

# J·D·H·L·S

Journal of D. H. Lawrence Studies

## Citation details

Title: **Murry vs. Carswell: Conflicting Versions of D. H. Lawrence During His Time in Cornwall**

Author: Jonathan Long

Source: *Journal of the D. H. Lawrence Society*, vol. 4.3 (2017)

Pages: 45–70

Copyright: individual author and the D. H. Lawrence Society.  
Quotations from Lawrence's works © The Estate of Frieda Lawrence Ravagli. Extracts and poems from various publications by D. H. Lawrence reprinted by permission of Pollinger Limited ([www.pollingerltd.com](http://www.pollingerltd.com)) on behalf of the Estate of Frieda Lawrence Ravagli.

**A Publication of the  
D. H. Lawrence Society of Great Britain**

**MURRY VS. CARSWELL:  
CONFLICTING VERSIONS OF D. H. LAWRENCE  
DURING HIS TIME IN CORNWALL**

JONATHAN LONG

“There were wonderful moments of happiness; but they were seldom”.<sup>1</sup>

“... a miserable account of Lawrence at this time ... would be a false and misleading account”.<sup>2</sup>

Following Lawrence’s death, a bitter dispute erupted in print between John Middleton Murry and Catherine Carswell: both claimed to have been close friends of Lawrence, but they offered very different accounts of his life, seeking to establish their own versions of him for posterity. The above quotations, describing Lawrence’s time in Cornwall, are taken respectively from Murry’s *Reminiscences of D. H. Lawrence* (1933) – one of three accounts by Murry covering this period –<sup>3</sup> and Carswell’s *The Savage Pilgrimage* (1932). These opposing readings (covering much of Lawrence’s life, not just the Cornwall period) constitute the first round in what turned out to be a long-running “battle of the biographies” (as Keith Cushman has aptly described it).<sup>4</sup> Murry’s *Son of Woman: The Story of D. H. Lawrence* (1931) was the first to appear; a hostile account of Lawrence’s oeuvre which Carswell quickly sought to repudiate. Arguably, this early exchange drew up a battleground between attackers and defenders of Lawrence’s reputation, in which the reputation of the memoirists was also at stake. This is significant because these conflicting versions of Lawrence came to influence a succession of critics, with the Cornwall period proving to be a particular case in point.

Lawrence's time in Cornwall was a key period in his creativity and thinking, but events there also marked the beginning of the slow end of his relationship with Murry, whose hostile interpretation of these developments has cast a long shadow over the record. As the above quotations show, on one side Murry suggested that Lawrence was miserable during his time in Cornwall, which he found a torturous experience that drove his physical and mental health to the brink of collapse; on the other hand, Carswell maintained that Lawrence was predominantly happy in Cornwall. Such were the points of difference between the Murry and Carswell books, particularly her uncomplimentary comments about him, that Murry judged Carswell's book to be libellous (a view with which her barrister husband Donald Carswell agreed).<sup>5</sup> Chatto & Windus withdrew *The Savage Pilgrimage*, although not before about a thousand copies had been sold. Carswell refused to cooperate fully with Murry's demands (he asked that she apologise or reprint the book with a preface by him), but she did seek to address the libel claim by making numerous changes to the text (some of which I shall refer to later on).<sup>6</sup>

The rather subjective judgements in the examples quoted above are coupled with some more substantial commentary in the memoirs on how Lawrence spent his time in Cornwall. Looking at the context to these conflicting reports will reveal some motivations and mitigating circumstances that possibly prompted both sides into the stances they took; it will also indicate the damage that Murry's, often provably disingenuous, remarks caused to Lawrence's reputation and their impact on Lawrence Studies. As Paul Eggert suggests, different periods of Lawrence criticism have produced different versions of him to suit themselves and what he would "like to see emerge is a new approach which permits emphasis on aspects of the man's life and writings which the older construction found inconvenient, and ignored, or sought to explain away".<sup>7</sup> For example, there is clearly much to be said in the Cornwall context for a greater focus on Lawrence's literary achievements, which tend to be underplayed not least because of his lack of financial success.<sup>8</sup>

Indeed Andrew Harrison's approach to the Cornwall period in his *The Life of D. H. Lawrence* (2016), with its emphasis on Lawrence's literary career, is a recent example of how differently it can be portrayed from the way Lawrence's life was presented by Murry.<sup>9</sup> In the twenty-first century, Lawrence Studies has moved beyond defensiveness against allegations by Murry, Bertrand Russell, Kate Millett, and others, and instead is beginning to come to terms with "inconvenient" aspects of Lawrence's life and work, as exemplified by Judith Ruderman's 2014 study of *Race and Identity in D. H. Lawrence: Indians, Gypsies, and Jews*.<sup>10</sup> It seems timely, then, to look again at the discrepant voices of Carswell and Murry, which remind us of the importance of Lawrence's creative connections as well as the deeply contradictory aspects of his life.

In addition to the memoirs by Carswell and Murry, a remarkable series of full-length works on Lawrence appeared in the 1930s, including those by Ada Lawrence, Frieda Lawrence, Richard Aldington, Mabel Luhan, Dorothy Brett, Helen Corke, Norman Douglas, Earl and Achsah Brewster, Jessie Chambers and Knud Merrild; most of whom were artists or aspiring artists, who also contributed to Lawrence's work and career in various ways.<sup>11</sup> This opening chapter in the history of the Lawrence industry was first assessed by Jeffrey Meyers in an article which wryly describes the memoirists as a "flotilla of Boswells ... eager to present their own interpretation of his vehement and contradictory character".<sup>12</sup> Indeed, it is difficult now to know the extent to which these early accounts have sedimented a view of Lawrence as being a "vehement and contradictory character" (in Meyer's words).

