

D.H. Lawrence and Cornwall

In Search of Utopia

by Philip Payton

DESCRIPTION:

This book examines D.H. Lawrence's attempt to create a utopian community of likeminded idealists in Cornwall, a quest that was given greater urgency by the outbreak of the First World War, an event Lawrence viewed with horror. He saw Cornwall as a 'Celtic other', beyond England's reach. But he was ultimately disillusioned by the gradual intrusion of England's 'war spirit' and was expelled from Cornwall by the authorities, ending up in Australia where he wrote about his Cornish sojourn in the semi-autobiographical novel Kangaroo.

The Cornish adventure was a key event in Lawrence's life and this book alights upon several significant features that have not been fully described or understood before, notably the impact of 'Celtic revivalism' upon his imagining of Cornwall and the changing nature of the maritime war in and around Cornwall-not least its effect on Lawrence himself. Discussing the genesis and development of his ill-fated (invitation-only) community, the text follows Lawrence as he moves to Cornwall, first to Porthcothan, then to Zennor, and considers his evolving (and often contradictory) estimation of the Cornish people. Increasingly under suspicion as a possible German spy responsible for the upsurge in U-boat activity along the Cornish coast, he nonetheless formed close relationships with the local community at Zennor.

Considering D.H. Lawrence through a new prism, or rather a series of new prisms, this volume offers a fresh perspective on his life, writing and thinking. It also furnishes new insights into Cornwall's ambiguous place in the English imagination and the complexity of Cornish identity, including its international dimension. As well as scholars and students, this book will be of great interest to both Cornish and D.H. Lawrence enthusiasts, along with the general reading public.

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CONTRIBUTORS BIOGRAPHIES:

Philip Payton is Emeritus Professor in the University of Exeter and Professor of History at Flinders University in Adelaide, Australia, as well as Honorary Professor at the Australian National University, Canberra. He is the former Director of the Institute of Cornish Studies in the University of Exeter. He edited *Cornish Studies*, published annually from 1993 to 2013, the only series of publications that seeks to investigate and understand the complex nature of Cornish identity, as well as to discuss its implications for society and governance in contemporary Cornwall.

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He has written extensively on Cornish topics, and recent books include A.L. Rowse and Cornwall: A Paradoxical Patriot (2005), Making Moonta: The Invention of Australia's Little Cornwall (2007), John Betjeman and Cornwall: 'The Celebrated Cornish Nationalist' (2010), and (edited with Alston Kennerley and Helen Doe), The Maritime History of Cornwall (2014). He was awarded South Australian Historian of the Year 2017 by the History Council of South Australia.