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The Language of D.H. Lawrence

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To Sarah and Ruth

Preface

Lawrence was one of the most prolific of modern writers. His work covers fiction, poetry, drama and essays, as well as several volumes of letters. This book is not intended to be an exhaustive description of the language of D.H. Lawrence through all the forms of his writing. It is an introduction to the study of one writer by way of the linguistic resources available to him. This necessarily involves some discussion of the contexts of his writing – for example, of the state of literary language during the first two decades of the twentieth century, of Lawrence's own background, and of his attitudes towards literature and towards society. I have also tried, when looking at specific textual examples, to keep a clear focus on their meaning and significance within the context of the whole work. I have concentrated almost exclusively on Lawrence's fiction, and have therefore largely confined myself to discussion of the language of prose. This has enabled me, however, to spend some time on the language of his letters and of his non-fictional prose. The plays are omitted altogether, but I have made space for one chapter on the language of poetry. I have kept to a minimum the use of linguistic terms. Those that have been essential are clearly explained when they first arise, and their application demonstrated through examples. I have used Penguin editions of Lawrence's writing, but have also been alert to textual changes registered in the Cambridge text.

I am grateful to the many friends, colleagues and students who have helped and stimulated this work through discussion and interest. My thanks are especially due to Annie Bergonzi, Jill Fenwick and Jan Hewitt, all of whom read through my manuscript and provided me with valuable suggestions and invaluable encouragement. Finally, I am grateful to Norman Blake for the opportunity to contribute to this series, and for his interest and help.