As Peter Preston has observed: "In these memoirs Lawrence becomes what might today be called a 'site of contestation', a battleground over which his relatives, friends and associates may be seen struggling for possession of the 'true' Lawrence, as they claim the deepest intimacy or the most clear-sighted view of their subject".<sup>13</sup> This is particularly the case with the accounts provided by Murry and Carswell concerning Lawrence's time in Cornwall, which are very significant as they both spent time with him there

and had long and (in quite different ways) close relationships with him. The extent to which any biography can lay claim to “truth” is a moot point, but even more so for the period under review here since few of these memoirists spent much, if any, time with Lawrence during his time in Cornwall, from 30 December 1915 to 15 October 1917. Frieda, who was the only person to be with Lawrence for his whole stay (short separations excluded), covered this period in only seven pages in *Not I, But The Wind...*<sup>14</sup> Edward Nehls’s composite biography includes contributions from several of those who met Lawrence at various points in his Cornwall period: Cecil Gray, the Hocking family, Murry, Katherine Mansfield, Carswell and (anonymously) Esther Andrews.<sup>15</sup> There are no extant photographs and have been no substantial memoirs other than by those contributors. Alison Symons in her record of life in Zennor during the first half of the twentieth century records comments of her grandmother, a local landlady, but these are brief additions to what we know.<sup>16</sup>

A significant factor here was that those in Lawrence’s circle were unlikely to make the journey to Cornwall in wartime conditions. It was a long way and an expensive train journey – in a letter of Boxing Day 1916 Lawrence records the fact that two return tickets to London cost £7 12/6 (3L 64), at a time when his rent for the smaller cottage at Higher Tregerthen for the whole year was £5. Another factor, as his letters also show, is that he oscillated between regularly encouraging certain friends to visit, such as Catherine and Donald Carswell, and discouraging other company. As he wrote to Catherine on 10 June 1917 about a former neighbour visiting from London:

How *very* rich it is to be alone, without these other human beings. People are poverty and negation – to be alone is wealth uncountable. I shall be so glad when Frieda and I have got room again. What an obstruction one little being is.

What would be nice, would be if the few, very few people one liked could have the cottages round about, far enough away,

and near enough. I wish you and Don had a cottage about 1½ miles from here. (3L 131)

In this context, the conflicting testimony of Murry and Carswell has loomed large. The prominence given by Murry in *Son of Woman* to Lawrence's representation of Cornwall in 'The Nightmare' chapter of *Kangaroo* (1923) continues to dominate critical reception (as evidenced by some essays in the current volume), and his claims that this "autobiographical ... record ... sometimes seems to cross the border-line of sanity" were later borne out by Paul Delany's influential account of Lawrence's precarious mental state during the years of the First World War in *D. H. Lawrence's Nightmare: The Writer and His Circle in the Years of the Great War* (1979).<sup>17</sup> The latter's account was shocking to Lawrence scholars as attested by Cushman, who was "struck by Delany's steady, clear-eyed manner of creating and presenting an intensely unstable man who often seemed near madness".<sup>18</sup> Cushman carefully considers Mark Kinkead-Weekes's claim that, in writing his volume of the Cambridge University Press biography of Lawrence, he had "no conscious aim of rehabilitating DHL – but I suppose that over the years one might have got irritated enough by the prevalence and the degree of prejudice and distortion that the attempt at fairness may have come out as overly defensive".<sup>19</sup> In the 1930s, Carswell was irritated much more quickly by the perceived distortion of Murry's account of Lawrence, and the ensuing debate was much less scholarly, but the early biographers seem to have provided a precedent for their successors.

Kinkead-Weekes also had the advantage of the Cambridge Edition of *The Letters of D. H. Lawrence* to provide a much fuller picture of events at this time. In substance the biographical record used by Kinkead-Weekes is the same as that used by Harrison in his new biography.<sup>20</sup> The material is in short supply, but here we might note the frequency of Lawrence's letters to Carswell. It is instructive to read the 42 letters to her that survive. To put that number into context, over the same period, of Lawrence's other

major correspondents, J. B. Pinker received 50 letters, Dollie Radford 25 and S. S. Koteliansky (Kot) 46. We only have seven to Murry, eight to Mansfield and seven to them jointly. Most of the letters Lawrence wrote to the Murrys (as Lawrence referred to Murry and Mansfield long before their marriage on 3 May 1918) are up to the time when they moved to the tower cottage in April 1916, and are full of encouragement to join him (whilst not actually begging him to go in a “desperate call” as Murry suggests in *Son of Woman*).<sup>21</sup> Those to Carswell are generally upbeat, full of factual information, encouragement about her work and commentary about the impact of the War, all of which is generally reflected accurately in *The Savage Pilgrimage*. Carswell had the benefit of an extensive correspondence with Lawrence over the whole of the Cornwall period, coupled with the experience of her visit to Zennor from 28 September to c. 3 October 1916, and her book is full of sometimes overlong quotations from those letters.

