out his concept of duality in terms of the "male" and "female" principles, insisting that all creativity is dependent on the fruitful interaction of the two principles. One thinks one hears the wheelchair among the wildflowers, the imaginative novelist helplessly imprisoned in the machinery of the 'thinker'.

In fact, however, the *Study of Hardy* not only does have the close relation with *The Rainbow* and *Women in Love* that is claimed for it, but is part of an organic act of imaginative exploration. It is a work of a very different kind from the later 'prophetic' writings. It is the direct product of three novels, which were attempts to write *The Rainbow* and *Women in Love*. It is the basis of a fourth, which is *The Rainbow* as we have it. Lawrence had felt there was a statue in the marble which he had been trying to free, but it was the writing of the *Study* which finally clarified its shape. The *Study* has to do with Hardy because it was a re-reading of the Wessex novels, especially *Jude*, which helped Lawrence to see what he had been up to; but the deepest concern is with his own work-in-progress. He is plotting the basic dimensions of his statue before returning with a new clarity of aim and vision to the task of creation. The *Study* will consequently elucidate the theme, the three-part structure, the peculiar 'theo-

logical' and biblical vocabulary of *The Rainbow*. It works out for us, as it did for its author, the basic vision of being and relationship which underlies the characters and situations of both *The Rainbow* and *Women in Love*. (It is, I believe, a dialectic vision and not a dualistic one.) So, although the *Study* is 'theoretic' as the novels are not, there is no divorce between thinker and novelist, for it is precisely the novels that are being thought about as a crucial stage in the act of creating them.

There should, therefore, be no question of the value of using insights from the *Study* as a critical aid, and if there were, Mr Daleski's treatment of the novels should go a long way to dispose of it. Over and over again the *Study* enables one to see the exact point of episodes and descriptions instead of the rather general sense one had had of them before; and to focus the dense suggestiveness of style and scene in both novels. Since the kind of imaginative insight that went into his greatest work informed Lawrence's vision throughout his life, though with marked variations of tone and emphasis, Mr Daleski is also able to cast valuable light on the novels of the 'Leadership' phase, and on *Lady Chatterley's Lover*.

Yet the book disappoints. It so clearly indicates the right direction, but is not quite sure of the way. Mr Daleski's treatment of the *Study* is too abstract, too doctrinaire; for if it is 'conceptual' as a purely literary work is not, it remains an imaginative and exploratory way of looking at human beings, conceived by a novelist, shaping a novel. Mr Daleski reduces it to categories and rebukes it for not being categoric enough. He is then inclined to allow the 'theory' to direct his response to the novels, where Lawrence subjects his basic insights to a far more complex and searching exploration. The result is often over-simplification and partiality, and sometimes misrepresentation. Both of Lawrence's forces are in conflict within every human being, and there can be no preference or judgement between them. I would wish to argue that it is the wisdom of *The Rainbow* that you cannot criticise or blame only one of the partners: Lawrence is as critical of Anna as of Will; cogently critical of Ursula, when we read him sensitively, not only of Skrebensky. (He reserves for her the language he will use of Mellors' wife.) Similarly, the imaginative exploration of Birkin in *Women in*

*Love* is a mature self-criticism, not a mere self-assertion. Mr Daleski's patterns and their application are unnecessarily reductive of both the *Study* and the novels. The same is true of his attempt to make the categories diagnose the man as well as the art; here too we feel that corners have been cut and signposts taken for destinations.

Perhaps the trouble comes from seeing as a dualistic vision what is essentially a dialectic one. The whole point of the conflict for Lawrence, and the way it becomes creative, is that in 'marriage' the opposites 'die' in the crucible and are 'reborn' to new selfhood in the 'Beyond', the further space. Precisely, the vision is not psychological, it is religious. The importance of sexual relationship is that it is the one way Lawrence knows in which human beings can transcend themselves and participate in the ultimate creative process of the universe. There are useful ways of seeing *The Rainbow* as a rewriting of the bible. Yet it is vital for this dialectic that the two people should be Others; should never become subordinated; should not

assert themselves destructively against each other, but be capable of passing *through* to a new singleness of being beyond, both eternally attached and eternally separate in marriage. Because Mr Daleski never quite gets this straight, we can watch him first accusing the *Study* of inconsistency where there is only clumsiness; then tending to go astray a significant and consistent degree in reading the novels.

Yet this itself demonstrates the vital connection between the *Study* and the major novels, which he has established for us all to use. The novels stand alone; but to get the *Study* clear is to illuminate a new dimension in them. To get only a part of the *Study* out of focus is to blur one's vision to a degree throughout that dimension. Mr Daleski illuminates far more than he blurs. He also has valuable insights on *Sons and Lovers* especially, on *Aaron's Rod* and *The Plumed Serpent*, and on *Lady Chatterley's Lover* though he overrates it. His book will be required reading for every student of Lawrence.

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