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**SHIFTING THE AXIS:
REGIONAL MODERNISM IN *KANGAROO* –
A FOREGROUND TO AUSTRALIAN LITERARY
MODERNISM**

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As the welcome and monumental *The Cambridge History of Modernism* (2016) shows, the parameters of modernism have been further shaped and defined, and Lawrence's modernist credentials continue to be illuminated by scholars on both sides of the Atlantic.¹ Although not one of "The Men of 1914" – Pound, Eliot, Joyce, and Wyndham Lewis", he is usually included among key modernist figures, such as Mansfield, Yeats and Woolf.² Pericles Lewis, in his Preface to *The Cambridge Introduction to Modernism* (2007), sees Lawrence as one of the "major figures in English-language modernism".³

In this essay I examine *Kangaroo* (1923) as a modernist novel through the lens of "regional modernism", broadening and extending our understanding of Lawrence's engagement with the local, and providing a new basis for evaluating the novel as a major modernist work. As the first modernist novel about Australia, *Kangaroo* had an immediate and enduring impact on the Australian literary scene. I also examine, therefore, Lawrence's role in the shaping of Australian literary modernism, and the engagement of Australian authors with global modernism, which remains under recognised.

The term regional modernism was drawn to my attention by the subtitle of a conference – the 'International D. H. Lawrence Conference, St. Ives Cornwall, 2016: D. H. Lawrence, Cornwall and Regional Modernism' – and is embodied in *Regional Modernisms* (2013), which comprises essays on English, Scottish, Welsh and Irish modernisms. In an essay in that volume Andrew Harrison points to

Lawrence's 'Odour of Chrysanthemums' (1911) and *Sons and Lovers* (1913), "both of which currently serve to underpin his identity as a regional author".⁴ But what exactly is meant by regional modernism? This adjunct term raises a host of fascinating questions. Do we mean works by modernist writers who are from or inhabit a region, and/or whose work is strongly associated with a region: for example Lawrence and his novels *Sons and Lovers*, *The Lost Girl* (1920) or *Lady Chatterley's Lover* (1928) set in his heartland, the English Midlands; or William Faulkner's novels set in a localised area of the American south? What of Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse* (1927), set as it is in the Hebrides, drawing on the topography of Cornwall, and written by an author who helped shape the modernist high culture of the metropolis? Given Lawrence's extensive travels, is there a transnational dimension to regionalism, in addition to the internationalism commonly associated with modernism?⁵ How does the regional differ from the local, communal, provincial, parochial, rural, or the indigenous? Detailed examination of these broad, suggestive questions is beyond the scope of this essay, which moves first to consider more closely how Lawrence's engagement with specific geographical regions interacts with modernism.

Critics have pointed to the centrality of the localised element in Lawrence's writing. In reference to Lawrence's "early work" Raymond Williams observes: "What really comes alive is community, and when I say community I mean something which is of course personal".⁶ Along with Hardy and Eliot, Williams sees in Lawrence a "crisis" of "belonging".⁷ Michael Bell makes an important but easily overlooked observation that Lawrence wrote about literature in an "informal, localised manner",⁸ and that *The Rainbow* (1915), set in the regional English Midlands, and Joyce's *Ulysses* (1918–20) "are densely of their localities".⁹ The idea of regionality, however, as a focus for criticism is relatively recent.

In their introductory chapter to *Regional Modernisms*, Neal Alexander and James Moran offer an overview of the development of critical engagements with regional modernism, and its key

characteristics. Alexander and Moran see their volume as rebalancing the “well-rehearsed narrative” that modernism is “essentially metropolitan and international in character”, and identify a “transnational turn” which “challenges the Eurocentrism of older models of internationalism” that saw “modernism as deterritorialised”.¹⁰ They do not, however, offer a prescriptive definition. I propose that regional modernism, while engaging with the multifarious, international, social, cultural and political forces associated with the modern industrial metropolis, counterposes specific socio-geographic regional spaces in opposition to or as a critique of some or all of these forces.

Alexander and Moran note the difficulties in defining a region, given that “the term’s malleability creates problems of interpretation”.¹¹ They identify a “Kantian tradition” which sees a region as composed of “mental constructs” and a “Marxist line” which views regions as “material, historical entities”.¹² For the purposes of my study, I propose a definition of region which draws on elements of both traditions, and which embraces variously both official and colloquial nomenclature as a basis for capturing Lawrence’s powerful evocations of mytho-geographical environments. In Lawrence’s engagement with regions we find examples of his utopian imaginings interlaced with precise portraits of local populations and geographical features. For Lawrence, regionality is a refuge from, and opposed to, the metropolitan, and while transnational in character, it contests the wider delineations of nation and empire.

Lawrence resided and undertook major work in a diverse range of regions: the English Midlands, where he was born, West Cornwall, the South Coast below Sydney in New South Wales, the area around Taos in New Mexico, and Lake Chapala in Mexico. Regional landscapes – such as “the country of my heart” which is “real England” (*5L* 592–3), the “desolate Celtic magic” of Cornwall (*2L* 493), the “new notes of gum-trees, cabbage palms and tree-ferns” of coastal New South Wales (*4L* 279), the “white sage scrub and dark green piñon scrub” of New Mexico (*4L* 313), and the “bananas in the

garden – little red birds” surrounding the house at Lake Chapala (4L 440) – are highly specific inspirational spaces for Lawrence, which literally ground the work he undertook in these locales.

