

Sorrow

David Herbert Richards Lawrence

Dr. Rudaina Abdulrazzaq
English Department
College of Education for Women

Why does the thin grey strand
Floating up from the forgotten
Cigarette between my fingers,
Why does it trouble me?

Ah, you will understand;
When I carried my mother downstairs,
A few times only, at the beginning
Of her soft-foot malady,

I should find, for a reprimand
To my gaiety, a few long grey hairs
On the breast of my coat; and one by one
I let them float up the dark chimney.

David Herbert Richards Lawrence (11 September 1885 – 2 March 1930) was an English novelist, poet, playwright, essayist, literary critic and painter who published as D. H. Lawrence.

“Sorrow” is an autobiographical poem. The speaker who is the poet himself is sitting alone with a cigarette between his fingers. He tried to brush some grey ash on his coat. The film of smoke of this cigarette, as it

flies upwards troubles him because it touches something deep at his soul which he does not know at first. However, after a while of recollection he is able to know why. This grey smoke reminds him of the long grey hairs of his mother that remained on the breast of his coat when he used to carry downstairs while she was sick of soft foot malady; and he watched them (the grey hairs) flying up through the chimney.

Having in mind the poet's novel *Sons and Lovers*, the reader is well aware of the strong attachment between the poet and his mother and this is of great help to the understanding of this poem. Though several years have passed since the death of his mother, he can never forget her. It is a personal poem.

Though the poem is written in three stanzas, each stanza is a single sentence. The poem, like most of the modern poems, is written in simple language and in free verse.

"Sorrow" is a Lawrence poem which was written in the process of grieving for his mother. It is touching and conflicting in that it expresses not only emotions of sorrow but emotions of gaiety.

The memory of his mother dying would haunt Lawrence for years. His image of a stream of smoke floating up from a cigarette is like the slow burn of a cigarette compared to the slow death of his mother.