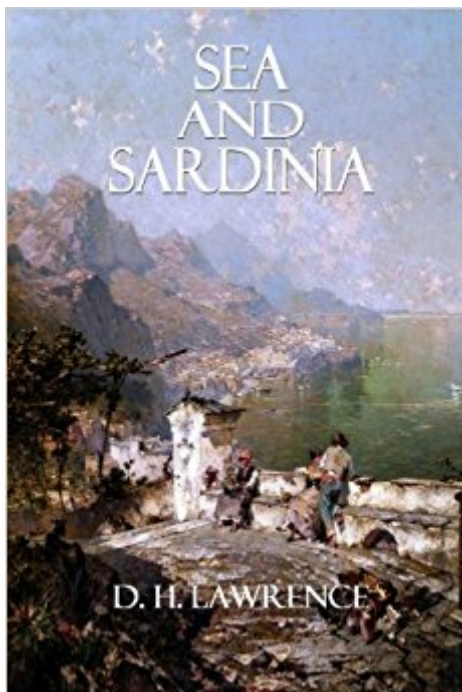


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Sea And Sardinia



Synopsis

D. H. LAWRENCE writes languorously and bewilderingly in "Sea and Sardinia". Color, charm, and an amazing array of emotions flood this beautifully volume. It is Lawrence the dreamer and mystic brought in contact with the easeful climate and life of a mellowing civilization. Wonderful reading. And there is humor, too, together with those emotions along the gamut from nausea to terror of a volcano. Such writing as this: "Wonderful to go out on a frozen road, to see the grass in shadow bluish with hoar-frost, to see the grass in the yellow winter-sunrise beams melting and going cold-twinkly. Wonderful the bluish, cold air, and things standing up in cold distance. After two southern winters, with roses blooming all the time, this bleakness and this touch of frost in the ringing morning goes to my soul like an intoxication. I am so glad, on this lonely naked road, I don't know what to do with myself. I walk down in the shallow grassy ditches under the loose stone walls, I walk on the little ridge of grass, the little bank on which the wall is built, I cross the road across the frozen cow-droppings: and it is all so familiar to my feet, my very feet in contact, that I am wild as if I had made a discovery. And I realize that I hate lime-stone, to live on lime-stone or marble or any of those limey rocks. I hate them. They are dead rocks, they have no life—no thrills for the feet. Even sandstone is much better. But granite! Granite is my favorite. It is so live under the feet, it has a deep sparkle of its own. I like its roundnesses—and I hate the jaggy dryness of lime-stone, that burns in the sun, and withers."

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Customer Reviews

..".very impressive to read..." Rocky Mountain News --This text refers to an alternate Paperback

edition.

Sea and Sardinia records Lawrence's journey to Sardinia and back in January 1921. It reveals his response to a new landscape and people and his ability to transmute the spirit of place into literary art. This 1997 edition restores censored passages and corrects corrupt textual readings. --This text refers to an alternate Paperback edition.

I was captured by the beauty of its language from the start. Have a look at just a few lines from one of the first paragraphs, describing the Etna and the surroundings of Taormina, where David Herbert Lawrence and his wife Frieda von Richthofen (named Queen-Bee, or Q-B, throughout the book) lived at the time: "Comes over one an absolute necessity to move. And what is more, to move in some particular direction. A double necessity then: to get on the move, and to know whither. Why can't one sit still? Here in Sicily it is so pleasant: the sunny Ionian sea, the changing jewel of Calabria, like a fire-opal moved in the light; Italy and the panorama of Christmas clouds, night with the dog-star laying a long, luminous gleam across the sea, as if baying at us, Orion marching above; how the dog-star Sirius looks at one, looks at one! he is the hound of heaven, green, glamorous and fierce!--and then oh regal evening star, hung westward flaring over the jagged dark precipices of tall Sicily: then Etna, that wicked witch, resting her thick white snow under heaven, and slowly, slowly rolling her orange-coloured smoke. They called her the Pillar of Heaven, the Greeks. It seems wrong at first, for she trails up in a long, magical, flexible line from the sea's edge to her blunt cone, and does not seem tall. She seems rather low, under heaven. But as one knows her better, oh awe and wizardy! Remote under heaven, aloof, so near, yet never with us. The painters try to paint her, and the photographers to photograph her, in vain." Lawrence and his wife travel to and from Sardinia by train and ship, and while on the island, they use the motor bus, still a novelty at that time. The people, the landscape, the villages and towns as well as the interior of the inns and hotels they stay at are described in a way that definitely makes you glad to live almost a century later, with all the comfort we have gotten used to. Most of the humble places where they stay are bitterly cold, no cleaner than a cow shed, offer too little food to make up for the lack of other comforts, and so the Lawrences never stay very long in one place. The author is fascinated by local costume and the rather archaic, simple way of life and character he finds in the village people. It helps that both he and Frieda are fluent in Italian, and he reports many a conversation with inn-keepers, bus drivers and fellow passengers. I enjoyed this read, and also enjoyed reading up about the couple on wikipedia. Frieda von Richthofen was German, six years older than David Herbert Lawrence, who

