

himself acknowledge (p. 187). Sukenick's understanding of Stevens is determined ultimately not by what Stevens says but by what *Sukenick* thinks his work means. Clearly, given the frequent unreliability of self-explication and divergences of interest between author and reader, the author's explanation of his or her work is simply one explanation among many and often not a superior one.

In other respects too, the views of Sukenick are, like those of Stevens, inconsistent. Though by admission not a formalist, Sukenick's radical rhetoric often inadvertently suggests as much. He asserts, for example, variously, that language is "self-contained" (p. 11), the primacy of the "nonrepresentational novel" (p. 211), and the importance of "essential form" (p. 95). Such commentary contradicts his notion of art as experience, experience that takes place in the world. In continually straining to discredit the mimetic theory behind nineteenth-century realism, he often obscures the referential bias of his own theory of representation. While one admits the difficulty, indeed impossibility of dealing with literary aesthetics in a systematic, "consistent" way, metacritical awareness of self-contradiction would have made various of the essays of *In Form* more persuasive and established the "order in disorder" Stevens talks about.

Perhaps *In Form* is most interesting as an apology for the radical cultural politics of the sixties and seventies. Sukenick reiterates tirelessly the virtues of originality and formal experimentation. But the world is, as he says, "changing" and "there are new circumstances that demand new paradigms" (p. 113). We no longer live in the sixties. The eighties, so far, have indicated nothing so clearly as the cyclical nature of politics and culture. Many avantgarde initiatives of the recent past appear to us now as idle, even desperate—"one-shot insights" (as Sukenick says, however appropriately, of the *nouveau roman*) (p. 77). Much of the shrill rhetoric and many of the metaphors of *In Form* seem dated. We no longer think of the novel (or much of anything else) as "energy." The future of literature no longer seems to depend on adapting the tape recorder to literary production (p. 143), on typographical manipulation (pp. 99-103), on substituting adding machine tape for bond paper (p. 206). While several of the brightest writers of the sixties and seventies found it necessary, philosophically and artistically, to break with the past, many gifted authors today—the likes of Handke, Coover, Sorrentino, Abish, and Calvino—move freely between traditional and experimental modes of fictional narrative. For better or worse, aesthetic compromise and pragmatism rule the eighties. We have realized, as Sukenick concedes at one point, that "novelty does not guarantee quality" (p. 243). *In Form* is an articulate evocation not only of its author's views but also of the countercultural aesthetics of the recent past. Students of the period and, of course, those interested particularly in Sukenick and other Fiction Collective writers will find it most illuminating. Its value, however, as critical prescription is less certain.

Janice Hubbard Harris

THE SHORT FICTION OF D. H. LAWRENCE

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Reviewed by Judith Ruderman

Janice Harris's recent book on D. H. Lawrence's short fiction is only the second full-length study of all of Lawrence's stories, and the first in the more than twenty years since Kingsley Widmer's *The Art of Perversity*. Considering that many readers prefer this Lawrence "in miniature" to the full-blown and often windy author of the novels, that paucity of wide-ranging critical evaluation is unfortunate. Given the large number of stories that Lawrence produced in his short career (over 60) in comparison to the number of novels (7), and given the acknowledged importance of those novels, the gap is understandable, perhaps, but also a bit surprising. With Harris's major work, a critic, teacher, or student of Lawrence now has a comprehensive, chronological, and readable assessment of the entire gamut of Lawrence's short fiction.

D. H. Lawrence made his debut as a published story writer in 1907, when the local newspaper printed "A Prelude," one of three stories that he submitted to a contest sponsored by the paper. He was 22 years old, living at home in a small town in the English midlands, and planning to be an elementary school teacher. The last story that Lawrence wrote was

"The Blue Moccasins," published in 1929, a year before his death from tuberculosis. The kind of life that Lawrence led in his short 44 years was very different from the one that he had imagined for himself in 1907. Its range, intensity, and uniqueness are mirrored in the tales, and it is this diverse lot of creative outpourings that Janice Harris sets out to survey and assess. She delineates her challenge in the introduction: to describe the whole while analyzing the parts; to find an overall shape while doing justice to the individual pieces. Though the task is formidable, Harris succeeds.

