

REVIEWS

Kangaroo by D.H. Lawrence, Edited by Bruce Steele, Cambridge University Press 1994, ISBN 0-521-38455-9.

Rosemary Howard

The C.U.P. Edition of *Kangaroo*, eagerly awaited in the wake of the recent flux of controversial attention paid to its problems, appeared in August 1994, and, edited by Professor Bruce Steele of Monash University, Melbourne, it demythologises the notion of "The Corrected Edition" published in Australia by Collins in 1989.

Perhaps the most valuable aspect of Professor Steele's introduction is his cool and scholarly assessment of the thesis put forward by Robert Darroch in *D.H. Lawrence in Australia* (1981) and subsequent articles. Professor Steele describes Lawrence's activities prior to his arrival in Sydney on May 27th 1922, slanting attention towards the friendships he had made while travelling to and from Ceylon, and the political discussions he was in a position to have had with the "rather nice" Australians on board, and with such people as he met later, for example, John Elder Walker and William Siebenhaar, an ex-civil servant in Perth with "unorthodox political views". Since *Kangaroo* is "in many ways a thinly disguised autobiography", there has been more than the usual search for originals for the main characters, and constant claims that the political plot is based on historical fact. To such an extent have these airy speculations been taken up, that the following categorical statement appeared in an otherwise excellent article by Pierre Ryckmans in the *New York Review of Books*, to be reprinted in the *Weekend Australian Review* for May 14th-15th 1994:

"He (*Kangaroo*) was Sir Charles Rosenthal, a Sydney architect of Jewish origin."

Professor Steele's comment in the Introduction is timely: "None of this speculation has brought convincing evidence that the characters, other than the Somerses, had single real-life originals." He proceeds to examine the political background of contemporary Australia, and sums up by saying that in his view, Lawrence expresses in *Kangaroo* the general interest he had in politics at that time - "his argument with democracy and his response to both fascism and socialism" - in his search for a new life-form. Two other problems assail the so-called "Darroch Thesis" - assertions by both Frieda and Lawrence that they knew no-one while in Eastern Australia, and the over-riding difficulty of the time-factor: the writing of between three and four thousand words a day for up to forty-six days would have left Lawrence precious little time for hob-nobbing with Australian revolutionaries.

As far as the text is concerned, Professor Steele conforms to the C.U.P.'s general policy of restoring Lawrence's manuscript versions wherever possible, and he provides a detailed analysis of the provenance of the present text. This is largely based on the manuscript, contained in four school note-books written between June

1st and July 17th 1922 -together with autographed corrections to Typescript I, which was forwarded by Lawrence's American agent Mountsier to Taos, and there emended in the author's usual creative fashion between October 6th and 16th. In addition, he corrected Seltzer's printed American Edition (AI) -corrections which were not available to Secker for the English Edition (EI). Complications concerning the alternative endings are lucidly explained: we lose, "It was only four days to New Zealand, over a cold, dark inhospitable sea", and have instead the C.U.P. ending: "The last streamers blowing away, like broken attachments, broken". To quote Professor Steele, "Both the actual and circumstantial evidence agree in suggesting that the AI ending must represent Lawrence's final decision". This robs us of a brilliant passage describing Somers' encounter with a callow young American on board, but, as usual with C.U.P. Editions, discarded passages are printed in the "Textual Apparatus". Lawrence's punctuation is reproduced as far as possible, and his distinctive use of the hyphen is well illustrated on page 169 (Chapter IX - "Harriet and Lovatt at Sea in Marriage") where the ironical term "perfect-love" makes five distinct appearances.

The "Reception" section of Bruce Steele's introduction is of particular interest, with comments ranging from Charles Morgan's intelligent appreciation to J. B. Priestley's "acres of mud". Almost all the early reviewers testify to Lawrence's masterly evocation of the spirit of place. Of course, limits have to be set to the time-span implied in the term "Reception", which Professor Steele sets at 1924. But I think that, in view of the peculiar nature of the reactions provoked by this novel, it would have been interesting to survey the work of a clutch of Australian critics writing in Journals like *Meanjin* and *Southerly* between 1950 and 1970 or so. Of these I find mention only of Ralph Maud (p.375 of the Notes). Katharine Susannah Prichard's volte-face concerning D.H.L. is noteworthy (*Meanjin* Vol. 9 No. 4), as well as conflicting assessments of the authenticity of Lawrence's perception of Australia, as between Robert Lee (*Southerly* 1973), A.D. Hope ("How it looks to an Australian" 1974) and John Alexander in *Meanjin* 1965.

