

Biography of David Herbert Lawrence



David Herbert Lawrence, novelist, short-story writer, poet and essayist, was born in Eastwood, Nottinghamshire, England, in 1885.

As a child, D.H. Lawrence often struggled to fit in with other boys. He was physically frail and frequently susceptible to illness, a condition exacerbated by the dirty air of a town surrounded by coal pits. He was poor at sports and, unlike nearly every other boy in town, had no desire to follow in his father's footsteps as a miner. However, he was an excellent student and in 1897, at the age of 12, he became the first boy in Eastwood's history to win a scholarship to Nottingham High School. At Nottingham, Lawrence once again struggled to make friends. He often fell ill and grew depressed and lethargic in his studies, graduating in 1901 having made little academic impression. Reflecting back on his childhood, Lawrence said, "If I think of my childhood it is always as if there was a sort of inner darkness, like the gloss of coal in which we moved and had our being."

Though better known as a novelist, Lawrence's first-published works (in 1909) were poems, and his poetry, especially his evocations of the natural world, have since had a significant influence on many poets on both sides of the Atlantic. His early poems reflect the influence of Ezra Pound and Imagist movement, which reached its peak in the early teens of the twentieth century. When Pound attempted to draw Lawrence into his circle of writer-followers, however, Lawrence decided to pursue a more independent path.

He believed in writing poetry that was stark, immediate and true to the mysterious inner force which motivated it. Many of his best-loved poems treat the physical and inner life of plants and animals; others are bitterly satiric and express his outrage at the puritanism and hypocrisy of conventional Anglo-Saxon society. Lawrence was a rebellious and profoundly polemical writer with radical views, who regarded sex, the primitive subconscious, and nature as cures to what he considered the evils of modern industrialized society. Tremendously prolific, his work was often uneven in quality, and he was a continual source of controversy, often involved in widely-publicized censorship cases, most famously for his novel *Lady Chatterley's Lover* (1928). His collections of poetry include *Look! We Have Come Through* (1917), a collection of poems about his wife; *Birds, Beasts, and Flowers* (1923); and *Pansies* (1929), which was banned on publication in England.

Besides his troubles with the censors, Lawrence was persecuted as well during World War I, for the supposed pro-German sympathies of his wife, Frieda. As a consequence, the Lawrences left England and traveled restlessly to Italy, Germany, Ceylon, Australia, New Zealand, Tahiti, the French Riviera, Mexico and the United States, unsuccessfully searching for a new homeland. In Taos, New Mexico, he became the center of a group of female admirers who considered themselves his disciples, and whose quarrels for his attention became a literary legend. A lifelong sufferer from tuberculosis, Lawrence died in 1930 in France, at the age of 44.

Views

Critic and admirer Terry Eagleton situates Lawrence on the radical right wing, as hostile to democracy, liberalism, socialism, and egalitarianism, though never actually embracing fascism. Some of Lawrence's beliefs can be seen in his letters to Bertrand Russell around the year 1915, where he voices his opposition to enfranchising the working class, his hostility to the burgeoning labour movements, and disparages the French Revolution, referring to "Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity" as the "three-fanged serpent." Rather than a republic, Lawrence called for an absolute Dictator and equivalent Dictatrix to lord over the lower peoples.

Lawrence continued throughout his life to develop his highly personal philosophy. His unpublished introduction to *Sons and Lovers* established the duality central to much of his fiction. This is done with reference to the Holy Trinity. As his philosophy develops, Lawrence moves away from more direct Christian analogies and instead touches upon Mysticism, Buddhism, and Pagan theologies. In some respects, Lawrence was a forerunner of the growing interest in the occult that occurred in the 20th century.