The study's twin aims are (1) to examine the short stories in terms of theme and form, relating theme to Lawrence's life and art, and (2) to set them in the context of the short-story tradition, conveying a sense of how Lawrence expanded the genre. Lawrence's early realistic tales, written between 1908 and 1912, were a response to the call for realism issued to English writers by Ford Madox Ford in the *English Review*. Focusing on the familiar rather than the fantastic, stories like "Odour of Crysanthemums" grounded Lawrence in the community as well as in the details of daily life. Later, that sense of community came under question, as Lawrence wrestled with conflicting urges toward commitment and withdrawal, togetherness and aloneness. The tales began to move out of the realm of realism into something that Harris calls the visionary. The 1913 creation of "The Prussian Officer" marks this stage in Lawrence's development, when he stretched the conventions of realism to peer into the recesses of the human psyche. His method was different from that of Kafka, Joyce, Woolf, or other moderns (not to mention from the great nineteenth-century writers): he fused the realistic short story with the religious exemplum, building his tales around ritual acts and investing their ordinary occurrences with religious significance. This flexible form accommodated numerous changes in thinking as well as in setting, character, and theme. Still later, as of 1925, Lawrence began to move toward fable and satire, shifting the balance between realism and exemplum toward the latter. Marked by stylized characters, schematic plots, landscapes that are mindscapes, and storytelling narrators, these "fabulations" have led to contemporary antification and to its practitioners Barth, Barthelme, Hawkes, Borges, and company. Harris does not find one mode distinctly better than another, for Lawrence produced good (and bad) fiction in each; but she does lean toward the best of Lawrence's visionary tales, arguing that because they are truest to Lawrence's deepest views about life they are truly inimitable.

Harris first read the three volumes of Lawrence's short stories together with Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique*, during one long summer drive from California to Rhode Island more than a decade ago. In the years since, she has often brought an energized feminist perspective to bear on Lawrence's works. In this latest example, focusing on the tales, Harris invariably finds those stories best that portray a questing, questioning female in opposition to the male, helping to achieve a balance of power. These tales are well written—with few clichés, flat characters, and conflicts between the human implications and the mythic dimensions—because they are true to Lawrence's close-to-the-heart convictions. To Harris, then, "The Captain's Doll" is more successful than "The Ladybird," a view that some might question. Undoubtedly, readers will take issue with other of Harris's interpretations and valuations (and even, perhaps, with her classifications: "St. Mawr," for example, is called a tale, "The Fox" a novelette, *The Virgin and the Gypsy* a novel; the first two are treated in this book, the third—shorter than "St. Mawr"—is not.) In particular, the reading of "The Man Who Died" may offend the many Lawrence devotees for whom this tale is sacrosanct, for she is disturbed by the classbound, genderbound, posturing hero and his disgust for certain orders of experience. On all levels (and I agree with her), Harris finds the tale's achievement far less impressive than its intentions.

By attending to Lawrence's entire career, Harris sees his life whole and complete, his own views in conflict, one tale contradicting another. Though there are certain patterns or phases in Lawrence's corpus of short stories, there is no neat and tidy progression from view to view or mode to mode, and Harris does not try to invent one. "Story speaks to story," as Harris puts it, and she tries to keep quiet so that we can hear the dialogue. Although we are always aware of the author—this is a very personal book, with phrases like "I feel"—she never tries to bully us. Moreover, she gives full weight to opposing points of view, and her ample references to the articles and arguments of others increase the usefulness of the book, especially because a survey cannot do full justice to each individual tale. The more than 60 pages of footnotes and bibliography in addition to the balanced and careful evaluations of the stories make Janice Harris's study a major reference work on the subject, and a forceful argument for the view that D. H. Lawrence is the greatest short story writer in English.