As well as the differences between their books, which I shall discuss in more detail later, there were also considerable differences between the relationships that Murry and Carswell had with Lawrence, which in part reveal motivations and mitigating circumstances for their differences in approach. Carswell first met Lawrence in Hampstead in June 1914, following an approach to him by her friend Ivy Low. Carswell had been working as a drama critic and book reviewer for the *Glasgow Herald*. She had known of Lawrence for some time, having reviewed *The White Peacock* (1911), and subsequently she lost her job for her review of *The Rainbow* (1915). Her relationship with Lawrence was exceptional in that Lawrence’s surviving correspondence to her (175 letters and postcards) is greater in volume than with any other female correspondent other than his sister Ada, and covers most of his career (29 June 1914 to 12 August 1929). There was no falling-out between them, as there was with so many others. Lawrence and Carswell clearly had a certain amount in common – and, whilst good friends, they evidently stayed sufficiently apart for the relationship not to come to grief in the way that it did with some of

those he spent more time with. He was very supportive about her first novel, *Open the Door!*, writing to her from Zennor in August 1916 that “I feel really eager about your novel ... The ‘us’ will be books” (2L 639).<sup>22</sup> However, her literary career never really took off.

By contrast, Murry became a prolific writer and influential editor and his relationship with Lawrence developed very differently.<sup>23</sup> There is surviving correspondence dating back to January 1913 relating to Lawrence providing material for *Rhythm*, a journal co-founded by Murry in 1911 and which Mansfield subsequently co-edited with him. Lawrence also contributed to their next journal venture, the *Blue Review*. Murry was a witness at the Lawrences’ wedding on 13 July 1914, when Frieda gave Mansfield her old wedding ring. Mansfield and Murry were at times close to Lawrence, and so he wanted them to join in the communal living experiment with him and Frieda in Cornwall, which as we shall see was a failure, as reflected in the Murry quotation at the beginning of this essay. Intermittent contact followed and in 1923 Murry founded *The Adelphi*, a journal he claimed would promote Lawrence’s views, but which gave rise to further friction between them. Nevertheless, Lawrence invited Murry, among others, to join him in New Mexico, at the infamous Café Royal dinner of December 1923 (of which Murry and Carswell once again gave differing accounts).<sup>24</sup> In contrast to Carswell, there were regular problems in the relationship with Lawrence, usually revolving around Lawrence’s quest for a close male friendship, which was frequently met with (at least in Carswell’s opinion) acts of betrayal by Murry; including suspicions of infidelity with Frieda when she returned to Europe without Lawrence in 1923 and following Mansfield’s death earlier that year. Failings in business ventures (Murry was also involved in the *Signature* project) coupled with differing views on male-male relationships, and indeed literature itself, clearly coloured what Murry had to say about Lawrence in his writing about him.<sup>25</sup>



The remainder of this essay will examine the differences between the two accounts of Lawrence's time in Cornwall in Murry's *Reminiscences* and Carswell's *The Savage Pilgrimage* (commenting on any changes made for the Martin Secker revised edition of Carswell's book). To some extent these reflect the differences in the relationships between Lawrence and Murry and Lawrence and Carswell. Murry's relationship with Lawrence deteriorated significantly after their falling-out in Cornwall, whilst Carswell remained a supporter of Lawrence throughout. There is of course bias in both accounts, as will also become evident. A timeline of Lawrence's activities in Cornwall, set out in Appendix A and annotated with page references from Murry's and Carswell's books, demonstrates the comparative coverage of events provided by each. Murry's account contains a lot of commentary but little factual detail and indeed his coverage of the Cornwall period in *Reminiscences* runs to only eleven pages compared to Carswell's 52 pages.<sup>26</sup>

*Reminiscences* is divided into four parts. The first is a particularly defensive preface about Murry's relationship with Lawrence; the second is the reprinting of the 'Reminiscences' he published in *The Adelphi* in 1930–1 (an account of his relationship with Lawrence); the third comprises some castigatory notes on Carswell's criticisms of that account; and the fourth is the reprinting of all Murry's critical works about Lawrence published during his lifetime. The latter is significant: first as a restatement of Murry's credentials as a critic who had much more in print about Lawrence's work than Carswell, and secondly because much of Murry's disagreement with Lawrence related to his literary criticism (for example on Dostoevsky).<sup>27</sup> As the blurb on the dust-jacket says: "The book contains the full documentary evidence for the nature of the relations between Lawrence and Murry, and it is intended to dispose finally of the misleading account of that relation recently given to the public in 'The Savage Pilgrimage'". The fact that this brief description uses the word "relation" twice should put the reader on notice that contrary to the book's title these are not

strictly “reminiscences of D. H. Lawrence” but of Murry’s view of his relationship with Lawrence.

Certainly as featured in the Murry and Carswell books, the key features of Lawrence’s time in Cornwall were his relationship with the Hockings (especially William Henry Hocking), his violent rows with Frieda, his relationship with the Murrays, his experience of army recruitment, and the suspicion that he was assisting the enemy, which resulted in his eviction from Cornwall. These are sometimes contentious areas for Lawrence’s later biographers, and indeed Cushman asserts that “The domestic violence and the friendship with [William] Henry are two of the most familiar sites of contestation in Lawrence biography”.<sup>28</sup>

In their conflicting accounts of these events Murry and Carswell both seem to be preoccupied by how happy or otherwise Lawrence was in this period, presumably as a measure of his mental state. For Murry, in *Son of Woman*, “Lawrence is bewildered and lost. He feels that he is disintegrating; his inward division is become terrible to himself; his life is a nightmare” (a word picked up in the title of the Delany biography) and these are also his final words on what he perceives as the failure of *Women in Love* (1920).<sup>29</sup> Interestingly, Carswell was sufficiently close to Lawrence to receive one of the two corrected typescripts of the novel (the other being sent to Pinker). She recorded that:

It made a painful but powerful impression on me. I did not know what to think of it, and in fact, said little. Except for the interest which is maintained throughout, the great descriptive passages, and the queer sense of Lawrence’s voice talking all the time; except too for a few details, chiefly in the matter of women’s wear, which struck me as unnecessary and a little ridiculous, I found mainly suffering in the perusal. And I resented the infliction of an almost physical suffering and malaise by what purported to be a novel. All the same here was something. It made one pause. The usual critical outfit had to be discarded.<sup>30</sup>

Carswell's ambivalent response to *Women in Love* suggests an honesty that was far from hagiographic, although her recognition of the "suffering" the novel portrays through "Lawrence's voice" also calls into question a straightforward account of his personal "happiness" during this period.

