

D. H. LAWRENCE, HENRY LAWSON AND SINGLE-AUTHOR CRITICISM¹

The place, Sydney, and the year, 1922, mark a curious conjunction in the writing careers of D. H. Lawrence (1885–1930) and Henry Lawson (1867–1922). The conjunction points at a number of parallels, previously unremarked, that are worth drawing out. After their deaths, especially in the post-World War II era of the professional literary critic, a more significant parallel, in the ongoing reception of their works, emerges. This parallel, once pursued, throws new light on Lawrence criticism and serves as a provocation or challenge to reconfigure our understanding of that activity by bringing a more book-historical perspective to bear on it.

Sydney, 1922: Lawrence and Lawson

Today, Writers Walk stretches around Circular Quay, at Sydney Harbour. Medallions set into the footpath commemorate the visits of various overseas writers to Sydney, as well as Australian counterparts. Both Lawrence and Lawson are commemorated there. The medallions constitute, one may say, a material act of reception of their works in Australia, a refusal to let go of the connection to the actual authors themselves by leaving it to function only at the level of printed text. Again, in a little park in Thirroul, south of Sydney and just up the road from Wyewurk, is a plaque let into a large rock, commemorating Lawrence and Frieda's few months stay in that wryly named house.

As the local author, Lawson is, understandably, more thoroughly memorialized than Lawrence. In the Domain parkland, not far from where Lawrence and Frieda spent their first night in Sydney, an elaborate statue of Lawson the Bushman, was erected in 1931. It was, at the time, an act of homage to the writer whom many in Australia were, by then, coming to believe had created in his prose and verse the very habitus of the Australian character, the bush. The memorial was sculpted by G. W. Lambert and partly paid for by the schoolchildren of New South Wales who contributed their pennies

¹ This is a revised version of the Mark Spilka lecture, "D. H. Lawrence and Henry Lawson: Parallel Paths", given at the International D. H. Lawrence conference in Sydney in July 2011. Spilka, a courageous literary critic, was the author of *Love Ethic of D. H. Lawrence* (1955) and *Renewing the Normative D. H. Lawrence: A Personal Progress* (1992). The lecture, delivered only a few months after the death of the widely admired Lawrence editor and biographer Mark Kinkead-Weekes, also remembered his achievement and influence.

weekly after the Teachers Federation answered the call of a committee set up to memorialize Lawson. This committee got to work following Lawson's state funeral, which was granted by the Prime Minister Billie Hughes, who happened to arrive in Sydney by train from Melbourne on the day Lawson died. Lawson gradually became the focus of a popular groundswell that peaked in the 1960s; he would finally be honoured with his image on the ten-dollar note in 1966 when the Australian currency changed from pounds, shillings and pence. The iconic image was not replaced until 1993.

Lawson died in Sydney on 2 September 1922, nearly three weeks after Lawrence and Frieda had sailed for San Francisco on 14 August. But some of Lawson's writings had been appearing in the Sydney *Bulletin* in 1922; and so, if Lawrence was keeping up with recent issues (Frieda many years later recalled that he read it regularly [120]), he would have come across the seventh item in Lawson's Elder Man's Lane Series, "His Burden of Sorrow", published in the *Bulletin* on 29 June 1922. The series recounted vignettes of the social life on the streets of North Sydney before the Harbour Bridge was built, connecting it to Sydney. This sketch concerns a West Indian man called Jacky Harrison who makes a living from scouring the local tip for rags, bundling them up, and then taking them on his horse-drawn wagon on the punt across the Harbour to the city and selling them. He has in succession lost his wife, elder son and younger son from, as Lawson's narrator puts it, "Consumption or something of that sort, I suppose" (1922, 48), leaving him finally with the question of what there is left to live for now. The narrator comes across the man on the punt after both of the first two deaths; but when a friend, Benno the bottle-o, tells the narrator of the third death while gesturing towards Harrison, who is standing at the front of the punt waiting for it to depart, the narrator cannot bring himself to come on board and decides instead to wait for the next one. The name of the narrator is "Mr Lawrence". If the real Mr Lawrence in Thirroul read the sketch he would have first encountered an ironical Author's Note. It would have amused the creator of Somers in *Kangaroo*, the novel that Lawrence was simultaneously writing not fifty miles away: "Many and various persons have, for many and various years, persisted in identifying one or other of my characters with myself or someone belonging to me. They needn't fret. I haven't knowingly attempted to draw a born idiot yet." (1922, 47)

The *Bulletin* was a weekly, for sale across Australia. Lawrence could, if he wished, have bought a copy when he travelled from Thirroul to

Wollongong on 30 June 1922.² The Lawson sketch appeared in the issue of the 29th. We know that Lawrence read the issue of 22 June because, as Bruce Steele documents in his explanatory notes to the Cambridge edition of *Kangaroo*, the chapter “Bits” quotes or adapts some of its so-called “pars” (401–02): pithy or droll paragraphs, usually quite short, often contributed by *Bulletin* readers. In an earlier chapter in *Kangaroo*, Somers sees *Bulletins* for sale near the Sydney General Post Office on the occasion when he goes to see Willie Struthers at Canberra House, the union headquarters. Struthers wants him to write for a Socialist newspaper, just as Lawson had in fact done in the 1890s after the *Worker*, a socialist weekly, was put onto a proper footing in Sydney. It was still being published in the 1920s. In 1893, some of Lawson’s best short stories appeared there, as well as many fictionalized sketches and other articles. But in November that year he left for New Zealand, after failing to secure the editorship of the *Worker* in succession to Walter W. Head. In 1894 he was invited to return from New Zealand to take up a staff position on a special daily issue of the *Worker*, intended to influence the upcoming New South Wales elections. But by the time he reached Sydney the moment had passed, and he was reduced to the status of special contributor for the weekly. Lawson had been a radical versifier in the 1880s and would remain a favourite of the Communist Left well into the 1960s. But, rather like Somers after him, Lawson had a falling out with his “feller wirkers” at the *Worker* and went his own way (Lawson 1970, 57).

Although these parallels are curious, there is nothing to suggest that they are other than coincidental. Nor is there anything to suggest that Lawson and Lawrence actually met. In Sydney in 1922 they could have trod the same streets, except that Lawson had become rather lame following a minor stroke in 1921, a recurrence of which would kill him in September 1922. We know that Lawrence went to Dymocks bookshop in Sydney, and Lawson could have.³ From March 1922, with the assistance of a government pension, Lawson was living at Abbotsford on the North Shore, attended by Mrs Isabel Byers; and, in those days before the Harbour Bridge had been built, it required some

² See 1L 272.

