



D. H. Lawrence

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John Worthen's D.H. LAWRENCE: THE EARLY YEARS, 1885-1912 observes that Lawrence was the only Edwardian author from the working class who wrote about the working class. Popular fiction of the early twentieth century had remained almost exclusively the province of solidly middle-class writers such as Thomas Hardy, Rudyard Kipling, and Joseph Conrad. Lawrence was thus writing against prevailing taste. His subject matter itself, not to mention his frank treatment of it, was shocking in the extreme.

Paradoxically, Lawrence had escaped the working class by the time he had begun to write about it. He escaped the working class by the time he had begun to write about it. He escaped the possessive love of his mother, Lydia Beardsall Lawrence, only after her death in 1910, and perhaps not even then. It took at least five love affairs (with Jessie Chambers, Louise Burrows, Helen Corke, Alice Daz, and ultimately with Frieda Weekley), all independent, exceptional women, for Lawrence to adopt the notorious persona most associated with him. Worthen discusses each of these women and shows how they influenced Lawrence's writing and personal outlook.

The years covered by this volume are those during which Lawrence wrote and three times thereafter rewrote SONS AND LOVERS, the autobiographical novel which describes his unhappy childhood home. His mother, too, had wished to escape, from the mining town of Eastwood and from a loveless marriage to Arthur John Lawrence, a collier. Frieda Weekley, who disregarded social convention when she left her husband Professor Ernest Weekley and her three children in order to marry Lawrence, was the only one of the women in his life bold enough to take such a step. Still, it was Jessie Chambers who suffered most, since Lawrence essentially rejected her selfless love. Frieda was, doubtless, the woman most responsible for the notorious Lawrence the world came to know, and Worthen's study concludes as this formative relationship begins.

Sources for Further Study

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