For Carswell, in essence Lawrence was happy during the Higher Tregerthen period (which dominates Murry's account), but he thought it right to try a communal living experiment with the Murrays. She quotes his letter of 16 April 1916, in part recording that "Here doing one's own things in this queer outlandish *Celtic* country, I feel fundamentally happy and free, beyond" (2L 595). But anticipating difficulties with Murry the same letter says, "When I think of Viola, or Ivy, even, perhaps, the Murrays, who are here, it is with a kind of weariness" (2L 595). Murry on the other hand wrote with the benefit of hindsight of an experiment doomed to failure, and with little empathy for Lawrence and more concern for his own situation. In *Between Two Worlds* he described the idyllic time he and Katherine had spent at Villa Pauline in Bandol, but in spite of that they came to Lawrence and Cornwall because "It was impossible, even for Katherine, to resist his urgency".<sup>31</sup> The surviving correspondence does not support the hectoring that Murry suggests. In a worked-up version of the same events described in *Reminiscences* Murry goes on to describe Katherine's feelings and (with a pathetic fallacy) circumstances bound to result in disaster:

On the journey down to Cornwall, she grew more and more depressed. The blue sky seemed to her steely, and the sea grey: the cry of the gulls bleak and forlorn ... in the room at the Tinnars' Arms, where we were to stay ... she confessed: 'I shall never like this place'.<sup>32</sup>

The narrative is much more about the state of mind of the Murrays, perhaps understandably given the death of Mansfield's beloved younger brother Leslie Beauchamp in October 1915 and ongoing marital problems, but Murry even concedes that he "vastly enjoyed

‘messaging about’ with Lawrence”.<sup>33</sup> In *Son of Woman* Murry goes further and states that he and Mansfield agreed to “join [Lawrence] and his wife, and live together in unity ... because we loved him and his wife”.<sup>34</sup> This is one of a number of examples of Murry’s disingenuousness that Sydney Janet Kaplan has pointed out: “Either Murry has forgotten his and Mansfield’s intense dislike of Frieda at that time, or his recent affair with her has overpowered his desire for absolute accuracy in his recounting of the events”.<sup>35</sup>

The next subject mentioned by both writers, but in different contexts, was Lawrence’s growing acquaintance with the Hockings. Murry and Carswell both described Lawrence’s renting additional garden land from them.<sup>36</sup> For Murry Lawrence’s gardening is mentioned briefly in the context of a visit Murry made to Higher Tregerthen with Frederick Goodyear. For Carswell gardening was:

by no means a time without happiness for Lawrence ...  
Wherever he went he planted, and his plants came up. To work peacefully with the earth was the best antidote to the War and the next best thing to migration ... Till he could leave England, Cornwall was the best place to be in. He loved it.<sup>37</sup>

She continued by referring to Lawrence finding “in one of the young men [i.e. William Henry Hocking] the ‘blood brotherhood’ which was as needful as a refreshed relationship between man and woman for the rich and complete life he sought” and takes Murry to task for rejecting Lawrence’s approaches to him.<sup>38</sup> For Frieda the Hockings were people Lawrence spent too much time with, leaving her all alone.<sup>39</sup>

One of the most difficult matters for a Lawrence biographer to address is the violent rows between Lawrence and Frieda. The case in point was the one the Murrays witnessed in May 1916. Cushman has compared the treatment of this episode in the Delany and Kinkead-Weekes biographies and he points out that: “Delany and Kinkead-Weekes examine the same period, making use of many of the same facts as found in many of the same documents. But their

readings of Lawrence in Cornwall (and of the episode of spousal abuse) are remarkably different”.<sup>40</sup> There are clearly parallels with the Murry and Carswell accounts.

Cushman alludes to Richard Holmes’s concept of biographers “inventing the truth”,<sup>41</sup> and the versions of the “truth” of the marital violence as presented by Murry and Carswell are indeed quite different. For the Murrays Lawrence’s behaviour towards Frieda was evidently a key reason for their departure to Mylor a few weeks later. Mansfield wrote about it at length, first in a letter to Kot of 11 May 1916 and then at even greater length in a letter to Ottoline Morrell of 17 May 1916.<sup>42</sup> Murry would have used these letters in writing his memoirs. He is completely negative about what he calls “clashes” between the Lawrences, but Carswell is quite an apologist; another example of her seeking to defend Lawrence’s behaviour. Murry does not go into as much detail but the reader is left with no doubt about how difficult the situation would have been. As he described one incident:

The clashes between him and Frieda became more frequent, and to me more desperate and frightening. One evening, when Katherine and I were sitting by our fire – in the long room where Lawrence had dreamed the community would eat together – we heard a shriek. Suddenly, Frieda burst in at the door crying, ‘He’ll kill me!’ Lawrence followed, white as a ghost, but in a frenzy of fury. Round and round the long table they went, Lawrence crying, ‘I’ll *kill* her, I’ll *kill* her!’ The chairs were scattered; I just managed to save the lamp. Katherine sat still in a corner, indifferent, inexpressibly weary. I was terrified. That he would have killed her I made no doubt; and yet, for some strange reason, I had no impulse to intervene.<sup>43</sup>