became her lover while she was still married to an English professor and he was his student. They eloped to Germany (leaving her three children behind) and married after her divorce came through. They stayed together for the rest of Lawrence's life, which ended early: he died in 1930, aged 44, from tuberculosis. Frieda married again and lived until 1956. Times have changed, and I guess most Sardinians wear their traditional costume only for touristy events and maybe a national holiday or patron saint feast, but I'd like to know how much of what the author describes of Nuoro, Cagliari, Mandas, Sorgono and Terranova still is recognizable today.

After reading this well written, quotable, but uneventful travelogue by D.H. Lawrence, I find myself wondering why British people travel. Here is Lawrence, 60 years before Paul Theroux (who I thought held the title of "Crankiest Travel Writer"), setting out on a whirlwind tour of Sardinia, and complaining about it every step of the way. With no explanation or preamble, D.H. Lawrence and his wife (The "Queen Bee", who he criticizes relentlessly) set off for this remote island IN WINTER apparently so he can bitch about the weather along with the poor food and service in the hotels they can afford to stay in. This is post WWI/pre-Mussolini Italy and the economy is not too hot. The Lawrences spend no more than 1 night in any city, so they never get to know any town. (One night they arrive in a rural town to find that all the men are dressed as women. It is cold, so they scurry back to their hotel, make tea, and look out from their window a while before eating a bad meal. Lawrence never explores why the people are cross dressing, but he does describe the meal in detail). The writing at times is amazing and the book provides a peek at an area of the world at a moment in time that is long gone. For this reason it is worth reading. On the other hand, it is unclear why Lawrence ever left home.

Well written, but not as much about Sardinia as the title would suggest and most of the observations were not particularly flattering. That being said the descriptions were exceptionally descriptive, occasionally amusing and made me glad I did not have to travel under the circumstances of that era.

In 1921, D.H. Lawrence joined the British literary tradition of writing a travelogue. He and wife Frieda, "the Queen Bee," were weary of Sicily where they were staying and selected Sardinia for its promise of unspoiled primitiveness and lack of "tourist-parasites." Though *SEA AND SARDINIA* follows many of the conventions of the travelogue genre of the time, playing to the market for a foreign experience, moments of wonder mixed with irony and nationalistic-centric sentiments, it is also a self-revealing journal in which Lawrence's passions, rages and perspectives get a frequent

work-out. As travelogues go, SEA AND SARDINIA may be found somewhat lacking in the description of landmarks. Lawrence focuses on encounters with the people, who presented a multi-layered lesson in the collision of the ancient with the 20th century and the recent war. In speaking to the audience back home, Lawrence often expresses himself in literary and historical allusion and his musings ring with a psychological resonance that is both intentional and unintentional. The result is an entertaining and informative experience that imparts much about post-war Europe and this particular traveler. This is a fine critical edition. The annotations are discretely listed at the back of the book, with no disruptive footnotes blotting the page. There are also a good map, a glossary of Italian words and phrases and a brief bibliography following the text. A chronology of Lawrence's career precedes it, as does a critical introduction. Despite the quality of the introduction, I heartily recommend reading it AFTER you've enjoyed the text on your own terms, because it gives away some of the surprises (as critical introductions are wont to do).

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