³ Lawrence’s visit is reported by Jack Lindsay (later co-proprietor with P. R. Stephenson of the Fanfrolico Press in London) in vol. 2 of his autobiographical trilogy *The Roaring Twenties* (1960), chap. 8: “It must have been in April [sic] 1922 that Frank [Johnson, 1898–1960, employee of Dymock’s bookshop] told me I had just missed D. H. Lawrence, who had come into the shop, and asked if I’d like him to arrange a meeting. I said no.”: *Life Rarely Tells: An Autobiography in Three Volumes* (Ringwood, Vic.: Penguin, 1982), p. 322.

effort to get into the city. The only certain movement we have for Lawson in central Sydney in 1922 is on 22 August when he went to the office of the *Bulletin* and wrote some letters from there; but Lawrence and Frieda had already left on the 14th. So far as we know, then, Lawson and Lawrence did not meet.

However, if we pose the question of parallel paths earlier than 1922, we find that the two authors had rather more in common. Both had profited from the services of the same literary agent in Britain, J. B. Pinker: Lawson in 1900–02 when he was in England trying to make his literary fortune there, and Lawrence from 1914 until he fell out with Pinker in 1919. Pinker, as he sometimes did with the authors he represented, staked both of them financially when they were desperately short of funds. He did the same for Joseph Conrad. With Lawson it was because his wife – afflicted with a serious psychosis, possibly the result of post-partem depression following the birth of their second child shortly before they left Sydney for London in 1899 – needed expensive hospitalization in Britain. With Lawrence during the War it was because his income from his writing dropped to poverty levels following the banning of *The Rainbow* – a commercial disaster that meant that publishing novels by him was no longer an attractive nor even a safe proposition. During the two periods in question, both authors depended mainly on the sale of magazine rights in England and Scotland that Pinker was able to effect.

Lawson in the 1890s

In order to pursue the next and more significant parallel we need to go back further, to 1892 when what would become Lawson's most anthologized short story, "The Drover's Wife", first appeared. It is an account of a mother's lonely life on a farm in the bush. The husband has been away for six months, working for hire to support their poverty-stricken life on the farm; and now the mother and children have seen a deadly snake slither under the floorboards of the house. To avoid it, she and the children go to spend the night in the outside, lean-to kitchen. After they fall asleep, the snake comes through a crack in the rough slab wall. Thoroughly alarmed and in peril, the dog Alligator and the woman's sturdy little son help her to kill it. At the very end of the story, Lawson allows the woman only a brief moment of emotion when, exhausted, she sits down to rest, with the boy on her lap. Elsewhere in the story the emphasis falls squarely on her stoicism: the sympathy with the mother is deep, but implicit rather than overt.

The story was first published in the *Bulletin* on 23 July 1892; its subject matter comes from Lawson's growing up on a farm in a

goldmining area near Gulgong before his parents split up and he came with his mother to live in Sydney. Following a stint of several months that he began in September 1892 in the outback around Bourke in north-western New South Wales, Lawson began to experiment with character-narrators intimate with the down-at-heel life of the shearing sheds at outback stations (ranches) and often forced to trudge from one station to the next in search of work. His character-narrators are all men, and so are most of his characters. Although both Lawson and Lawrence had a working-class upbringing and an energetic mother, Lawson was less self-consciously constrained when portraying ordinary men than Lawrence, at least after the *Sons and Lovers* period. Week by week in his stories and sketches in 1893, Lawson experimented with ways of eliminating the distance between writer and subject matter. Although he was half-deaf he had, paradoxically, an extremely sensitive ear for the typifying language in which the rural poor, especially the men, wrapped up their impoverished world and rendered it to one another. Lawson registered this tonally in the idiom, slang and dialectal spellings that characterize the narrator and the people of whom he wrote.

Lawson frequently drew attention to the habitual words and phrases of a character, often unconventionally spelled, by setting them off within inverted commas. This technique, mainly edited out for book publication, potentially made for comedy but continually struck serious notes too. The seemingly ingenuous but in fact controlled blend of the two tones is his signature achievement. This rendering of a working class life felt direct, intimate and nearly unmediated. It begs the question, to which I shall return, of whether, in any sense, Lawson prepared the way for Lawrence's colliery-town short stories of 1909 to 1912.

Lawson's writing for the newspapers rather than for posterity, and writing many more short pieces than Lawrence, must have encouraged his sense of intimacy with his readership, almost as if he were on the stage in front of a live audience. Most of his stories and sketches were appearing in the *Bulletin* and the *Worker* in Sydney. The contents of both of them were partly contributed by their readers. The readers of the *Worker* were its owners, the members of the Australasian Workers' Union; and the editor of the literary Red Page in the *Bulletin*, A. G. Stephens, kept up a running conversation with his readers by answering would-be contributors on the Red Page itself.

One effect of Lawson's strategy, with which he experimented throughout 1893, was to put the middle-class reader in conditions of unaccustomed proximity to the rough characters being portrayed. Only

occasionally did he adopt the convention of an easy ironic distance from his subject matter, a technique that would put him, and thereby the reader, in a secure position above the fray. Furthermore, his avoidance of a more stylized and sentimental form of prose-writing was an offence to some reviewers, even as they registered what a radically new talent he was.

Like Lawrence after him, Lawson was also faced with the problem of how to portray the autobiographical city-sophisticate returning to his old haunts in the country and encountering acquaintances, from whose simplicity and ignorance he can now only register his distance. It was not a sub-genre in which Lawrence excelled, and the fact that both writers essayed it suggests a common source. But I do not know what it may be unless it is, distantly, the age-old city-mouse-country-mouse theme available to all writers. In Lawrence's "The Shades of Spring", a Lawrence character called Syson returns from the city to Willey Water and meets his old sweetheart Hilda Millership and a country lad called Arthur Pilbeam, who is now courting her. The enriched third version of this story appeared in the *Prussian Officer* collection in 1914; but it was written in late 1911 first as "The Harrassed Angel" and published in a revised form as "The Soiled Rose" in 1913 (in *VicG*).