Lawrence travelled extensively but spent most of his life in non-metropolitan areas. Although he met many leading literary figures of the metropolis early in his career, including Pound, Yeats, Mansfield and Wells, and, for a time, frequented Lady Ottoline Morrell’s gatherings of artists at Garsington Manor, he never committed to metropolitan salons, such as that of the Bloomsbury set.¹³ Moreover, from early in World War I Lawrence was anxious to leave England. Neil Roberts notes that, between the writing of *Sea and Sardinia* (1921) and the *Plumed Serpent* (1926), Lawrence was “centrally concerned with the search for the other of European civilisation: with cultural difference”.¹⁴ Tony Pinkney, in addition to noting that “*The Rainbow* and *Women in Love* together constitute Lawrence’s most far-reaching engagement with modernist aesthetics”, points to Lawrence’s “far-flung intercontinental pilgrimages” as part of his “repudiation” of his “Englishness”.¹⁵ Lawrence’s explorations and evocations of regions are a feature of his search for the other – in Britain and abroad – and his bitterness towards modern industrial England.

David Trotter notes that Marinetti’s “proselytizing visits to London between 1910 and 1915 provided the catalyst for Anglo-American Modernism”, and that the metropolises of London, Paris and New York are at the heart of modernism’s origins.¹⁶ With the exception of his early career as a teacher, when London held a brief and qualified fascination, Lawrence resided in metropolitan areas only sporadically, and he shared many contemporary degenerationist fears about life in cities. In a letter to Blanche Jennings on 9 October 1908 he wrote: “I have been to Stockport and Manchester, vile, hateful, immense, tangled, filthy places both, seething with strangers” (IL 80). Lawrence’s regionality, while often engaging metropolises, ultimately rejects them. There is no Lawrentian novel embracing a city in the way that, for example, Virginia Woolf does in *Mrs Dalloway* (1925), a novel which Matthew Beaumont observes

“attempts to grasp the relationship of consciousness to the conditions of life in the modern metropolis”, and where the character Peter Walsh having returned from colonial service feels “limitless possibilities” on his return to London.¹⁷ The burgeoning suburbs, however, removed from the sophistication of inner city elites, did not necessarily offer “possibilities”. As Anne Fernihough remarks, life in the Edwardian suburbs, which developed as London grew, was often regarded as “a degenerative descent into drabness and sameness”.¹⁸ The scale and rapidity with which major cities grew between the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries is remarkable. Between 1850 and 1910 London grew from 2,685,000 to 7,256,000, and New York from 515,547 to 4,776,883.¹⁹ In 1851, the population of Sydney was 53,924.²⁰ In 1911 it was 656, 801, and in 1922, the year Lawrence visited, it had risen to 934, 540.²¹

The local and non-metropolitan elements in Lawrence’s North American work have been noted by critics. For example, Lee M. Jenkins observes that Lawrence’s writing in the 1920s “was appropriated to local traditions of New Mexico modernism”, the “desert aesthetic” associated with Mary Austin and Alice Corbin Henderson, and alerts us to critical work undertaken by Laura Doyle in proposing “regional transnationalism” and the power of “regional cultures [to] tilt national axes”.²² Howard J. Booth’s recent essay ‘Non-Metropolitan Modernism: E. M. Forster, D. H. Lawrence, and William Faulkner’ provides a valuable analysis of “rural modernisms” and “the hierarchies *within* nations”,²³ which offer new loci for modernism in addition to the postcolonial and the global. Booth amply outlines the centrality of the non-metropolitan in the work of these authors. He observes of *The Plumed Serpent* (1926): “Not only does it decenter a modern focus on the city at the level of content, but it also reaches toward a concomitant form and style for its subject matter”.²⁴ The novel is clear in its rejection of the metropolitan. The narrator informs us of Kate Leslie’s reaction to the Mexican capital: “Never had she seen such faces of pure brutish evil, cold and insect-like, as in Mexico City” (*PS* 76). Colonialism and imperialism are similarly critiqued: “And the spirit of Spaniards in

Mexico dies ...the Spanish buildings stand around, in a sort of dry exhaustion" (PS 79), the narrator reports. Don Ramón considers Mexico's future, questioning its nationhood: "It might. Die out and become American-ised" (PS 63). Lawrence's power to evoke a specific local environment is evident in the passage below describing passengers boarding a "big, wide, flat-bottomed *canoas*" which has arrived from "Tlalpaltepec":

A short man with trousers rolled up came to carry the people on board. The men stood with their backs to him, legs apart. He suddenly dived at them, ducked his head between the fork of their legs, and rose, with a man on his shoulders. So he waded out through the water to the black boat, and heaved his living load on board.

For a woman, he crouched down before her, and she sat on one of his shoulders. He clasped her legs with his right arm, she clasped his dark head. So he carried her to the ship, as if she were nothing.