Carswell on the other hand had this to say:

I was present at many ‘rows’ between Lawrence and Frieda, some of them violent and exhausting enough. But I never felt

any one of them to be of that deadly ‘painful’ nature which is of frequent occurrence between many couples who all the while protest their love with endearments and never get within arm’s length of violence. It was indeed the thing about Lawrence which I understood best at this time, and it made me see in him a courage that I never saw in any other man to the same degree.<sup>44</sup>

Her apologist coverage of this aspect of the Lawrences’ life together runs for several pages. It continues with her describing them telling her when she first arrived in Cornwall of Frieda’s hitting Lawrence over the head with a stone dinner plate (reminiscent of Hermione and the lapis lazuli in *Women in Love*). He was apparently “as far from bearing Frieda a grudge as from turning the other cheek”.<sup>45</sup>

The deterioration of the Murrys’ relationship with Lawrence, resulting in their move from Higher Tregerthen to Mylor and the background to it are predictably (in view of Murry’s perceived need to defend himself) covered in some detail by Murry in both *Reminiscences* and *Between Two Worlds*. In the former he wrote:

From the beginning the experiment was a failure. There were wonderful moments of happiness; but they were seldom. We fell back into a depression from which it seemed impossible to escape. Katherine was very unhappy, and conceived a hatred of Cornwall that lasted for the rest of her life. And Lawrence, at times, was positively terrifying: a paroxysm of black rage would sweep down upon him, and leave us trembling and aghast. Sometimes he hated me to the point of frenzy.<sup>46</sup>

This, just part of what Murry has to say on the subject, coupled with Murry’s refusal to become Lawrence’s “blood-brother” with an appropriate form of sacrament, led to the Murrys’ departure. There is very little that Murry has to say about his time with the Lawrences that is positive, and his account is very self-defensive.

Carswell does not dwell on the Murrys' time at Higher Treggerthen, which reflects Lawrence's minimal references to it in his letters to her and the fact that it ran to only ten weeks (comparable in length to the earlier stay of Heseltine in Porthcothan). She refers to Murry's account in *Reminiscences* and what Murry saw was a failure "right from the beginning", but in contrast to Murry's lengthy narrative repeats what Lawrence told her in his letter of 19 June 1916: "brief and to the point as usual", as she described it, "The Murrys have gone over to the south side, about thirty miles away. The North side was too rugged for them and Murry and I are not really associates. How I deceive myself".<sup>47</sup> In a typical piece of retaliation, Murry's note in *Reminiscences* on her version of events reads: "Mrs Carswell has the assurance to controvert this account of our experience at Higher Treggerthen. It is a matter of which she could, in the nature of things, know nothing actually, and into which she is imaginatively incapable of entering".<sup>48</sup>

Only Carswell comments on Lawrence's examination for military service in June 1916, which followed closely on the Murrys' departure. Reflecting the tone of most of Lawrence's letters to her he is surprisingly sanguine about the situation: "If I must be a soldier, then I must – ta-rattata-ta! It's no use trying to dodge one's fate. It doesn't trouble me any more. I'd rather be a soldier than a school-teacher, anyhow" (2L 616). Although Lawrence told him about his subsequent re-examination in his letter of 11 June 1917 (3L 132), Murry's interest is only with the examination that he himself received at Bodmin in October 1916, mentioned in *Reminiscences*, which resulted in his exemption and his going to London to work for the War Office.<sup>49</sup>

The final stage of Lawrence's time in Cornwall was his expulsion under the Defence of the Realm Act on what is assumed to be suspicion of spying.<sup>50</sup> Carswell's account is generally factually accurate and objective, going into detail beyond what he gave her in his letter of 16 October 1917 (3L 169). Without apparently having evidence for it she gives the following account of

the Lawrences receiving the expulsion order: “Lawrence was horror-stricken but composed. Frieda was voluble, argumentative and defiant to rudeness”.<sup>51</sup> Murry, in *Reminiscences*, refers to the eviction being in the spring of 1918, and as a result of signalling to German submarines.<sup>52</sup> Neither of these statements is correct. The latter would appear to be a conflation of events. Lawrence was in regular contact with Cecil Gray, who moved to nearby Bosigran in June 1917, and it was Gray who was heavily fined for having an unobscured light visible from the sea during a visit from the Lawrences.<sup>53</sup> Murry also wrote that Lawrence then went to Margaret Radford’s cottage at Hermitage, correcting this in a note and adding rather revealingly: “I knew nothing directly of Lawrence’s movements at this time”.<sup>54</sup>

The differences between the Murry and the Carswell texts show how deep the divide was between them. As mentioned above, she was not interested in apologising to Murry. However, she would not have been able to afford the costs of running a libel case. Her novels were not financial successes and her controversial *The Life of Robert Burns* (1930) made her better known but little else. Equally she would have wanted to see in print what she had to say about Lawrence, as far as was possible in the circumstances, and to profit from that. We do not know what her royalties were from the book but it was sufficiently popular to justify a translation into French published by Armand Colin in 1935; after her death a new edition was published by Secker and Warburg in 1951, followed by the Cambridge University Press reprint of 1981.

