

ALASTAIR NIVEN

D. H. Lawrence: The Novels

Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978. Pp. 188. \$5.95; \$16.95.

Niven's study of Lawrence's novels provides an excellent introduction to Lawrence as an artist and as a thinker. Although the main focus is on the novels themselves, on an analysis of language, imagery, and themes, Niven also discusses Lawrence's letters since he believes that they are essential for throwing light on Lawrence's mood and on his purposes. Where appropriate, he considers the essays and short stories, showing cross-currents between the shorter fiction and the novels. The chronological format of the study gives valuable insights into Lawrence's development.

With the exception of the first two versions of *Lady Chatterley's Lover* and of *The Boy in the Bush*, all the novels are represented at length here. The longest section deals with *The Rainbow* and *Women in Love*, the centerpieces of Lawrence's art. Particularly useful is the much needed reassessment of Lawrence's more neglected novels. Niven stresses their importance in Lawrence's overall development as well as their intrinsic value as novels, despite their shortcomings. In his chapter on *The White Peacock*, for example, Niven shows the important links between Lawrence's first novel and the mature novels yet argues convincingly that this novel has a sturdy independence of its own. In his essay on *The Trespasser*, Niven criticizes the lack of consistency in the novel but argues that it is a watershed in Lawrence's development since it shows him wrestling with the new discoveries of beginning maturity.

According to Niven, the "travel" novels show Lawrence struggling with new directions in his art. In *The Lost Girl*, Lawrence's scrutiny of provincial morality soon changes into a sexual and metaphysical psychology that goes far beyond his models of Bennett and Galsworthy. The sense of unrootedness in *Aaron's Rod* reflects Lawrence's own restlessness and despair and depicts the purposelessness of the world as Lawrence perceived it then. Above all, Niven urges a reassessment of *Kangaroo*, arguing that this novel has more unity than critics have generally recognized. He also discusses

Lawrence's view of politics, concluding that Lawrence flirted with authoritarianism only to abhor it later as he would have abhorred the fascist governments of Europe, had he lived to see them. Throughout these "travel" novels, Lawrence explores new values and searches for a vital mode of existence to replace the sterility of modern life. In the last chapter, Niven points to similarities in theme and setting between *The White Peacock* and *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, and this comparison with the first novel is a useful measure to assess Lawrence's artistic development.

This series on British authors, of which this study is a part, wishes to promote an increase "in the reading, with enjoyment and understanding, of the great works of English literature." This study definitely fulfills this goal in respect to Lawrence. Niven's style is refreshingly lively and the book spurs the reader on to become more familiar with Lawrence's works.

Jenny Michaels

BARD H. BAKKER, ED.

Emile Zola: Correspondance, I (1858-1867)

Montreal: Les Presses de l'Université de Montréal and Les Éditions du Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, 1978.

Pp. 594. \$40.00

This is the first volume of a great edition which will reach ten volumes and which will require more than a decade to complete; it will contain a very high percentage of the letters Zola wrote between 1858 and the year of his death, 1902. It promises to be far more than the usual edition of a correspondence: like the epoch-making edition of Zola's *Oeuvres complètes* by Henri Mitterand for the Cercle du Livre Précieux, it will aim at being as complete as any such publication can ever be. Not only will it contain most of Zola's letters, but, in addition the editors aim to produce something very much like an encyclopedia of material surrounding

the letters. This first volume gives some idea of the enormous amount of work that the team of Canadian, French, and American scholars have contributed and some hint of the huge expense of the total *Correspondance*, which is being financed in large part by the Canada Council, with some help from the CNRS.

The present volume, after a fine preface by Henri Mitterand, the driving force of the whole project in its first years and still very active in it, contains a biography of Zola in his early years, up to the time of *Thérèse Raquin*, most complete and perceptive; a useful—and unique—historical introduction to the period, a chronological concordance juxtaposes the events of Zola's life with the external events of the epoch. The letters, 210 of them, come next, complete with the most detailed and handy notes which are followed by a bibliography of books and articles pertaining to Zola's early life and career; after these come biographical notices, thumbnail sketches of Zola's correspondents at this time in his life, then there are a description of the chief periodicals of the time, an index of all the works by Zola cited in this volume, and an index of all those correspondents and others mentioned in the letters.

The letters themselves are perhaps a little less good than the edition, which is a real monument, one of the great publishing events of our century in the domain of nineteenth-century French studies. Zola was not a great correspondent, neither as noble nor as appealing as Flaubert, not as clever as Gide, not as intellectual as Sainte-Beuve or as universal as Voltaire. But he was a very good correspondent nonetheless: his letters are clear, pointed, well composed, solid and complete, though they are not usually very long. Already some of his typical attitudes and qualities are evident: his seriousness, his somewhat formal approach to others, his reserved but courteous tone, his angular hardness of mind, his love of discussion, debate and theory. In these letters he is not yet a great man, but they show that he is a great man in the making.

And this edition is a worthy tribute to him as well as a worthy complement to Henri Mitterand's edition of the *Oeuvres complètes*. All those who formed the policy and devised the plans for it have contributed much not only to our knowledge of a man but of a period and a literary

movement, and those who persuaded the Canada Council and the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique to support it have done us all a signal service. It is a shame, some think, that no institution in France would fully back this enterprise, which does so much for one of France's most glorious sons. But it is greatly to the credit of the Canadian people that it was their country which made possible not only the organization of the active and spirited Zola Programme of the University of Toronto, whence this edition derives, but that it made possible a publication which will be a model for all future editions.

Robert J. Niess

FREDERICK G. PETERS

Robert Musil, Master of the Hovering Life: A Study of the Major Fiction
New York: Columbia University Press, 1978. Pp. 286. \$16.50.

Peters's study both pleases and irritates. The latter reaction is due in part to the fact that the book grew out of a doctoral thesis. The investigation shares one trait common to academic theses which emerge as born-again books. The compulsion to cover everything relevant in encyclopedic thoroughness at times wearies and distracts from the valid argument Peters develops.

The introductory chapter, after a balanced sketch of Robert Musil's life, posits the thesis that Musil attempted in his fiction to create a new morality for modern man lost in the vacuum of values. Fiction alone for Musil seemed able "to hover" over all aspects of modern fragmented life, according to Peters. A cogent justification for the investigation which studies Musil's fiction from philosophical and psychological perspectives is next developed. Musil's antipathy toward psychoanalytic study of his life and works is duly noted, but Peters carefully argues that Musil whether writing on the level of metaphor (read: "mysticism") or of reason was sensitive and true to psychological reality.