... Then down the lake to Tlalpaltepec, with its reeds at the end of the lake, and its dead, dead plaza, its dead dry houses of black adobe, its ruined streets, its strange, buried silence, like Pompeii. (PS 245)

Lawrence's creative engagement with modernist preoccupations and anxieties about gender, race and the rise and fall of civilisations extends this writing beyond descriptive reportage and travelogue. The woman riding side saddle on the man's shoulders suggests a delicate, erotic innocence amongst the peasants. The "dead plaza" of Tlalpaltepec, and the apparently incongruous reference to "Pompeii" in the context of Mexico, in addition to recalling a past civilisation, gives us a powerful sense of what Lawrence famously referred to as 'The Spirit of Place', which he explained in *Studies in Classic American Literature* (1923): "Every continent has its own great spirit of place. Every people is polarised in some particular locality, which is home, the homeland. Different places on the face of the earth have

different vital effluence, different vibration, different chemical exhalation, different polarity with different stars: call it what you like" (*SCAL* 17). Lawrence often refers to national and continental examples of place – his novels critique England, Australia and America. However, it is his use of the term "particular locality" and his obsessive search for what he also refers to as a "homeland" which suggest that the idea of region can be useful in illuminating Lawrence's oeuvre.

Although Lawrence himself did not attach particular significance to the word region, regionality is a characteristic of his evocations of place, and is often infused with a Lawrentian spirituality – aligned with his utopian region Rananim. For Lawrence, specific regions exhibited a combination of geographic and spiritual elements. In 'The Spirit of Place' Lawrence writes: "The Nile valley produced not only the corn, but the terrific religions of Egypt" (*SCAL* 17). At various times Lawrence refers to the possibility of living in Florida, the Andes and the South Seas, amongst other locations. Bell observes that beginning with *Aaron's Rod* (1922), in Lawrence's subsequent novels until *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, "characters go around the world in search of places and culture which would exemplify or, provide insight into, his own sense of being".²⁵ While Lawrence often spent time in metropolitan centres, enjoying restaurants and museums, it was largely in regions that he wrote his novels, and in which he chose to live. Bell observes that "Lawrence was to become in some measure an adoptive American writer",²⁶ and we may extrapolate to include Australia and Mexico as other countries he for a time "adopted", and the regions within those countries. Notably, in Mexico and Australia, Lawrence's protagonists for a time imagine that they might inhabit a new "homeland". In *The Plumed Serpent*, Kate, albeit inconclusively, considers that she will remain in Mexico: "'Why should I go away!' she said. 'Why should I see the buses on the mud of Piccadilly, on Christmas Eve'" (*PS* 439). And in *Kangaroo* Somers remarks: "If I stay much longer [in Australia] I shall stay altogether" (*K* 347).

***Kangaroo* – the Australian South Coast and Cornwall**

Kangaroo's innovative, journalistic and autobiographical style, its characterisation as a "gramophone of a novel" (K 280), incorporating found objects or 'Bits' from *The Sydney Bulletin*, and its concern with issues of gender and empire, point to its modernism. As much as *Kangaroo* can be read as a generalised impression of, or reaction to Australia the nation, the novel, through its primary location in the fictional Mullumbimby, engages a highly specific geographical region. Lawrence spent most of his time in Australia at Thirroul, about one and a half hours by train to the south of Sydney. With some similarity to the Lawrences' house at Higher Tregerthen in Cornwall, the Lawrence house at Thirroul sits in a narrow plain, behind which rises abruptly "the dark tor" (K 79), a striking escarpment. Thirroul, Mullumbimby in the novel, is located within a region of the New South Wales south coast known as the Illawarra, which is defined as follows: "The R[egional] D[evelopment] A[ustralia] Illawarra region stretches from Helensburgh on Sydney's southern rim to the South Coast village of Gerroa. The region encompasses an area of 1,128 square kilometres and includes the three local government areas of Wollongong, Shellharbour and Kiama with an overall population currently of approximately 283,000".²⁷

Harriett Somers, after conversations with Victoria Callcott in Sydney, wants "to go down to the South Coast" (K 66), to "another world" (K 53) where she hopes to find "lovely little bays with sand" (K 67), removed from metropolitan Sydney. The narratorial description of the exit from Sydney is heavily weighted against the Australian city. Unlike London's "solid rows of houses" Sydney exhibits "the weary half established straggling of more suburb" (K 76). When the Somerses begin to enter "real country", the landscape with its "dull-leaved gum-trees" and "tree ferns standing on one knobby leg" is wildly exotic to the English couple (K 76). The "virgin bush" appears "unvisited, lost, sombre", and "aboriginal, out of our ken" (K 77). Lawrence's recourse to the term aboriginal is

significant. In the Australian context, the word is capitalised and has long been used to refer specifically to Australia's indigenous inhabitants. Lawrence understood the specific meaning of the word and, given the frequency with which he uses the term in *Kangaroo*, I infer that Lawrence freights the word with both its specifically Australian meaning and its wider pseudo-anthropological meaning. For Somers the landscape appears as if it were still occupied by Australian Aborigines. It is heavily racinated. In Western Australia he had experienced a "terror" in the bush, "the spirit of the place", which "might have reached a long black arm and gripped him" (K 14). However, through its appearing "unvisited", the landscape is also paradoxically deracinated – and ripe for colonial occupation. And yet, the colonisers have a peculiarly flimsy grasp on the country: "As soon as night came, all the rattle-taggle of amorphous white settlements disappeared, and the continent of the kangaroo reassumed its strange, unvisited glamour" (K 32). In a complicated, acrobatic rendering of the landscape, the narrator explains that Somers realises that if he can suspend his English viewpoint, which induces "the feeling of ugliness or monotony, in landscape or in nigger", he can perceive the "subtle, remote, *formless* beauty more poignant than anything ever experienced before" (K 77). The landscape no longer appears as other.