Lawson's version of the same basic theme, "An Unfinished Love Story", written probably in 1894, was a new departure for him, involving a young man with the surname Brook (Lawson had an aunt Emma Brooks), who had "spent those fifteen years in cities" and who visits the old family farm. Curious about what he has left behind, Brook tries out his citified powers on the daughter of the tenant farmer, a simple country girl, heartlessly attaching her affections to him:

Now and then he would turn his face, rest his head against the side of the cow, and watch Lizzie at her work; and each time she would, as though in obedience to an influence she could not resist, turn her face to him—having noted the pause in his milking. There was a wonder in her expression—as if something had come into her life which she could not realize—curiosity in his.

When the spare pail was full, he would follow her with it to the little bark dairy; and she held out the cloth which served as a strainer whilst he poured the milk in, and, as the last drops went through, their mouths would come together. (Lawson 1896a)

Had Lawson read the wonderful cow-milking scenes in *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* in 1891 when the novel was being serialized in the *Sydney Mail*? The biographical record does not tell us; but whatever the case

may be, Lawson's Brook is not as radically self-divided as Hardy's Angel Clare, nor as entangled in his own self-consciousness as Lawrence's Syson.

Nevertheless, and using far fewer column inches than either Hardy or Lawrence, Lawson gets to the moral heart of the matter, without moralizing. When the relationship looks like it is becoming serious Brook leaves, breaking the girl's heart:

He looked back as the coach started and saw her sitting inside the big kitchen window. She waved her hand—hopelessly it seemed. She had rolled up her sleeve, and, to Brook, the arm seemed strangely white and fair above the line of sunburn round the wrist. He hadn't noticed it before. Her face seemed fairer too, but, perhaps, it was only the effect of light and shade round that window.

He looked back again, as the coach turned the corner of the fence, and was just in time to see her bury her face in her hands with a passionate gesture which did not seem natural to her.

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Brook reached the city next evening, and, "after hours," he staggered in through a side entrance to the lighted parlor of a private bar. (Lawson 1896a)

In this passage, Lawson has displaced the centre of real interest, the girl's desolation, by placing her behind the kitchen window, making us see her through Brook's disconcerted vision. The ending takes this distancing one step further, concluding with deliberate bathos: "They say that Lizzie broke her heart that year, but, then, the world does not believe in such things nowadays."⁴

Joseph Conrad saw the technical achievement straight away when he first encountered some of Lawson's later stories in 1901: "Lawson's sketches are beyond praise – the more so that in such a subject it takes a first rate man not to break through the thin ice of

⁴ Lawson 1896a: first published in 1896 but written in 1894 while Lawson was in New Zealand (see Lawson 1970, 422); the source is a clipping from the *Worker* without pagination in the Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales A1867–A1868 (marked-up printer's copy for Lawson's prose collection *While the Billy Boils*, published in 1896). Cf. Lawson's aunt Gertrude O'Connor's note: "Written after a visit back onto the farm at Eurunderree The Girl was a niece of the Tenants, she married went out onto a selection and died early leaving the small children": Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales MS 314/247, Angus & Robertson card catalogue of the firm's Lawson copyrights: Card 165: "An Unfinished Love Story".

sentimentalism”.⁵ The Lawson stories that Conrad encountered had begun to appear in *Blackwood's Magazine* after Lawson came to London in 1899 to try to make good in its broader marketplace. As we have seen, James B. Pinker got to work for Lawson. Two collections appeared from Blackwoods and another from Methuen; and the publisher's reader Edward Garnett energetically took up the public case for Lawson, just as he would later do for Lawrence when he needed public support in 1916. And in the 1920s, when he was working for Jonathan Cape, Garnett would ensure that both Lawrence's *Twilight in Italy* and Lawson's best-known collection *While the Billy Boils* (1896) appeared in Cape's Traveller's Library.⁶

Garnett's collection of his own reviews and essays from previous years also appeared in the Traveller's Library series as *Friday Nights* (1929). Of *Sons and Lovers* he had to say: “This novel is really the only one of any breadth of vision in contemporary English fiction that lifts working-class life out of middle-class hands, and restores it to its native atmosphere of hard veracity . . . The whole treatment is unerringly true and spiritually profound, marred a little by a feeling of photographic accuracy in the narrative and by a lack of restraint in some of the later love scenes” (124–5).

This essay dates from 1916; Garnett's essay on Lawson dates from 1902, the year in which Lawson returned to Australia. Garnett had originally written to Lawson after reading *While the Billy Boils* in 1897 while a reader for Fisher Unwin. Lawson visited Garnett at his house on the Kent–Sussex border, the Cearne, at least once; in January and February 1902 they were in constant contact; and Garnett's essay on Lawson appeared in *Academy and Literature* on 8 March 1902.⁷ Both Garnett and his neighbour E. V. Lucas, a publisher's reader for Methuen who wrote another appreciative article on Lawson, probably advised him on how to get on in the London literary scene. But in his case,

⁵ Letter to William Blackwood, 3 June 1901 (Conrad 329). Conrad's reference, in the plural, seems to comprehend the following Lawson stories: “Brighten's Sister-in-law” (*Blackwood's*, November 1900; the last instalment of *Lord Jim* appeared in the same issue), “A Double Buggy at Lahey's Creek” (February 1901), as well as “Past Carin” in the issue he had just read (May 1901).

⁶ In 1933 Garnett went a step further when he included five stories from *While the Billy Boils* in a selection of stories published by Cape since 1921: *Capajon: Fifty-four Short Stories Published 1921–1933* (1933). There is nothing by Lawrence in it: Cape had not been his short-story publisher. The Lawson collections are, respectively: *The Country I Come From* (Edinburgh: Blackwood, 1901); *Joe Wilson and his Mates* (Edinburgh: Blackwood, 1901); and *Children of the Bush* (1902).

⁷ See further, Barnes, Hickey.

unlike Lawrence's, there was no Hueffer to introduce him into a circle of literary sophisticates. Unlike Lawrence, Lawson was not a well-read man; his schooling had been brief and barbarous; there was no Jessie Chambers in the background with whom to discuss his reading, such as it was; and no *English Review* to look up to as creating a community of readers devoted to new literary standards. And, with a colonial accent, Lawson would not have passed muster anyway – a consideration that adds lustre to Garnett's brave unprejudiced vision.

Garnett's commendation of Lawson in some way prefigures his account of Lawrence:

Lawson's special value to us is that he stands as the representative writer of a definitive environment, as the portrayer of life on the Australian soil, and that he brings before our eyes more fully and vividly than any other man the way the Australian people's life is going, its characteristic spirit, code, and outlook . . .