In the following review of the changes Carswell made to her account as a result of Murry’s threatened libel action it will be apparent that on the whole they have been kept to a minimum – through gritted teeth. The copy of the title page of the Chatto & Windus edition of *The Savage Pilgrimage* provided (Figure 2) is from a withdrawn copy of the book. This first edition contains many express or implied criticisms of Murry, which were removed for the 1932 Secker revised edition and the section on Lawrence’s time in Cornwall is no exception. The revisions are mainly



omissions of offending words and phrases, which in any case tend to lack any factual basis and do not particularly assist her very favourable portrait of Lawrence. For example, when addressing the question of whether “The Rainbow Books and Music” publishing scheme came from the same initial idea as the *Signature* venture in which the Murrys were closely involved, Carswell wrote of Murry that he was trying to “justify himself and discredit Lawrence”, words omitted from the revised edition.<sup>55</sup> After mentioning the Murrys’ departure to Mylor, Carswell initially wrote that “After a dose of Murry Lawrence was always well disposed toward Donald”.<sup>56</sup> The words “dose of” became “visit from”. And when describing Lawrence’s wish to get a passport to America to be able to extend his readership, what started as “Not that Lawrence had any such pleasant, puerile illusions about America as Murry would attribute to him” became “Not that Lawrence had any pleasant, puerile illusions about America”.<sup>57</sup> Whole sentences that were omitted included one used to praise a strong reaction in contrast to a weak one. The offending words “Better that than the Judas kiss of agreement which is no agreement” were deleted, no doubt as Murry’s name appeared in the next sentence and he assumed that this was a reference to him.<sup>58</sup> There were clear parallels in Carswell’s mind between Judas and Jesus and Murry and Lawrence.<sup>59</sup> Not surprisingly Carswell took out the following final offending words: “What Murry is too logical and too custom-bound to guess, is that Lawrence’s paramount value lies precisely in the discrepancy he bewails”, ironically not knowing that Murry annotated at this point a copy of the book (now at the University of Nottingham) with the words “fair criticism”.<sup>60</sup>

The differences in the versions of Lawrence’s time at Zennor presented by Murry and Carswell highlight a number of issues, some for further study, including the value of the experiment in communal living and the behaviour of Lawrence towards Frieda. There is the immediate question of the extent to which *either* memoirist presented events accurately, but in any event biography must involve interpretation. The tendency in contemporary

Lawrence criticism is to see Murry (and his account) as discredited, and preferring to build his own reputation, and of course Mansfield's. But as we have seen, Carswell too shows bias, in her occasionally blind advocacy of Lawrence. Whatever we may think about their respective personalities, Murry was not always wrong and Carswell right. These matters impact on our understanding of these protagonists and have had a lasting effect on the reception of Lawrence's work and indeed his reputation; of course Lawrence was not always "right" either, but critics have perhaps felt unnecessarily defensive. Are there versions of Lawrence that remain ignored or explained away because they seem "discrepant" (to paraphrase Carswell) or even abhorrent? The Cambridge Edition of the *Letters* has been an especially fruitful source for biographers, but has this one-sided correspondence drowned out a host of other voices? We now need more balanced accounts, which move beyond what Eggert referred to as the pigeon-holing of Lawrence as "the priest of love, the anti-mechanisation vitalist, the morally intelligent prophet of Life, the exposé of the distorting effects involved in the tyranny of mind over body".<sup>61</sup> Lawrence was also a great exposé of the flawed human condition, in which he shared. As Carswell and Murry remind us, Lawrence was a product of his own conflicted times and relationships, and there is more work to be done in exploring those contexts and complexities.

---

Acknowledgement: I am extremely grateful to Susan Reid and to Jane Costin for their insightful comments on a draft of this article.

<sup>1</sup> John Middleton Murry, *Reminiscences of D. H. Lawrence* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1933), 78.

<sup>2</sup> Catherine Carswell, *The Savage Pilgrimage: A Narrative of D. H. Lawrence* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1932), 74.

<sup>3</sup> As I explain later, *Reminiscences* was an extended version of the 'Reminiscences' Murry published in *The Adelphi* in 1930–1. He also published *Son of Woman: The Story of D. H. Lawrence* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1931).

---

<sup>4</sup> Keith Cushman, 'Lawrence in Cornwall: The Battle of the Biographies', *Études Lawrenciennes*, vol. 31 (2005), 7–23, 7.

<sup>5</sup> Peter Preston, 'Scribbling on Catherine: Murry vs. Carswell', unpublished conference paper (2007). I am indebted to him for this information and for alerting me to annotated copies of *The Savage Pilgrimage* and related correspondence held at the University of Nottingham, which are referred to in this essay.

<sup>6</sup> The revised edition was published by Secker in London in December 1932. Harcourt, Brace and Company published an American edition in October 1932.

<sup>7</sup> Paul Eggert, 'Comedy and Provisionality', in *Lawrence and Comedy*, eds Paul Eggert and John Worthen (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1996), 132.

<sup>8</sup> During his Cornwall period Lawrence inter alia wrote (twice) the novel we now know as *The First 'Women in Love'*, together with the seven 'Reality of Peace' essays and made a substantial start on *Studies in Classic American Literature*; he also published a number of poems and prepared *Amores* and *Look! We Have Come Through!* for publication.

<sup>9</sup> Andrew Harrison, *The Life of D. H. Lawrence* (Chichester: Wiley Blackwell, 2016).

<sup>10</sup> Judith Ruderman, *Race and Identity in D. H. Lawrence: Indians, Gypsies, and Jews* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).

<sup>11</sup> For a discussion of how the women in his life contributed to the writing of *Sons and Lovers*, for example, see Neil Roberts, *Sons and Lovers: A Biography* (Clemson, SC: Clemson UP, 2016), which is reviewed in this number of *JDHLS*.