The Australian landscape was a profound challenge to Lawrence's Anglo aesthetics. He wrote to Earl Brewster that the area around his house was "extraordinarily subtle, *unknown* country" (4L 265). If we consider Lawrence's first encounter with a non-European landscape, that of Ceylon (Sri Lanka), a couple of months prior to his arrival in Australia, where he wrote to Mary Cannan "I hate the tropics" and "loathe the tropical fruits" (4L 224), it is apparent that in Australia he was learning to adjust his gaze to an alien environment. However, he warned Cannan: "*Don't you travel. Get a nice little house in Sussex or Hants*" (4L 224). He concluded: "I need this bitterness, apparently, to cure me of the illusion of other places" (4L 224).

Once settled at Mullumbimby, Harriett and Somers explore the district around the township, travelling to the principal town Wollongong, which is renamed "Wolloona" and described as a "lost little town" in *Kangaroo* (K 272). The sub-tropical landscape, with its "jungle, impenetrable, with tree-ferns and bunchy cabbage-palms" (K 177), is distinctive and is not found west of the Great Dividing Range which hugs the east coast of the Australian continent. To Somers, it is oppressive, inducing a "saurian torpor" (K 178). Australia is unlike and remote from anything he has known. He tells the Cornish migrant Jaz: "You just walk out of the world and into Australia. And it's just somewhere else" (K 204). Lawrence's evocations of the Australian landscape in *Kangaroo* are often celebrated, even by those who otherwise dislike the novel:

So the land swooped in grassy swoops, past the railway, steep up to the bush: here and there thick-headed palm trees left behind by the flood of time and the flood of civilisation both: bungalows with flame-trees: bare bungalows like packing cases: an occasional wind-fan for raising water: a round well-pool, perfectly round: then the bush, and a little colliery steaming among the trees. And so the great tree-covered swoop upwards of the tor. (K 344)

As he does in *The Plumed Serpent*, Lawrence in the above passage, paints a realistic picture of a specific socio-geographic landscape, infusing it with an unsettling element. The houses are temporary, looking like "packing-cases" (K 344), evoking the insubstantial nature of European Australian and the passing of civilisations.

Somers's metaphysical speculations about his location on the South Coast include the idea of home – as both dwelling and the wider sense of belonging. A seemingly innocuous plot detail of Somers returning "home" after a walk, is challenged by his outright rejection of the very idea of a domesticity: "I won't delude myself with the fallacy of home," he said to himself. "The four walls are a blanket I wrap around me, in timelessness and nowhere, to go to

sleep” (K 333). “Home, to tea. The clicking of the clock ... Just for clock-work’s sake”, is for Somers an empty habit. His momentary repudiation of the fledgling domestic environment he and Frieda have created in Australia appears to be at odds with the earlier homesickness for England he felt in Sydney, where “at the Circular Quay he pined for London Bridge” (K 20). Surely Somers should be pleased he at least has a home to go to, albeit on foreign soil. Instead, Somers imagines home as an impersonal, purely physical phenomenon, which one inhabits without “feelings” like a “bird”, or like “The fish has the vast ocean for home” (K 333). He might then be free of nostalgia for England, and the sense of strangeness of Australia, and finally liberated from the need to scour the globe for a place to live.

However, Somers remains confronted with the frightening possibility that Australia might not only become his physical home but supplant his essential Englishness. When Jaz remarks to Somers: ““You’ve got a bit of an Australian look this morning about you””, Somers replies: ““I feel Australian. I feel a new creature.— But what’s the outcome?”” (K 203). Somers grapples with the possibility that his identity is undergoing a fundamental shift. He might actually thrive on the South Coast, with its fresh, utopian quality, where “the flimsy hills of Australia were like a new world, and the frail *inconspicuousness* of the landscape, that was still so clear and clean” (K 346–7). He considers he might “go a bit further back into the bush ... and—damn everything” (K 347). At its conclusion the novel celebrates the glory of the South Coast spring. “The bush was in bloom, the wattles were out. ... And the perfume in all the air that might be heaven” (K 354–5). “At home, with all the house full of blossom” (K 356), on the point of departure from the South Coast, bound for Sydney and San Francisco, Somers and Harriett experience a sharp pang of regret. “Do you wish you were staying?”, Somers asks: “And he knew that one of his souls would stand forever out on those rocks beyond the jetty, towards Bulli” (K 356).

Remarkably, for Somers, the South Coast conjures up memories of the joys and trials he experienced in another region, which for a

time had also been home – wartime West Cornwall. “[P]erhaps it was being again in a purely English-speaking country, and feeling again that queer revulsion from the English form of democracy ... Or perhaps it was just the inversion of the seasons, the climate” (K 260), Somers speculates. He also recalls saying to his Cornish friend John Thomas that when the war is over “we will go far across the seas—to Mexico—to Australia—and try living there” (K 239) – which Somers has done. It may be that Lawrence had a similar conversation with William Henry Hocking, on whom John Thomas is probably based, and who Lawrence briefly tried to mentor.