Nothing is more difficult to find in this generation than an English writer who identifies himself successfully with the life of the working democracy, a writer who does not stand aloof from and patronise the bulk of the people who labour with their hands. This no doubt is because nearly all our writers have a middle-class bias and training, and so either write down to or write up to their subject when it leads them outside their own class, and accordingly their valuations thereof are in general falsified. (250)

With Lawrence, some years later, Garnett believed he had found a home-grown counterpart.

Another of Garnett's comments about Lawson's milieu might explain why Lawrence looked out for the *Bulletin* magazine when he arrived in Australia:

It is therefore an immense relief to the unsophisticated critic, after looking east and west and north and south for writers untainted by the ambition to be mentally genteel, to come across the small group of able democratic writers on the *Sydney Bulletin*, of whom Mr. Lawson is the chief. (251)

Had Garnett told Lawrence of the *Bulletin* in those couple of years before the War when Garnett, as reader for Duckworth, was acting as Lawrence's mentor and unpaid agent? And had they discussed Lawson's collection of short stories and sketches, *Children of the Bush*, which Lucas had secured for Methuen and published in 1902? When Lawson departed for Australia in July 1902 he checked the proofs of

this volume en route, returning them from Naples and Port Said. He asked Garnett to make the decisions about any final queries there might be. In a letter to Garnett of 16 March 1911, in the very month when Lawrence was writing his colliery-town short stories and an early version of “The Shades of Spring”, Lawrence promised he “would send you back the Bush Stories”.⁸ Relying on some personal information from the novelist David Garnett, Edward’s son, James T. Boulton, the editor of the Lawrence letters, identified the volume in question as probably Lawson’s *Children of the Bush*.

David Garnett was only a boy when Lawson visited the Cearne in 1902. In 1976 he recalled: “I was rather scared of him: a very tall man with large ears but almost totally deaf, who drank a good deal of whisky.”⁹ And he described himself in his memoir of various writers who had visited his father as “an only child” who “had got into the habit of listening to the conversation of grown-ups” (D. Garnett 8). However, there is a fair chance that David Garnett misremembered, and that the volume of stories that Lawrence read may have been Barbara Baynton’s *Bush Studies*, another Australian collection published by Duckworth, also in 1902, the publication of which Edward Garnett had fostered. Thus the direct connection of Lawrence to Lawson, and the question of potential influence of one upon the other, remains unproven; but this connection is at least a little more likely than the others mentioned initially. Whatever the case may be, the shared Garnett connection allows us to affirm that, if we want to explain why Lawrence’s realist writing affected Garnett so profoundly, then we need to bring Lawson into the explanation. Both of them, in Garnett’s typical phrase, had “veracity”; both were in direct touch with working-class subject matter. Class did not get in the way. Whether Lawson ever read anything of Lawrence’s we do not know. But Lawson had, for Garnett at least, prepared the way for Lawrence.

Lawrence criticism and book history

Implicit in the account so far of the Lawson–Lawrence parallels and conjunctions have been two contentions that now need to be brought to the surface of the discussion. They are in the service of an overarching claim that single-author literary criticism may now, after

⁸ (1L, 376 and n. 1). The stories Lawrence was writing were: “The Miner at Home”, “A Sick Collier”, “Her Turn”, “Strike Pay” and “The Soiled Rose”: first collected in *The Prussian Officer and Other Stories* (1914) or *Love Among the Haystacks and Other Pieces* (1930).

⁹ Personal correspondence quoted in Barnes 40.

the wave of high literary theory has demonstrably receded, be in a position to reassert something of its former importance – but only if, I will argue, a methodological re-equipping takes place. With Lawrence, we are very fortunate in that the basic tools for such an ambitious endeavor have been painstakingly created over the last thirty years or so: reliable editions of the letters and works, extensive biographies, and accurate bibliographies and chronologies. How to model the literary-critical practice is the question. My two contentions are conceived as the beginnings of such a modelling.

The first is situated on the *text-production* side, and I shall take Lawson as my example: If we are understand his innovative development of narrators capable of rendering a bush realism, then we need to appreciate the original publishing circumstances in the context of which he wrote, and the precise chronology of his individual writings in newspapers, rather than relying on his edited collections in volume form that massaged the texts and blended the contents. I will presently argue much the same about Lawrence. On the *text-reception* side (the second contention), we need to understand the sense in which writing was, for both Lawson and Lawrence, a transaction with actual readers (not just with the postulated ideal reader of New Criticism and reader-reception theory) and with real feedback effects on their writing. In order to test these contentions we must, I believe, admit the materialities of book history into the very centre of the literary-critical debate.

John Worthen made an important contribution towards the understanding of Lawrence as a professional writer in 1989 in *D. H. Lawrence: A Literary Life*. He had scoured through the published *Letters* volumes, the letters yet to be published, and microfilms of unpublished Curtis Brown business materials, to put together all the known evidence about Lawrence's earnings, and his dealings with his publishers and agents. Worthen's resolute focus on the commercial dimension of a literary career marked a radical shift. Biographies of literary writers in the postwar period until the end of the 1960s had often, even mainly, been written by non-literary critics. It used to be felt that there was something slightly suspect about a literary critic – whose proper concern was the evaluation and elucidation of *works* – writing trade biographies. Partly as a result, biographies of novelists often fell into the routine pattern of a narrative of the writer's successive phases of life in chronological order, broken by a summary of the contents of each novel, together with some characterizing remarks and a brutally short evaluation. Una Pope Hennessy's 1945 biography *Charles Dickens 1812–1870*, which was being reprinted as

late as 1970, is a sufficiently dreary example of how the biographical and the aesthetic did not mix. Times gradually changed; critics became willing to chance their arm; literary biography became more flexible; and, for Lawrence, John Worthen went one step further in 1989 by giving the normal literary-biographical aim a decisive twist.

But what Worthen did not do in his book was explain how the new information about Lawrence's dealings with the literary marketplace ought to affect the ways in which literary criticism of him might now proceed. The Cambridge Lawrence biography project, which was already well under way by 1989 and which led to three massive volumes published from 1991 to 1998, could not, of its very nature, do it either (*EY*, *TE* and *DG*). But the volumes did expand the ambit of the biographical approach to Lawrence in remarkable ways. They absorbed the energy of discovery and the spread of insights into Lawrence's activities as a professional writer that had been emerging from the textual research behind the editions, and melded them with accounts of the genesis of all of Lawrence's works. But the underlying conceptual category of the work was not overturned or even re-envisioned by the biographical activity.¹⁰ The result for Lawrence criticism has been that money and art have remained like two passing ships in the night.

