

D.H. Lawrence: posthumous novel and the man

Mr. Noon, a recently published novel by the author of *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, is interesting mainly for its autobiographical insights into the life of D.H. Lawrence.

The book, a so-so effort compared with Lawrence's other works, first appeared in its entirety late last year after the manuscript for its second, larger part had been purchased at an auction by the University of Texas. Lawrence, who died in 1930, didn't want this section published in his lifetime because he feared libel action.

The full version was published in connection with the 100th anniversary of Lawrence's birth in a dank miner's cottage in England's Nottinghamshire, and it is a fine companion piece to *Flame into Being*, a new study of the author's life and loves by British scholar and novelist Anthony Burgess.

Burgess, whose arm-long list of publications includes *A Clockwork Orange*, has produced an engaging study of the mercurial Lawrence that is at once scholarly, witty and spiced with a nice larding of gossip.

The goal Burgess has set for himself is to create a full-length

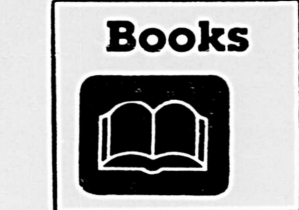
portrait of Lawrence as not simply an author of sexually frank books that were banned or fought over in sensational court cases, but also as the creator of far more important works in novels, short stories, essays and poems.

In Burgess's view, Lawrence's *Women in Love* is one of the 10 great novels of the century.

Side by side with his study of Lawrence's literary output is Burgess' tracking of the personal adventures through a turbulent, short life of travel, illness and self-destructive wilfulness as a writer whom English hypocrisy drove into permanent exile.

The first half of *Mr. Noon*, published posthumously as *A Modern Lover* in 1934, tells how Gilbert Noon, a young Nottinghamshire schoolmaster, seduces a girl and has to give up his job and flee. The second, clearly autobiographical part, follows Gilbert to Germany where he falls in love with a married woman and elopes to the Italian Alps.

In real life Lawrence was barred from teaching by the board of education because of his tuberculosis. He then met

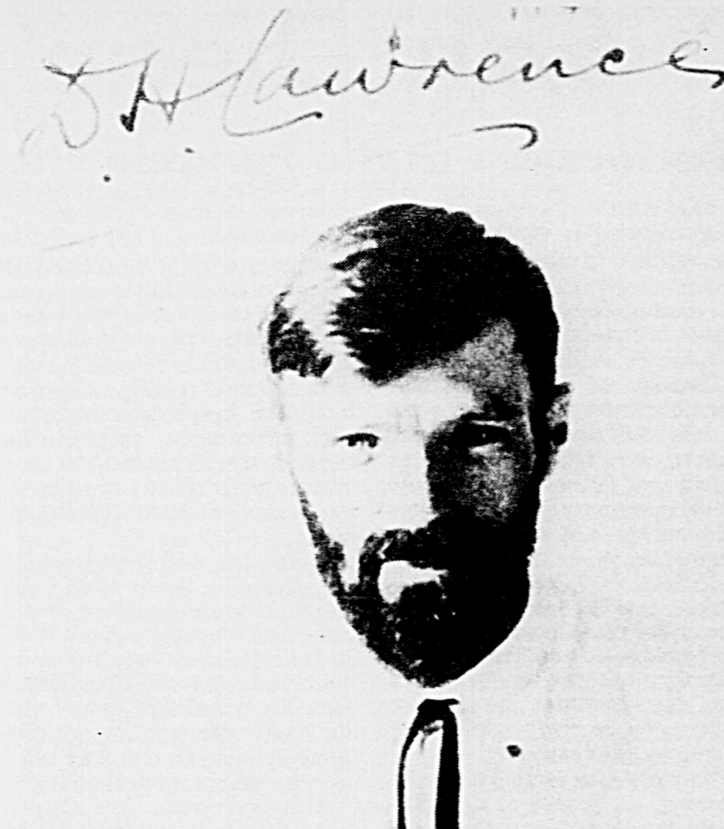


Mr. Noon, by D. H. Lawrence. Published by Collins; 382 pages; \$19.95. **Flame into Being**, by Anthony Burgess. Published by Stoddart; 211 pages; \$19.95

Emma Maria Frieda Johanna, Baroness von Richthofen, a married woman six years his senior — who, by the way, was a cousin of the Red Baron, scourge of the Royal Flying Corps and villain of the *Peanuts* comic strip.