Lawrence had a deep fascination with ancient and traditional cultures, stemming from his readings in anthropology, and exemplified in *Women in Love* (1920) by the much referenced “carved figure of the negro woman in labour” (WL 78). As David Richards notes, events such as “the 1851 Great Exhibition in London” introduced the public to the diversity of cultures represented in the British Empire, foregrounding “Modernism’s identification with the primitive”.²⁸ The day after his arrival in Cornwall Lawrence informed Catherine Carswell, in a letter of 31 December 1915: “The country remote and desolate and unconnected: it belongs still to the days before Christianity, the days of Druids, or of desolate Celtic magic and conjuring” (2L 493). And just as Lawrence, through his rendering of an uninhabited, pre-human landscape infuses the South Coast of New South Wales with otherness, Lawrence’s pre-Christian Cornwall is other, distinct from and oppositional, to England. He affirmed to Carswell on 11 January 1916: “I like Cornwall very much. It is not England” (2L 503).

We may also infer that Australia was one of the many places Lawrence was interested in at this time, which may further explain Lawrence’s recalling of Cornwall in *Kangaroo*.²⁹ In a letter of 8 December 1915 Lawrence referred to James Frazer’s *The Golden Bough* and *Totemism and Exogamy*, describing how they had confirmed his idea of a “blood-consciousness”, that “this is the origin of totem”, and that “some [Australian] tribes no doubt really were kangaroos” (2L 470). Christopher Pollnitz observes that such

“borrowing from turn-of-the-century anthropology is a foundation [sic] Modernist strategy”.³⁰

In a further illustration of Lawrence’s interest in Australia at this time, less than a fortnight later he told Catherine Carswell, on 11 January 1916: “I read *Where Bonds Are Loosed*. It has got some real *go* in it” (2*L* 502). The 1914 novel, by E. Grant Watson, is set in Western Australia and the protagonist is an Englishman who witnesses the degradation of Australian Aborigines on a remote island off the north-west coast. This vast region remained in Lawrence’s imagination. Years later, en route from Perth to Melbourne he wrote: “The sense of futility grows – and it’s nice to know there is this country – the North West particularly – where one could lose oneself away from the world” (4*L* 245). This region is recalled in Lawrence’s subsequent novel, *The Boy in the Bush* (1924). Jack Grant’s bigamous marriage proposal to Mary is predicated on his desire to live in the remote “North-West” (BB 329), the “Never-Never” (BB 330), far removed from the strictures of civilisation.

A Cornish thread in *Kangaroo* is maintained through William James Trewhella (Jaz), who is married to an Australian. Although a seemingly minor character, Jaz appears throughout the novel as a sounding board for Somers’s responses to Australia. On discovering that his house on the northern coastal outskirts of Sydney bears the Cornish name St. Columb, Somers’s “heart flew to Cornwall” (K 28). The Somerses learn that Jaz was from “St. Columb Major”, emigrating as “a boy of fifteen” (K 30). While Trewhella grimly recalls “the little stony holes they have for rooms in those old stone Cornish cottages”, Harriett retorts romantically: “Yes—but we had a lovely one” (K 70). The coastal region around Thirroul reminded Lawrence of Cornwall. Writing to Frieda’s mother he remarked: “Here it is winter, but not cold. But today the sky is dark, and it makes me think of Cornwall” (4*L* 249). There are also resonances of Lawrence’s wartime descriptions of Cornwall in his later descriptions of the South Coast. On 8 March 1916 he described the house at Higher Tregerthen to Mark Gertler as “beautifully situated

under the hills and above the sea" (2*L* 566). Eight years later from Thirroul he wrote to Else Jaffe that he and Frieda "have got a delightful bungalow here ... right on the shore ... About two miles inland there is a great long hill like a wall, facing the sea" (4*L* 262–3). In *Kangaroo* the cows at Mullumbimby are 'so unafraid', perhaps suggesting a wild innocence associated with the extreme remoteness of the sparsely populated Australia, whereas "In Cornwall, Harriett said, the cows had always sniffed in when she came near" (*K* 188). It is more difficult today to see country around Thirroul as reminiscent of Cornwall, but in 1922 the present day spread of suburbia did not exist. The expanses of green grass next to the sea with the rising hills behind would have borne some resemblance to the scene at Higher Tregerthen.

Many of the novel's evocations of metropolitan Sydney contrast sharply with the more idyllic renditions of the South Coast landscape. While Sydney is often regarded as one of the most picturesque cities in the world, Somers recalls that at his first sighting it looked "Unspeakably forlorn" (*K* 156). He perceives metropolitan Sydney as essentially a burlesque of London: "an imitation of London and Birmingham, without any core or pith of meaning. Business going on full speed: but only because it is the other end of English and American business" (*K* 27). The novel, therefore, in addition to decentering Sydney in relation to the adjacent South Coast region, asserts its peripheral, vassal status in relation to the global centres of global culture and commerce. With Sydney's "absence of any inner meaning" and "swarming teeming Sydney flowing out into these myriads of bungalows" (*K* 27) one is left with an image of a vacuous metropolis, like the hole in a doughnut. The inhabitants of Sydney speak a debased dialect, a "cheeky Cockney Australian" English (*K* 25), which Lawrence reproduces with considerable care and accuracy. Harriett and Somers return to a restaurant where she has lost her scarf but the people "hedn't seen it ... the next people who kyme arfter must 'ev tyken it" (*K* 25).