Since 1989, the field that has subsequently become known as book history has, by virtue of its materialist approaches, only reiterated the problem. If the net result of book history in the literary sphere is to describe the economic background to literature's aesthetic foreground, then literary critics will not feel it incumbent on them to engage with it. And yet, if we are to be realistic about the complexity and charge of the Lawrence phenomenon, the two perspectives need to be brought together. How best to do it remains, for me, very much an open question. It is one that I have most recently been addressing with Lawson, whose dependence on the weekly newspaper trade was fundamental.¹¹

He had the advantage of the *Sydney Bulletin*, and its vitality inspired him as a young writer in the late 1880s. It also paid about twice what the *Worker* paid, although Lawson's unionist and politically radical affiliations in his early years meant that he gave the *Worker* a lot of his output. Instead of novels or plays, which he later essayed without

¹⁰ For an extended commentary on the biographies, see Eggert 2001.

¹¹ In a monograph in preparation, *Brought to Book: Henry Lawson's While the Billy Boils*.

success, he specialized in verse – readily saleable ballads rather than lyrical poetry – and in fictional sketches and short stories. He had to write and sell his prose pieces individually, and even if he wrote some with the same characters he could never be sure where they would appear, when, or in what sequence. Each one had to be able to stand by itself. One result was that his characterizations do not deepen. Only when book collections were assembled was there the opportunity to revise and sequence the contents. But then, of course, Lawson was at the mercy of his publisher who was paying the printer.

Lawrence, on the other hand, began writing within the context of the London book trade, not a colonial one; and this would be a considerable advantage provided he could determine where and at what level in the cultural ecosystem his talents could thrive and be recognized. But to do that he had to address and engage an audience. The effects on his texts of this would-be sensitivity to audience are demonstrable. Following the long-delayed first publication in 1984 of *Mr Noon* in both its Parts all readers must, I think, have wondered at the satirical breeziness and the, at times, almost cynical combativeness of the writing, especially in Part I, which is set in the narrow Eastwood environment in which Lawrence had grown up. It soon became clear that these at-first disconcerting tonal shifts were the immediate upshot of his having to rewrite some passages of *The Lost Girl* for Secker in late 1920, even after it had been printed, because of the threatened refusal of the circulating libraries to take the title otherwise. And then, in early 1921, Lawrence had to tone down *Women in Love* for Secker, who nevertheless lost £50 settling, out of court, a threatened libel suit. Again, comparison of the early forms of Lawrence's classic American literature essays with their collected forms in 1923 shows that his readjustment of audience relations was by now deeply ingrained.¹²

But the signs of a sensitivity, indeed an over-sensitivity, to what his readers might *think* were there, even pre-War. At the very first Lawrence was writing poems and stories but refusing to submit them anywhere until Jessie Chambers did it for him. He withdrew "The Saga of Siegmund", which would become *The Trespasser*, from Heinemann in 1910 for fear of its being compared to H. G. Wells's *Ann Veronica* with its sexually advanced New Woman heroine.¹³ After meeting Ford Madox Hueffer in 1909, he felt the need to shine in the literary circle in

¹² I draw factually on Worthen (1989) until the end of this section.

¹³ Cf. the extracted reviews in 1L, 339 n. 4.

which he soon found himself moving. This probably helps explain the literariness, the overworked stylizings, in both *The White Peacock* and *The Trespasser*. Then, under the opposite preference of Hueffer and subsequently of Edward Garnett for a sparer and more precisely located provincial realism, we see the result in the mining-town short stories of 1909–12, and finally “Paul Morel” as it developed into *Sons and Lovers*. After Heinemann refused “Paul Morel”, which Lawrence had substituted in their arrangements for *The Trespasser*, Lawrence allowed Garnett to cut it down and partially reshape it. This was the granting of a readership of *one* – attempting to anticipate a readership of the *many* – the most invasive and far-reaching power over the text of his novel. In the face of such evidence, it is impossible any longer to see Lawrence’s published writings as purely an unmediated expression of genius. Yet this was routinely the case until about twenty-or-so years ago.

When Lawrence extracted himself from Garnett’s influence in the first half of 1914, he was now assuming that, after the success of *Sons and Lovers*, he could afford to go his own way with “The Sisters”, from which would emerge his masterworks *The Rainbow* and *Women in Love*. But he disastrously miscalculated his audience’s expectations and toleration. By contracting with the more commercial firm of Methuen for *The Rainbow*, rather than with the more “literary” publisher Duckworth (for whom Garnett worked), Lawrence would be paid much more and potentially reach a wider audience; but this broader exposure brought with it a more intent scrutiny that soon led to the novel’s banning. For the remainder of the War and for a year or two afterwards, Lawrence was commercially marooned. His only solidly consistent magazine publisher was the one with which he had started, the *English Review*. He was forced upmarket into its pages for only very modest payments. As for getting *books* published during the War, the banning of the Methuen *Rainbow* pushed Lawrence into other genres: into non-fiction and travel, including completing *Twilight in Italy*, and into poetry, returning to Duckworth for *Amores* in 1916 and to Chatto & Windus (after Duckworth refused) for *Look! We Have Come Through!* in 1917. The reason that Lawrence turned to write those ambitious early versions of *Studies in Classic American Literature* in 1918–19 was that his fiction had almost no market, poetry brought in precious little money, and he was not travelling – so travel essays were out of the question.

In letters to his agents and publishers over the years describing his own writings as they emerged, Lawrence frequently showed himself unable to appreciate the difference between the popular and the

serious. Only in the newspaper articles late in his life, collected as *Assorted Articles*, was he consistently able to strike a popular level. Before that, throughout most of the 1920s, Lawrence was always at odds with his readers. This apartness had been submerged in his early days in the ways that I have described; the apartness found a new polarizing dynamic after he threw over Garnett's mentorship in 1914; but it took more tangible forms in the 1920s after publisher and audience reception began to feed back into his writing. So it is *there*, in the necessity of paying close attention to the shaping of a professional literary career, that we see the more fundamental parallel between Lawson and Lawrence. The parallel is one of methodology, and perhaps more oriented towards the future than the past. It is about how we may understand the activity of single-author criticism, and how we may think of literary works (not as just "texts", as we learned to call them in the 1980s). The parallel draws attention to how works that have achieved a classic status *worked*, and how they may go on working.

