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Obituary: Professor Lawrence S. Rainey

Professor Lawrence Scott Rainey, Chair of Modernist Literature at the University of York, died on 7 December 2020 at the age of 66. One of the leading literary critics of our time and an authority on Anglo-American Modernism, Lawrence wrote and edited ground-breaking critical studies and editions, and was co-founder, and for twenty years co-editor, of *Modernism/modernity*, the award-winning official journal of the Modernist Studies Association.

Lawrence was born in Chicago on 16 February 1954, the grandson of Estonian immigrants. He was brought up by his mother, Emma Rainey, who worked full-time as a secretary, doubling up on weekends and on two evenings a week as a shop assistant at the iconic Marshall Field's department store in Chicago. At school, Lawrence wore a black armband in protest of the Vietnam War, and instigated others to follow suit, for which he was suspended. The practice originated in Iowa and led to the famous Supreme Court case, *Tinker v. Des Moines*, judged in favour of the students, who did not 'shed their constitutional rights to freedom of speech or expression at the schoolhouse gate'.

Lawrence took a BA in Classical Languages at Valparaiso University, Illinois, and an MA and then a PhD in English at the University of Chicago. From 1985 to 1987, he was a Mellon Fellow at the California Institute of Technology, and in 1987, he was appointed Assistant Professor at Yale University, where he promoted to Associate Professor in 1993. In 1998, he moved to the University of York, UK, to take up a Chair in Modernist Literature. At York, he was a charismatic and popular lecturer,

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and a superb and sought-after supervisor of doctoral students, endowing the study of literature with an air of intellectual adventure. Lawrence was an innovator of the York curriculum and was instrumental in the development of the institutional practices of the Modern School at the Department of English and Related Literature.

Lawrence's first monograph, *Ezra Pound and the Monument of Culture* (1991) – reviewed by Hugh Kenner as ‘a brilliant book’ – drew from numerous unpublished sources to trace Pound's fascination with the Tempio Malatestiano in Rimini and its profound impact on his work. In his highly influential second book, *Institutions of Modernism* (1999), Lawrence argued that modernists, including James Joyce, T. S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, H.D. and F.T. Marinetti, reacted to the growing pressure from a commodified mass culture in complex and often contradictory ways, retreating to a form of exclusivity embodied in patronage, the deluxe edition, and little magazines that became the central components of literary production, transmission, and the construction of modernist authorship. His intricately researched third monograph, *Revisiting ‘The Waste Land’* (2005), established for the first time a chronology for T. S. Eliot's high-modernist masterpiece, while also advancing important new readings; together with his innovative edition of the poem, *The Annotated ‘Waste Land’ with Eliot's Contemporary Prose* (2005), the book went on to win the 2006 Robert Motherwell Book Award, as well as the 2007 Fredson Bowers Memorial Prize. Lawrence was editor of the Yale University Press ‘Henry McBride Series in Modernism and Modernity’ and he also edited and co-edited a number of influential critical volumes on Modernist literature. At the time of his death he was completing a monograph on the emergence and cultural history of the typist, secretary or stenographer in the first decades of the twentieth century.

Lawrence won many other distinguished awards and prizes, including a Fulbright-Hays fellowship to carry out doctoral research in Florence, Italy, where he met his wife, Sonia; a Bibliographical Society of America Fellowship (1990–1991); a John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation Fellowship (1990–1991), and a Leverhulme Research Fellowship (2008–10). *Modernism/modernity*, the journal he co-founded and co-edited, was awarded the prize of Best New Journal of 1995 by the Council of Editors of Learned Journals, and in 2003, the Phoenix Award for Significant Editorial Achievement. Lawrence frequently appeared in the media, for instance in Melvyn Bragg's ‘In Our Time’, and contributed to the *Times Literary Supplement* and the *London Review of Books*.

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From 2016, Lawrence suffered from ill health. He is survived by his wife Sonia Marathou Rainey, his son Evan Marathos Rainey, and his mother Emma Rainey.

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