***Kangaroo* and Australian modernism: Rethinking the dominant axes of modernism**

In my view, the publication of Lawrence's *Kangaroo* in 1923 was the most significant modernist development in the Australian literary scene, and the first modernist expression of Australia in a novel. In re-examining *Kangaroo* as an example of regional modernism, and in light of the continuing interest in the scope and definition of modernism, exemplified by the recent publication of the *Cambridge History of Modernism*, this writer has been struck by the omission in that volume of *Kangaroo* as a pre-eminent example of a modernist novel, and the exclusion of examples of Australian literature. With its innovative form, authorial interventions and critique of global politics, Lawrence knew he was breaking new ground with the novel. Writing from Thirroul on 9 July 1922, he informed S. S. Koteliansky "I shall be able to read this famous *Ulysses* when I get to America", and of *Kangaroo* he wrote: "I have nearly finished my novel here – but such a novel! Even the Ulysseans will spit at it" (4L 275). He wrote subsequently to F. Wubbenhorst that he could not "read *Ulysses*" but noted that "in Europe they usually mention us together – James Joyce and D. H. Lawrence" (4L 340). With Lawrence writing *Kangaroo* in 1922, and the publication of *Ulysses* and Eliot's 'The Waste Land' that same year, there is an appealing symmetry, and synergy in a modernist grouping of these authors. Lawrence novels are in fact well represented in *The Cambridge History*, however, the absence of Australian authors, many of whom were influenced by Lawrence, remains anomalous, and repays closer examination.

Writing in 2011, Elleke Boehmer and Steven Matthews observe that "Interpretations of Modernism current in the academy still tend to assume a long dominant Anglo-American or Euro-American axis".³¹ Boehmer and Matthews propose the "shaping of Modernism by a colonial geopolitics", querying whether the "diffusionist picture from traditional centre to periphery [is] the whole picture".³² They

have in mind the inclusion of works by colonial authors originating from or inhabiting the periphery, and consider whether modernism can be said to “have been *informed* by colonial experiences and energies” and exchanges between “the so-called centre (London, Paris, New York) and its peripheries (Calcutta, Kingston, Sydney)”.³³ Mansfield is put forward as an example of this proposition, both personally, in terms of the “bourgeois provinciality of her colonial backwater background”, and artistically through “the teasingly innovative jump cuts that characterize the colonial Katherine Mansfield’s short stories”³⁴ – although it is not entirely clear how her stylistic innovations are colonial in origin. However, the overall observation that “Mansfield’s bifurcated colonial-metropolitan positioning is integral to her Modernism” is a helpful characterisation of her life and work.³⁵ And it may be that Mansfield’s origins in New Zealand and contribution to modernism is proof that former colonies were culturally connected to the centre of empire in the early twentieth century and were not necessarily backwaters. In contrast to Mansfield, Lawrence travelled in reverse, seeking to escape the metropolitan centre of the British Empire. *Kangaroo*, I suggest, may also be usefully considered as contributing to modernist literary trajectories – in two directions, between Australia and the centre (albeit from an English perspective), and within Australia.

In her 1924 study *Modern Australian Literature*, the Australian critic Nettie Palmer praised *Kangaroo*’s “wayward beauty” and its “revelation of our Australian character”, seeing it as “a gift from overseas”.³⁶ And *Kangaroo* is often included as a context for Australian literature,³⁷ and has been described as being “on the borderline of Australian literature”.³⁸ Boehmer and Matthews, however, in considering Australian literature, overlook *Kangaroo* and offer examples of “Modernist disruption” exemplified by A. B. Paterson, Henry Lawson and Kenneth Slessor, and a post-war “nationalism that was open to Nietzsche and to modern cultural and sexual mores”.³⁹ To my mind, important as these authors are in their own right, there are better examples of Australian modernist authors,

many of whom were influenced by Lawrence. He was a key influence on several prominent Australian novelists of the early to mid-twentieth century, including Katharine Susannah Prichard, Christina Stead and Patrick White, whose novels could usefully be considered or reconsidered in light of the continuing interest in and extension of global modernist studies.

Prichard, already an established novelist, praised Lawrence's work, and had hoped to meet Lawrence in Australia in 1922 (see *4L* 272). However, the Australian novelist Henry Handel Richardson (born Ethel Florence Richardson) thought Prichard's writing would have been better had she not "come under the influence of D. H. Lawrence's 'dark forces' & urge of the blood etc".⁴⁰

Although not usually considered a modernist, Richardson could qualify as a proto-modernist. Richardson was keenly aware of many of the key modernist figures during a working life spent in England. In her letters she notes that the futurist "signor Marinetti has also been paying a visit" to London, that she took "a deep interest in Virginia Woolf", and "thought *Kangaroo* one of L's poorest efforts & have never been able to get through it. The descriptions of scenery of course excepted. Otherwise pure journalism".⁴¹ Richardson's novel *Maurice Guest* was published by Heinemann in 1908 and, surprisingly, given her complaint above, it was cut because of its "unusually frank treatment of certain sexual and psychological states".⁴² In reviews it was compared favourably with novels by Theodore Dreiser, W. Somerset Maugham and Wyndham Lewis, amongst others.⁴³ There are some coincidental parallels in Richardson and Lawrence's publication history. Richardson's story 'Death' appeared in the *English Review* in October 1911, a month after Lawrence's 'A Fragment of Stained Glass',⁴⁴ and her *The Getting of Wisdom* (1910) is advertised on the flyleaf of *The White Peacock* (1911), as one of the new six shillings novels published by Heinemann.