The posthumous receptions

This necessarily raises the question of reception and thus my second contention. To pursue this final parallel of Lawrence's and Lawson's posthumous receptions we need first to return to 1922 and then work our way chronologically forwards.

By 1922 Lawrence's literary fortunes were recovering decisively from their wartime nadir and he was on the verge of attaining to a good and solid income, mainly from American sales and because of the enthusiasm of his New York publisher Thomas Seltzer. Lawrence was reaching new audiences. Lawson on the other hand had reached a sorry state. After returning from Britain in 1902 his marriage was at an end; his always dangerously near-alcoholic habits worsened; his contact with the bush, which had been the principal source of his inspiration in the 1890s, attenuated; and, although he continued to exploit bush subject matter and to have collections published, his writing deteriorated and none of the books did well. Although supported by his stalwart Sydney publisher George Robertson, he was in and out of prison for non-payment of alimony and there were bouts of hospitalization caused by alcoholic poisoning, worsened by recurrent bouts of depression. His condition was not as dangerous as Lawrence's later consumption perhaps, but it shortened Lawson's life. He died at 55. If Lawrence did happen to see him on the street in 1922 he may well have taken him for a cadging drunk.

Their paths diverged. Yet, well after their deaths, with their literary reputations in the hands of others and no longer dependent on their

own strivings, they would, in some ways, resume their parallel journeys, now buffeted in common by the changing critical winds of the second half of the twentieth century and the underlying cultural shifts. It is the business of publishers to sense such shifts and to make their investment decisions accordingly. Some works attain their status as classics as a result. Classics can thus be defined empirically as those that continue to key into ongoing or new cultural agendas. So it is that Lawson and Lawrence would have their widest reception in the post-World War II period and that their works would be subject to similar forces of reception.

The man who had originally endeavoured to promote both their reputations, James B. Pinker, died in that same, unexpectedly significant year 1922, worth £40,000. In 1930 when he died, Lawrence would leave not quite £2,500, much of it accumulated in the last few years of his life through the success of *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, the only novel in which he could truly afford to dictate the terms of engagement with his readers without reference to the anxieties of prudent or timid publishers. Lawson left nothing, with his fame, from a publishing point of view, having eclipsed well before his death. Yet, both Lawrence and Lawson would become classics, subject to frequent reprinting and repackaging: Lawson mainly in Australia; Lawrence worldwide, and not only in Anglophone countries. In the post-World War II period a great deal of money would be made for Lawrence's Estate and a modest amount for Lawson's – an amount that, in his case, would have been substantial had he not got into the habit, from the 1890s, of selling his copyrights to his publishers when living hand-to-mouth and also borrowing against those sales of rights beforehand.

After Lawson's death in 1922 Angus & Robertson saw a new opportunity. New formats and then new typesettings of *While the Billy Boils* and his other collections began appearing from 1923, with some imposing hardback omnibus compilations of the collections from 1935. By the time university-based literary critics in Australia began to write about Australian literature in the 1950s and 1960s it was in the period of New Criticism. They were unconcerned about the book-historical embeddedness of each of his stories. They treated them as a group of individually isolated aesthetic objects, each in need of analysis and evaluation. The critics found that Lawson was talking directly to their own present: to the existentialist concerns and the answering moral humanism of the 1950s and 1960s. This response was mixed in with the particularly Australian concern about a national identity deriving

from the 1890s bush tradition, which was being more consciously revived as a tradition in the lee of World War II.¹⁴

I leave that aside to dwell on the common need that Lawrence and Lawson both fed: that appetite in the postwar period for new sources of value. The literary critics, some of them at least, felt the weight of civilization on their shoulders. In an introduction to a collection aimed at school students in 1967 Stephen Murray-Smith praised

[the] compassion and universality of vision that you find in those rare people who have been touched, one might say, by the finger of God. In nearly two hundred years we have been lucky to find one such man among the twenty million or so who live or have lived on our shores. We shall be lucky to find another, but at least we have Lawson. And if Australians were divested of all other sources of spiritual judgment and values, we could do far worse than draw on him. (xii)

In 1972, in a more measured study of Lawson aimed at a scholarly audience, Brian Matthews commented of Lawson's Joe Wilson stories (1900–01): "Lawson's art has assumed a breadth and power in relation to which the bush milieu of his stories no longer stands as a limiting factor." Matthews praises "Lawson's delicate understanding of man's desperate need to know himself involved in humanity (perhaps this is the real Lawson mateship) and his fear and horror when, for whatever reason, he begins to lose himself and his human landmarks in the labyrinths of alienation and endless physical stress" (24, 27).

The widely felt existentialist dilemma of the postwar period, witnessed in these quotations, helps explain the attraction and currency of the idea that it was of the very nature of literary works to transcend their period. The consequent sense of mission for literary critics – their identification and elucidation of the transcendent meaning to be found in literary works – helps explain local inflections of Leavisite criticism in Australia, though the tag itself merely denoted (as one can see in retrospect) the more strenuous expressions of a view of the role of criticism that was far more widely felt. As Australian critic Brian Kiernan put it in 1971, aesthetic "works of the imagination", each considered as "an autonomous, imaginative creation", needed to be treated "in its own metaphorical and dramatic terms" and "not as a document in literary or social history" (159, viii). In the Australian

¹⁴ In this paragraph and the next two I am adapting material from a forthcoming, broader argument about literary study ("Brought to Book: Bibliography, Book History and the Study of Literature").

literary field that meant that the attempt of the so-called Radical Nationalists to draw a tradition of Australian writing from the 1890s was doomed since it intermixed the truly literary with irrelevant subject matter: what Kiernan calls mere “social documentation” (159). If there was a tradition that could be identified from a study of Australian *literary* works then that was the critic’s higher role.

The postwar situation with Lawrence’s reputation and the uses to which his writings could be put was not so different. In Britain, F. R. Leavis announced his loathing of any admixture of sociology and literature, a boundary-squeezing move that would put extra pressure on what remained inside (1945). His famous *Great Tradition* appeared in 1948; and, after a two-year break, his essays on Lawrence, which would be collected in 1955 as *D. H. Lawrence, Novelist*, began to appear, year-by-year, in *Scrutiny*. Leavis’s special targets were the critics of the 1930s, such as John Middleton Murry and T. S. Eliot, whom Leavis passionately believed had got Lawrence wrong. For him, what they did was tantamount to an act of treachery.