<sup>12</sup> Jeffrey Meyers, 'Memoirs of D. H. Lawrence: A Genre of the Thirties', *D. H. Lawrence Review*, vol. 14 (Spring 1981), 1–31, 1.

<sup>13</sup> Preston, 'Scribbling on Catherine: Murry vs. Carswell'.

<sup>14</sup> Frieda Lawrence, *Not I, But the Wind...* (Santa Fe, NM: The Rydal Press, 1934), 102–8.

<sup>15</sup> Edward Nehls, *D. H. Lawrence: A Composite Biography*, 3 vols (Madison, WI: U of Wisconsin P, 1957–9), vol. 1, 344–428.

<sup>16</sup> Alison Symons, *Tremedda Days A View of Zennor, 1900–1944* (Padstow: Tabb House, 1992), 142–4.

<sup>17</sup> Murry, *Son of Woman: The Story of D. H. Lawrence*, 123. Paul Delany, *D. H. Lawrence's Nightmare: The Writer and His Circle in the Years of the Great War* (Hassocks: Harvester Press, 1979).

- 
- <sup>18</sup> Cushman, 'Lawrence in Cornwall: The Battle of the Biographies', 11.
- <sup>19</sup> Ibid., 19. Mark Kinkead-Weekes, *D. H. Lawrence: Triumph to Exile, 1912–1922* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1996).
- <sup>20</sup> Harrison, *The Life of D. H. Lawrence*.
- <sup>21</sup> Murry, *Son of Woman: The Story of D. H. Lawrence*, 124.
- <sup>22</sup> Carswell's first novel was published in 1920, followed two years later by her second and last novel *The Camomile*.
- <sup>23</sup> For a discussion of Murry's career and influence see Sydney Janet Kaplan, *Circulating Genius: John Middleton Murry, Katherine Mansfield and D. H. Lawrence* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP), 3–5, 10.
- <sup>24</sup> For a commentary on events at the Café Royal and the differing accounts about it see David Ellis, *D. H. Lawrence: Dying Game 1922–1930* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1998), 148–53.
- <sup>25</sup> See Kinkead-Weekes, *D. H. Lawrence: Triumph to Exile, 1912–1922*, 276 and note 96. *Rhythm* and *Blue Review* were also financial failures. For Murry's ambivalence about a closer relationship with Lawrence see Kaplan, *Circulating Genius: John Middleton Murry, Katherine Mansfield and D. H. Lawrence*, 49–50.
- <sup>26</sup> Although Murry's later autobiography *Between Two Worlds* (1935) extended his commentary on the Cornwall period to almost thirty pages, these focus solely on his stay in Zennor, between c. 5 April and c. 13 June 1916. I have made only occasional reference to the earlier *Son of Woman*, the significance of that volume in the context of this essay being fully assessed in Keith Cushman, 'Middleton Murry, Catherine Carswell, and the Boundaries of Memoir', *Etudes Lawrenciennes*, vol. 39 (2009), 9–30.
- <sup>27</sup> See for example Kinkead-Weekes, *D. H. Lawrence: Triumph to Exile, 1912–1922*, 325–6.
- <sup>28</sup> Cushman, 'Lawrence in Cornwall: The Battle of the Biographies', 9.
- <sup>29</sup> Murry, *Son of Woman: The Story of D. H. Lawrence*, 122.
- <sup>30</sup> Carswell, *The Savage Pilgrimage*, 79–80.
- <sup>31</sup> John Middleton Murry, *Between Two Worlds: An Autobiography* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1935), 401.
- <sup>32</sup> Ibid., 403.
- <sup>33</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>34</sup> Murry, *Son of Woman: The Story of D. H. Lawrence*, 124.
- <sup>35</sup> Kaplan, *Circulating Genius: John Middleton Murry, Katherine Mansfield and D. H. Lawrence*, 183.

- 
- <sup>36</sup> Murry, *Reminiscences of D. H. Lawrence*, 86; Carswell, *The Savage Pilgrimage*, 88.
- <sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 88–9.
- <sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 89.
- <sup>39</sup> Frieda Lawrence, *Not I, But the Wind...*, 105.
- <sup>40</sup> Cushman, ‘Lawrence in Cornwall: The Battle of the Biographies’, 9.
- <sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.
- <sup>42</sup> Vincent O’Sullivan and Margaret Scott, eds, *The Collected Letters of Katherine Mansfield: Volume One 1903–1917* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984), 262, 266.
- <sup>43</sup> Murry, *Between Two Worlds: An Autobiography*, 409.
- <sup>44</sup> Carswell, *The Savage Pilgrimage*, 68.
- <sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 71.
- <sup>46</sup> Murry, *Reminiscences of D. H. Lawrence*, 78.
- <sup>47</sup> Carswell, *The Savage Pilgrimage*, 47.
- <sup>48</sup> Murry, *Reminiscences of D. H. Lawrence*, 140.
- <sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 87.
- <sup>50</sup> Kinkead-Weekes, *D. H. Lawrence: Triumph to Exile 1912–1922*, 400.
- <sup>51</sup> Carswell, *The Savage Pilgrimage*, 92.
- <sup>52</sup> Murry, *Reminiscences of D. H. Lawrence*, 91.
- <sup>53</sup> Kinkead-Weekes, *D. H. Lawrence: Triumph to Exile 1912–1922*, 402–3.
- <sup>54</sup> Murry, *Reminiscences of D. H. Lawrence*, 141.
- <sup>55</sup> Carswell, *The Savage Pilgrimage*, 44. The Manuscripts and Special Collections Department of the University of Nottingham has significant holdings of material relating to this matter, including copies of *The Savage Pilgrimage* annotated by Middleton Murry and by Carswell, together with associated correspondence.
- <sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 47–8.
- <sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 82.
- <sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 48.
- <sup>59</sup> Indeed Virginia Woolf in her letter of 15 April 1931 said “Murry – the one vile man I have ever known – has written a book about D. H. Lawrence, making out that he is Judas and Lawrence, Christ”: quoted in Kaplan, *Circulating Genius: John Middleton Murry, Katherine Mansfield and D. H. Lawrence*, 190.
- <sup>60</sup> Carswell, *The Savage Pilgrimage*, 78.
- <sup>61</sup> Paul Eggert, ‘Comedy and Provisionality’, 131.