Christina Stead and Patrick White, both much-travelled authors who spent time in the United Kingdom and the United States, "pursued modernist and European modes in their fiction".⁴⁵ Hazel

Rowley sees “unmistakeable traces of Lawrence in vocabulary and imagery” in Stead’s novel *For Love Alone* (1944),⁴⁶ and Michael Hollington has demonstrated Lawrence’s influence on Patrick White.⁴⁷ Pollnitz has traced the poet Judith Wright’s response to her reading of Lawrence’s poems, noting her sense that they were both “weird” and “lovely”, and that ultimately, if predictably, she found Lawrence “more prophet than poet”.⁴⁸

The various contributions, engagements and responses of these authors to modernism could usefully be included in the global catalogue of modernist authors. It appears, however, that as far as Australian literary modernism is concerned, Boehmer and Matthews’s attempt to realign the axis of modernism has faltered. Australian modernists, in Lawrence’s words, still appear to be at the “other end of English and American business” (*K* 27). The index to the recent *The Cambridge History of Modernism* contains a single reference to one Australian author: Patrick White. There are also several areas where developments in Australia, outside the world of literature, could be viewed as having contributed to the context of Anglo-American modernism, and could usefully have been included in the Chronology of the *Cambridge History*. For example, the “world’s first full-length feature film”, held to be *The Story of the Kelly Gang*, was made in Melbourne in 1906.⁴⁹ In the realm of socio-politics, Australian women gained the right to vote in Federal elections in 1902,⁵⁰ while British women had to wait until 1918 (aged over 30 only),⁵¹ and American women until 1920.⁵² During World War I Britain introduced conscription to boost the war effort. In Australia, however, government efforts to introduce conscription were defeated in two referenda, causing considerable social fracture. The conscription debate in Australia was registered in the Bloomsbury group, who were opposed to the war. In a letter to Lady Ottoline Morrell, dated 31 October 1916, Lytton Strachey remarked: “What good news it is about Australian Conscription! Really the first piece of good news there’s been since the war”.⁵³ Examples of Australia’s engagement with the culture of modernism, both in

Australia and globally, can be found in Robert Dixon and Veronica Kelly's *Impact of the Modern*.⁵⁴

A reading of *Kangaroo* as regional modernism, one of the “new modernisms developed since the mid-1990s”,⁵⁵ alerts us to the specificity of Lawrence's engagement with modernism and reminds us of his contribution to the shaping of Australian literary modernism – a hitherto peripheral branch which may yet contribute to a shift in the current dominant axes.

¹ Tony Pinkney argued this case in *D. H. Lawrence and Modernism* (Iowa City, IA: U of Iowa P, 1990), and Lawrence is now included in broader studies such as those referenced below.

² Vincent Sherry, ‘Introduction: A History of Modernism’, in *The Cambridge History of Modernism*, ed. Vincent Sherry (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2016), 1–25, 19.

³ Pericles Lewis, ‘Preface’, *The Cambridge Introduction to Modernism*, ed. Pericles Lewis (Cambridge: CUP, 2007), xvii–xvi, xx.

⁴ Andrew Harrison, ‘The Regional Modernism of D. H. Lawrence and James Joyce’, in *Regional Modernisms*, eds Neal Alexander and James Moran (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2013), 44–64, 46.

⁵ *The Australian Concise Concise Oxford Dictionary* (Melbourne: Oxford UP, 1987) defines ‘transnational’ as “extending beyond national boundaries” and ‘international’ as, inter alia, “representative of different nations” (1209, 560). Lawrence's modernism may be seen as transnational because it shifts across national boundaries, reflecting his travels, as distinct from the international origins of, for example, the high modernists, namely Pound and Eliot (United States), Joyce (Ireland) and Lewis (Canada/United Kingdom), and the diverse international locales of modernisms.

⁶ Raymond Williams, *The English Novel from Dickens to Lawrence* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1973), 172.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 171.

⁸ Michael Bell, ‘Lawrence and modernism’, in *The Cambridge Companion to D. H. Lawrence*, ed. Anne Fernihough (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2001), 179–96, 193.