Yet their animadversion to Lawrence is readily explicable. Lawrence’s abandonment, after *Sons and Lovers*, of the realist author’s stance of impartiality and the reliance on fully located and dramatized definitions of character had morphed, during his experimentation that led to *The Rainbow* in 1915, into a disturbingly intimate, almost claustrophobic proximity to his characters’ subconscious lives. From then on, in *Twilight in Italy* and *Women in Love*, in his growing commitment to polarizing explorations of emotion that simultaneously expressed social directions and commitments, Lawrence typically denied critics the intellectual space to put his writing into perspective. The critics of the 1930s has sensed this straight away and complained of the “close, inner necessity” of his portrayals (Thomas 14). But the experience of another world war with its racist atrocities, and then the anxieties of an era of the atomic bomb, led in some quarters to a growing sense that the moral stables of Western societies had to be cleansed before any civilization worth the name could be renewed. This situation created an appetite in critics in the 1950s and afterwards to cast Lawrence in the role of prophet and saviour. The inevitable result was that the Lawrence we inherited, and who divided critical opinion in the 1970s and after, was a Lawrence of the 1950s – not the man of his own time. It is the fate of literary classics to live in their reception, but the consequent distortion can be especially acute if the need is great and when the literary-critical debate is deprived of historical, book-historical and bibliographical nourishment.

F. R. Leavis became the most influential expositor of the Lawrentian message after his book of 1955, largely because he was ready to take the force of Lawrence's ideas in a prose rhetoric that many readers, right down to my student generation in the 1970s, found mesmerizing. Leavis was able to extract from those ideas and themes a normative and centralizing ethical understanding, a pseudo-religion of Life. At much the same time a far younger Mark Spilka was trying much the same thing, finding in Lawrence's writings a religious love ethic. It must have felt liberating because deeply engaged with the crisis of contemporary living; and the activity lent a cultural centrality to literary criticism. No wonder that English departments flourished.

Because Leavis had expunged sociology from the literary-critical field he was able to address the crisis with a deliberate abstraction, one that ballooned rhetorically to fill the available space. In this bold way, the extremes of experience actually conveyed in Lawrence's writings – and his personal engagement on the page with those extremes that simultaneously co-opt the reader in their realization – were curiously tamed. The other side of the coin was that, far from elucidating Lawrence's ideas in the sense of translating them into something outside Lawrence's diction and metaphors, Leavis created a tighter hermeneutic circle with even less air to breathe. In his 1976 book on Lawrence, *Thoughts, Words and Creativity*, this underlying problem in the earlier book became obvious:

Lawrence somewhere compares the individual life to a mountain tarn that is fed from below, no inlet being perceptible. The promptings of true spontaneity – those, for instance, in which the creativity of an artist are manifested – come from the hidden source . . . Lawrence in his discursive treatises [sic], *Psychoanalysis and the Unconscious*, makes plain why he treats the hidden source as the access to the real and profound authority that may properly be called religious, and why, in his diagnosis of a sick world, he makes indifference to the source the lethal malady – a blankness inherent in technologico-Benthamism – that will destroy our civilization. (68–9)

This step makes it easier for Leavis to diagnose Gudrun's problem in *Women in Love*: she intensely desires Gerald's freedom when she sees him swimming in the lake because it manifests, in Leavis's words, his "power . . . to indulge the will that belongs to the ego". As artist, she ought to desire access to the "deep-lying source" of Life that would grant her the only freedom that matters, "a profoundly unified totality of life" (72–3).

The problem with such exegesis is that everything must be referred back to the same bedrock, to the same repertoire of metaphors of capital *L* Life. This way of proceeding ignored or side-lined so much in Lawrence: the experimentalism, the contradictoriness, the determined emotional extremism, the wilful devil's advocacy, the fearless living-out on the page of sometimes repulsive states of mind and body. Lawrence's exploratory urge meant that he was as much an amoral artist as Leavis's profoundly moral one. Yet such an awareness did not fit the tenor of the times in the 1950s and could scarcely have been articulated, even though it had been in the 1930s, if usually in a reductive way.¹⁵

Critics in the 1960s and 1970s, at least those following in Leavis's footsteps, were doomed to repeat him. Many of their utterances could appeal only to other readers laboring in the same hermeneutic enclosure. So J. C. F. Littlewood in 1976, writing of Mrs Bates in

¹⁵ T. S. Eliot's review in the *Criterion* of John Middleton Murry's *Son of Woman* (1931), to which, in 1955, Leavis so objected (Leavis 1973, 10–12), came hard on the heels of John Heywood Thomas's essay, "The Perversity of D. H. Lawrence", in the same journal. In the USA, Frederick York Tindall's *D. H. Lawrence and Susan his Cow* (1939) picked up some of the same general thrust, as did – after the War, apparently independently, and swimming hard against the critical tide – Kingsley Widmer in *The Art of Perversity: D. H. Lawrence's Shorter Fictions* (1962). Colin Clarke's *River of Dissolution: D. H. Lawrence and English Romanticism* (1969) registered the importance of the negative pole in Lawrence's polarizations, even if he failed to account for the force field in which they were deployed. Of them all, Thomas was, perhaps, the most succinct:

[Lawrence] shuts his eyes to those characteristics which give an event colour and life and make it stand out, an individual and unique phenomenon; he deprives things and persons of their identity and submerges them in the flux of an abstract principle. (10)

This prejudice of Lawrence's . . . deprives persons and things of their opaqueness; there remains nothing beyond them. And that is so stifling. . . . Uninterpreted, facts seem to enjoy a certain freedom and independence; they give one a feeling of spaciousness. Lawrence robs them of this independence by showing them up as the products of a close, inner necessity. (14)

The debate between J. C. F. Littlewood and Christina van Heyningen, over several issues of the South African journal *Theoria* during 1955–56 (reprinted in Phelps and Bell), traverses much the same ground. Van Heyningen complains of Lawrence's "tendency to take sides for or against his characters, to obtrude his personal feelings in a way that destroys the reader's poetic faith" and, of one hyperbolic expression of Will Brangwen's emotional need of Anna: "The sensuous imagination rebels against such language. It is too literal." (Phelps and Bell 26, 28). Littlewood defends the "exploratory use of language" (36); he brooks no criticism of Lawrence.

“Odour of Chrysanthemums” as she gazes at her husband’s corpse, comments: she “is in a sense no longer there personally but only as a well-head for the truth, which flows through her as if independently” (18). And Keith Cushman in 1978 commented of “Daughters of the Vicar” that “Only gradually did the Alfred–Louisa marriage come to embody the human salvation available through the dark mystery of the body” (99). In cases like these, and there are very many examples to be found, it is clear that Lawrence’s projective fundamentalism has tended to winnow out the usual scepticism from the sympathetic critic’s mind.