To have explanatory notes so generously written by an Australian-born editor is invaluable, particularly in respect of the flora and fauna as, for example, the notes on "coral-tree" (p.362), "sunrefusing leaves of the gum-trees" (p.363), "yuccas ... tree ferns" (p.370), "Kookaburra" (p.389), Wattle-Day (p.409), and "bottle-brush ... black boys" (p.409). Detailed arguments concerning the hypothetical identification of individual characters are patiently explored e.g. Mr Calcott (p.363), the first Trehwella (p.365), The Maggies (p.389) and Willie Struthers (p.391) and of course Mr Cooley himself (p.375).

The four maps in the Appendix illustrating the novel's geographical setting, with accompanying topographical details, will delight the hearts and save the feet of future travellers, whether to Thirroul, Manly or Narrabeen, or merely on a sight-seeing tour of Sydney with its many-lobed harbour.

A perusal of the notes reminds one of the extraordinary range of literary references characteristic of Lawrence's writing, all here admirably annotated - the

range all the more astonishing when one considers that Lawrence was writing far from any literary sources other than those of his well-stocked memory. Amazingly, Professor Steele has drawn a blank with the identification of one or two of D.H.L.'s popular songs.

Michael Black, D.H. Lawrence *Sons and Lovers* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp. 111, paperback £6.95, ISBN 0-521-36924-X;

D.H. Lawrence, *Sons and Lovers*, ed. Helen Baron and Carl Baron (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1994), pp. 498, paperback £5.99, ISBN 0-14-018832-0.

Peter Preston

The first date in the chronology prefaced to Michael Black's book is 1843, when Barber Walker and Co bought the main shaft of Brinsley Colliery; the next two record the births of Arthur Lawrence and Lydia Beardsall, in 1846 and 1851; the fourth is their marriage in 1875. Much of the status of *Sons and Lovers* as a realist and quasi-autobiographical novel rests on these facts, which are a necessary starting-point for any study of the novel. After all, as late as April 1912, Lawrence still referred to it as 'the colliery novel', while the work he did on the text in the succeeding months, under the influence of Frieda, sharpened the focus of its familial and sexual themes. But, as Michael Black shows, the novel also has its genesis in Lawrence's own earlier works, which had established him as a regional and social realist writer with a particular interest in the drama of sexual and parental relationships. Furthermore, even before the novel moved towards its final form during 1912, there had been crucial stages in its composition: in the intervention of Jessie Chambers (for whose courage, intelligence and determination Michael Black clearly has a good deal of admiration); and in the argument with Edward Garnett from whose Flaubertian notions of form Lawrence's text ultimately suffered.

The extended and often tortuous progress of composition and publication is the subject of Michael Black's first chapter, which is his longest, occupying forty out of a hundred pages. My only quarrel with the structure of the book concerns the proportionate length of this chapter, which might either have been shortened or, preferably, the whole book been made longer to allow more space for Michael Black to develop the argument of the two succeeding chapters. Both concern form, in terms of narrative structure and of imagery as structure. The first of these chapters covers the more familiar ground, but is useful in the emphasis it places on the persistent duple and triple patterns of the novel, particularly in relation to one of the novel's main subjects: love and marriage at the turn of the century. Black offers a particularly thorough discussion of the parallels between the Morel and Dawes marriages, and the way in which Paul's relationship with Baxter Dawes enriches the novel's Oedipal theme. When Paul fights Dawes he partly wants to kill him; but he also wants to be reconciled with the man who can be seen as a version of his father.

The novel is also concerned with degrees of consciousness: Morel represents an archaic, mythical, instinctive way of seeing the world while Mrs Morel has the pious, moral outlook of the nineteenth century. Paul and Miriam, however, are of the twentieth century, experiencing what Hardy called 'the ache of modernism', confused, seeking new values and looking uncertainly towards the future. In his