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- ⁹ Michael Bell, 'The metaphysics of Modernism', in *The Cambridge Companion to Modernism*, ed. Michael Levenson (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2011), 9–32, 22.
- ¹⁰ Neal Alexander and James Moran, 'Introduction: Regional Modernisms', in Alexander and Moran, *Regional Modernisms*, 1–21, 1, 3.
- ¹¹ *Ibid.*, 10.
- ¹² *Ibid.*, 12.
- ¹³ The Bloomsbury set also gathered at Virginia Woolf's Monk's House at Rodmell, Sussex, and her sister Vanessa Bell's Charleston nearby.
- ¹⁴ Neil Roberts, *D. H. Lawrence, Travel and Cultural Difference* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 3.
- ¹⁵ Pinkney, *D. H. Lawrence and Modernism*, 100, 6.
- ¹⁶ David Trotter, 'The Modernist Novel', in *The Cambridge Companion to Modernism*, ed. Levenson, 69–98, 71.
- ¹⁷ Matthew Beaumont, 'Modernism and the Urban Imaginary I: Spectacle and Introspection', in Sherry, *The Cambridge History of Modernism*, 220–34, 221.
- ¹⁸ Anne Fernihough, *Freewomen and Supermen: Edwardian Radicals and Literary Modernism* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2013), 61.
- ¹⁹ See Stephen Kern, *The Modernist Novel: A Critical Introduction* (New York: Cambridge UP, 2011), 12.
- ²⁰ Australian Bureau of Statistics, in Joe Flood, 'The Case of Sydney Australia', 3: <http://www.ucl.ac.uk/dpu-projects/Global_Report/pdfs/Sydney.pdf>.
- ²¹ Australian Bureau of Statistics, cat. No 3105.0.65.001 Australian Historical Population Statistics, Table 18.- population(a), capital city and balance of state(b), states and territories, 30 June 1901 onwards.
- ²² Lee M. Jenkins, *The American Lawrence* (Gainesville, FL: UP of Florida, 2015), 7.
- ²³ Howard J. Booth, 'Non-Metropolitan Modernism: E. M. Forster, D. H. Lawrence, and William Faulkner', in Sherry, *The Cambridge History of Modernism*, 700–16, 701.
- ²⁴ *Ibid.*, 709.
- ²⁵ Bell, 'Lawrence and modernism', 191.
- ²⁶ *Ibid.*, 180.
- ²⁷ Regional Development Australia: Illawarra, 'Regional Overview': <<http://www.rdaillawarra.com.au/about-us/regional-overview/>>.

²⁸ David Richards, 'At Other Times: Modernism and the "Primitive"', in Sherry, *The Cambridge History of Modernism*, 65, 64.

²⁹ For an account of the development of Lawrence's interest in Australia, and its early introduction into his work, see David Game, *D. H. Lawrence's Australia: Anxiety at the Edge of Empire* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2015), chapters 1–4.

³⁰ Christopher Pollnitz, 'D. H. Lawrence and Judith Wright: Overlapping Modernisms', *D. H. Lawrence Studies* 20.2 (2012), 1–35, 3.

³¹ Elleke Boehmer and Steven Matthews, 'Modernism and colonialism', in Levenson, *The Cambridge Companion to Modernism*, 284–300, 284.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ *Ibid.*, 285.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 289.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ Nettie Palmer, *Modern Australian Literature (1900–1923)* (Melbourne and Sydney: Lothian Book Publishing Company, 1924), 58.

³⁷ See 'Chronology', in *The Cambridge Companion to Australian Literature*, ed. Elizabeth Webby (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2000), xi–xxi, xv.

³⁸ H. M. Green, *An Outline of Australian Literature* (Sydney and Melbourne: Whitcombe and Tombs Ltd, 1930), 223.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 296.

⁴⁰ Clive Probyn and Bruce Steele, eds, *Henry Handel Richardson: The Letters*, 3 vols (Carlton South: Miegunyah Press, 2000), Letter 1144.

⁴¹ Probyn and Steele, *Henry Handel Richardson: The Letters*, Letters 327, 586, 1266.

⁴² Clive Probyn and Bruce Steele, 'Introduction', *Maurice Guest* by Henry Handel Richardson (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1998), xxv–lxxi, xxvi.

⁴³ See *ibid.*, lix. eds.

⁴⁴ See the *English Review* 9, October 1911, 405–12, and September 1911, 242–51.

⁴⁵ Gillian Whitlock, 'From biography to autobiography', in Webby, *The Cambridge Companion to Australian Literature*, 232–57, 234.

⁴⁶ Hazel Rowley, *Christina Stead: A Biography* (Carlton: The Miegunyah Press, 2007), 112.

⁴⁷ See Michael Hollington, 'D. H. Lawrence in Patrick White', *D. H. Lawrence Studies* (Korea), 12.2 (2004), 215–36. For a broad overview of

the impact of *Kangaroo* on Australian literature see Game, *D. H. Lawrence's Australia*, 127–31.

⁴⁸ Pollnitz, 'D. H. Lawrence and Judith Wright', 5, 6.

⁴⁹ 'First Feature Film', Guinness World Records:

<<http://www.guinnessworldrecords.com/world-records/first-feature-film>>.

⁵⁰ See Australian Electoral Commission, 'Women and the Right to Vote':

<https://www.aec.gov.au/Elections/Australian_Electoral_History/wright.htm>.

⁵¹ About Parliament, 'Women and the Vote':

<<https://www.parliament.uk/about/living-heritage/transformingsociety/electionsvoting/womenvote/overview/thevote/>>.

⁵² 'When Did Women Get the Right to Vote in the US?', *World Atlas*:

<<https://www.worldatlas.com/articles/when-did-women-get-the-right-to-vote.html>>.

⁵³ Paul Levy, ed., *The Letters of Lytton Strachey* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2005), 331.

⁵⁴ See Robert Dixon and Veronica Kelly, eds, *Impact of the Modern: Vernacular Modernities in Australia 1870s–1960s* (Sydney: Sydney UP, 2008).

⁵⁵ Steven Connor, 'Epilogue: Modernism after Postmodernism', in Sherry, *The Cambridge History of Modernism*, 820–34, 821, 825.