It is strange but true that Lawson and Lawrence were both filtered through closely related strands of the same postwar taste. They answered a need, and their works were renewed by it. Whatever we may think of him now, Leavis left an influential legacy in enunciating that need for his period. Breaking the mould proved no easy matter, but that is what I think Mark Kinkead-Weekes was doing, in his long and remarkable essay of 1968, “The Marble and the Statue”. In it, he traced the filiations between Lawrence’s writings in the 1912–16 period, including his discursive writings.¹⁶ Although the latter fell outside the usual boundary line that marked off the accepted literary genres, they were in effect redeemed by his critical project. Nor even did Lawrence’s correspondence seem merely “background” material any more. Kinkead-Weekes was on his way to delineating the processes of thought and discovery that led Lawrence to the point where he could write the final version of *The Rainbow*. These discoveries would in due course feed into his Cambridge edition of the novel in 1989; and he would make a loving and somewhat protective biographer of Lawrence.

Because of that 1968 essay, cited as it soon was by others, it began to seem feasible to trace Lawrence’s thought as a many-faceted but interlinked project – not just for critics, engaged in elucidation, but for editors too. The Cambridge editions were conceptualized in the 1970s and the project had built up a head of steam by the early 1980s. The editions would have to strip away the repeated bowdlerization of Lawrence’s texts by nervous publishers; and the editions would retrieve the texture – the often non-standard punctuation of Lawrence’s prose that scored his imagined rhythms as he wrote – rather than accepting the texture imposed by his typesetters. In these ways the editions would approximate reading texts of final authorial

¹⁶ H. M. Daleski has already made some headway, especially with the “Study of Thomas Hardy” in 1965, in elucidating what Lawrence later called his “metaphysic”.

intention – for there was still a deep commitment to what everyone called, in an unproblematic way, Lawrence’s “art”.

Might those editions, some people began to wonder, be able to do more than what was traditionally expected?¹⁷ The editorial need to undertake the Complete Works put pressure on the question of what works were, and assumed that we could say with confidence which of his writings ought to be chosen. Was “Quetzalcoatl” a work, for instance? If so, what of the version of *The Boy in the Bush* that Lawrence completed in Mexico in 1923 before returning to England, where he added a new last chapter with a daring narrative development and with a great many revisions to prepare for it? Did we have one work here, or two? With Lawrence’s collected pieces, was it the first book publication that should be respected as the point of orientation (the decision was “yes”), even though the editions’ reading texts would inevitably misrepresent the chronology of writing and periodical publication that had preceded the collection and might not fully record, in their apparatus, the earlier versions?

Even more radical than this organizational question was another that flowed from it: Were the original publication units that contained only a *single* work, such as a novel, an adequate guide to the best editorial presentation of it? What gave the original publication dates such authority anyway? They had, inevitably, put a certain pressure on Lawrence to finalize the wording; but, as Kinkead-Weekes and others had been demonstrating, Lawrence’s thinking about and imagining of a given theme did not simply stop on the day of publication. Did Lawrence truly finish works or did he only abandon them? He had, for his bread and butter, to respond to the commercial logic of production deadlines (the central book-historical fact); but should our interpretative work be dictated by them? The “art” category was becoming more and more distended.

A number of books in the 1960s had seen that the main strands of thinking in Lawrence’s novels were linked thematically and in some respects evolved from one to the next. But there were also apparently inexplicable jumps, as well as new stylistic experiments. In the 1950s and 1960s the evaluative judgements of these works were typically made on the basis of inadequate chronologies or in open defiance of them as biographical irrelevances. But if the chronologies of composition of the underlying versions could be worked out at a fine-

¹⁷ See further, Eggert (2009).

grained level, then new modes of interpretation – an authorial intertextuality – might open up.

Single-author scholarship, such as I have been describing, was working its way through the biographical and textual archive, creating impressive resources, for some favoured authors at least, as it went. By doing so, it was gradually, even if unintentionally, breaking down the assumptions on which New Criticism had been based. The biographical element was now indispensable (so *there* was one of the so-called fallacies that the New Criticism aimed to displace thrown out the window). Intention had of necessity to be postulated if one were editing, and how anyway could one avoid it if one were, as an interpreter, tracing an intellectual project manifesting itself in contemporaneous early versions of various works, in the author's correspondence and reading? (So the Intentional Fallacy was now gone too.) Moreover, the work had come to be seen as anything but a self-contained Verbal Icon (so there was the *image* of the work gone); and there were many genres now worthy of study. And *this* was happening – we ought to remember – before, and overlapping with, the many new influences of poststructuralist and postcolonial thinking that were gradually coming onto the literary-critical scene throughout the Anglophone world from the late 1970s, and especially strongly throughout the 1980s and 90s.

Things have since improved, the 1950s tension has gone into abeyance, and different balances have been struck. Howard Booth's conspectus of recent approaches in his introduction to *New D. H. Lawrence* is refreshing; and, to take another recent example, the 2007 special issue of the Korean journal, *D. H. Lawrence Studies* gives confidence that the traditionally central Lawrentian thematic of otherness can now be approached in less rhetorically loaded and therefore more cogent ways,¹⁸ especially once carefully disassociated from the negative loading that postcolonialist debates have recently lent it. Virginia Hyde, who wrote the introduction to the special issue, comments that now that more Lawrence critics engage with the theoretical movements of the recent past “on his own terms and not simply in reaction to the times, some of these approaches are capable of showing new facets of this durable author” (vi). This is true, but the question remains of when and by whose hand such “facets” first came into existence. There is a dynamic here, as between production and

¹⁸ See, for example (Bell) and (Roberts).

reception, which alert criticism ought not to avoid.¹⁹ If it is true, as I have argued, that the reception of works forms a necessary dimension of their existence over time, then any work that goes on speaking to the needs of the present will likely be affirmed as a classic in the bookselling marketplace. But of equal importance, and needing to be balanced against that, is an understanding of the works in their production phase. There, also, the book-historical contexts – in continuous transaction as they were with the writings of the biographical author – will be found to be crucial and productive.

¹⁹ There is, for instance in the same issue, an unexpectedly interesting article on the relevance of “The Thimble” and “The Ladybird” to recent disability theory (Wright), but it does raise the same question.

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