The German beauty who ran off with the penniless miner's son caused a scandal but Frieda, as Burgess puts it, "was a great taker of lovers and such sexual escapades as Nottinghamshire could offer must have filled in pleasantly enough such times as she could spare from looking after her three children."

Having abandoned the comforts of a more orthodox life, Frieda remained loyal to Lawrence through thick and, more often, thin. Friends said her inability, or disinclination, to make Lawrence take better care of his health was his great undoing. Burgess, however,



Lawrence, photographed in 1928, shows autobiographical insights in new novel.

says another woman might have brought order to Lawrence's life whereas his talent needed chaos in which to flourish.

Chaos is what he got. While the adventures of the darkly handsome Noon often were touched with elegance, adventure and mystery, Lawrence's own adventures were often

harsh and tinged with sadness in his frustrated love for England and his failing health.

He also was troubled by his fame for dirty books with dirty words, since, Burgess says, he was really a puritan.

— Rod Currie,
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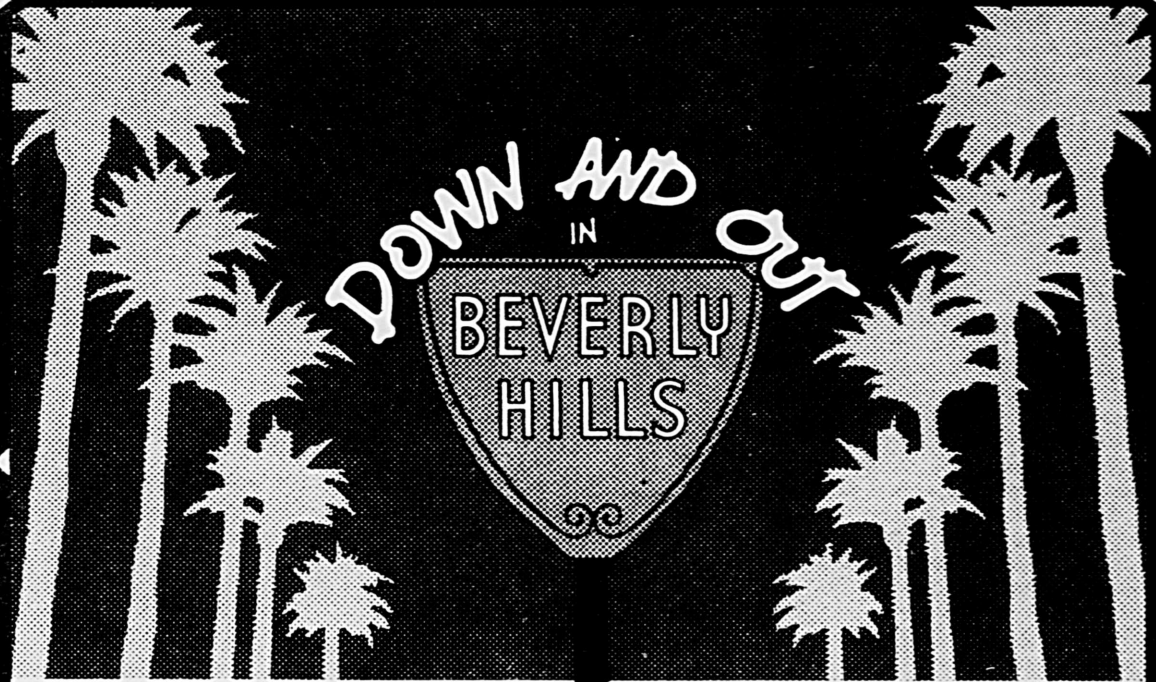
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