---

**APPENDIX A: TIMELINE OF CARSWELL AND MURRY'S  
VERSIONS OF D. H. LAWRENCE IN CORNWALL**

Date	Event	Carswell <i>The Savage Pilgrimage</i> (41–93)	Murry <i>Reminiscences</i> (86–96)
30.12.15	Arrival at Porthcothan	41	74
1.1.16 to c. 21.2.16	Visit of Philip Heseltine	43	74
c.10.1.16 – 22.1.16	Visit of Michael Arlen		
c.10.1.16 – c. 24.1.16	Seriously ill. Examined by Dr. Maitland Radford	41	74
11.2.16	“The Rainbow Books and Music” scheme first mentioned	43–5	
c. 25.2.16	Sidgwick & Jackson reject <i>Amores</i>	41	
29.2.16 – 16.3.16	Stays at Tinner’s Arms Zennor	45	
17.3.16	Moves to Higher Tregerthen	45	77

By end of March 1916	Becomes friendly with Hocking family	88–9	86
Date	Event	Carswell <i>The Savage Pilgrimage</i>	Murry <i>Reminiscences</i>
c. 5.4.16	Murrys join Lawrences at Higher Tregerthen	47	77
c. 19.4.16	Begins writing <i>Women in Love</i>		
5.5.16	Violent quarrel witnessed by Murrys	68–73	
1.6.16	Duckworth publish <i>Twilight in Italy</i>	45	
c. 13.6.16	Murrys move to Mylor	47	80
28.6.16	DHL examined for military service	49	
July 1916	Duckworth publish <i>Amores</i>	45	
22 – ?23/7/16	Visits Murrys at Mylor	58	

31.7.16 – ?6.8.16	Dollie Radford visits	59 (not named)	
10.8.16	DHL admires Carswell's new novel	59–60	
Date	Event	Carswell <i>The Savage Pilgrimage</i>	Murry <i>Reminiscences</i>
c.10.8.16 – 15.8.16	Barbara Low visits	59 (not named)	
28.8.16	DHL comments on Murry's Dostoevsky book	60–1	81–5
16.9.16	Frieda visits her children in London	57–8	
? September 1916	Murry and Frederick Goodyear visit		86–7
28.9.16 - ?3.10.16	Carswell visits	59–78	
31.10.16	Finishes <i>WL</i> and sends for typing	52	
c.7.11.16	Robert Mountsier and Esther Andrews visit	58	



20.11.16	Sends Carswell copy of TS of <i>WL</i>	79	
18.12.16	Discusses with Kot publication of <i>WL</i> in Russia	80	
Date	Event	Carswell <i>The Savage Pilgrimage</i>	Murry <i>Reminiscences</i>
25.12.16	Visit of Mountsier (to 31.12.16) and Andrews (to c. 12.1.17)		
Early January 1917	Begins reading for <i>Studies in Classic American Literature</i>	81	
9.1.17	Looking for work in USA	82	
By mid-January 2017	Duckworth rejects <i>WL</i>	80	
29.1.17	Applying for passport to USA Preparing <i>Look!</i> for publication	82 83	

12.2.17	Passport to USA is refused	88	
18.2.17	Sends MS of <i>Look!</i> to Carswell	83	
20.2.17	Ottoline threatens libel action re <i>WL</i>	81	
Date	Event	Carswell <i>The Savage Pilgrimage</i>	Murry <i>Reminiscences</i>
?28.3.17 – 31.3.17	Frieda visits her children in London		
After 11.4.17 – 11.5.17	Andrews visits	86	
14.4.17 – 18.4.17	At Ripley with Ada	86	87
19.4.17	At Nottingham	86	
19.4.17 – 25.4.17	At Kot's in St. John's Wood	86	
25.4.17 – 27.4.17	At Dollie Radford's cottage in Hermitage	86	87–8

May 1917	Publication of first part of 'The Reality of Peace' in <i>English Review</i>	85	
5.5.17	Frieda ill. DHL enjoying gardening	87 88	86 and 88
c.16.6.17 – 19.6.17	With Dollie Radford in London to see specialist		90–1
Date	Event	Carswell <i>The Savage Pilgrimage</i>	Murry <i>Reminiscences</i>
23.6.17	Army medical re-examination		
11.7.17	Working on the Hockings' farm	88	
28.7.17	Pleased that Chatto & Windus are publishing <i>Look!</i>	85	
By August 1917	Mail being examined	91	
3.8.17	Chatto & Windus want omissions from <i>Look!</i>	85	

13.8.17	Frieda ill Suggests titles for Carswell's novel	87 88	
14.8.17	Accepts omission of two poems from <i>Look!</i>	85	
12.10.17	Police raid Higher Tregerthen	92	91
15.10.17	To Dollie Radford in Hampstead	92	91