



THE BULLETIN, DH LAWRENCE & KANGAROO



Photo: Rose Shead

The dinner at the Union University & Schools Club, Sydney, on Thursday August 2016, to celebrate the launch of Robert Darroch's two volume *DH Lawrence's 99 Days in Australia* and to commemorate Lawrence's admiration for *The Bulletin* which he quoted from in *Kangaroo*. Among the guests were artists Paul Delprat (standing, left) and Garry Shead, and former *Bulletin* luminaries: Trevor Kennedy, Trevor Sykes, Lindsay Foyle, John Edwards, Deborah Hope, Geoffrey Lehmann, Evan Williams and Robert Darroch. Sandra Jobson (Darroch) paid tribute to the leading Australian artists and musicians who were inspired by Lawrence, including Sidney Nolan, Brett Whiteley, Garry Shead, Paul Delprat, sculptor Tom Bass and Peter Sculthorpe



Lawrence reading *The Bulletin* at Wyewurk

Drawing by Paul Delprat

THE INFLUENCE of *The Bulletin* in Lawrence's 1923 Australian novel, *Kangaroo* – his 8th major novel – is substantial and pervasive. The role *The Bulletin* played in my story of how *Kangaroo* came to be created is also profound. I do not say that had I not worked at and with *The Bulletin* between 1977 and 1992, my two books on Lawrence's 99 days in Australia would not have been written. But I do acknowledge that much of the research – my principal discoveries – occurred during those one and a half decades.

So I have much to thank *The Bulletin* – and my editor, and later my editor-in-chief (and later still my Consolidated Press CEO) Trevor Kennedy – for. By employing me, Trevor financed my research. Tonight's function is largely to express my gratitude to and to the late and much lamented *Bulletin*.

The Bulletin's influence in *Kangaroo* was diverse and far-reaching.

Lawrence "borrowed" significant extracts from two and probably three contemporary issues of *The Bulletin* to put into the text his Australian "romance"...which was his description of the novel he spent 33 of the 99 days he was in our country composing a writing (as you will see in my books, the two are not the same)...in 30 hectic writing-sessions down in his "cottage by the sea", *Wyewurk*, in Thirroul.

A major complaint of what Andrew Moore – who is present here tonight – christened "The Darroch Thesis" is how Lawrence hit time, not only to gather the factual content for his novel, but to write it up at a rate of up to 5000 words – not a day, but a morning...and in longhand (which puts the puny output of some of us journalistic mortals to shame).

It takes a genius to do that...and indeed Lawrence was a genius – probably the most gifted writing mind ever to visit our shores. For he saw below the surface to the underlying fascism beneath it (what he called "the horrible paws"), as my volume 2 reveals. His first main "borrowing" came in chapter 6, after he had lunch in town with the man who became the title-character of the *nc* Benjamin Cooley (in real life the secret army leader Charles Rosenthal). This extract was the Cape York "tiger-cat" story, of which he said "they put that yarn in *The Bulletin*" (he scrupulously attributed his *Bulletin* "steals").

Yet even before that, he was using his reading of *The Bulletin* to inspire his "muse" and "flesh out" the text.

In that same chapter he first calls Cooley "Kangaroo", and I quote his words:

"He [Cooley/Kangaroo] was all over me when I mentioned your name.

You'd like Kangaroo. He's a great chap."

"What's his name?"

"Cooley--Ben--Benjamin Cooley."

"They like him on the *Bulletin*, don't they? Didn't I see something about Ben Cooley and his straight talk?"

There is something especially interesting about this *Bulletin* reference. In an almost desperate effort to disparage the Darroch Thesis, the appointed Cambridge University Press editor of the 1994 "definitive" edition of *Kangaroo*, Bruce Steele, said I was wrong about Rosenthal, and that if Lawrence had anyone in mind when he created the character Cooley, it would have been Sir John Monash, not Rosenthal.

So therefore he must have read over the quote in the copy of *The Bulletin* that we know Lawrence read which praised Rosenthal "his straight talk". (Steele dismissed the entire Darroch Theses, which, his Introduction asserted, "had now been shown to be without foundation"...words he will come to regret.)

In fact, Lawrence had cited *The Bulletin* before this, in chapter three, where he wrote:

Somers thought of an advertisement in the Bulletin. "Madge: I can't think what you see in Jack. He is so unintellectual." "Gladys: but he always brings a pound of Billyer's chocolates."

At one point the Somers character – who is Lawrence – receives mail from England, which offends him. He writes: *he felt quite capable of saying "Good dog" to the sea: to quote one of the quips from the Bulletin.*

Although Lawrence hadn't a clue what he had run across in Australia (he did not know what a secret army was), he recognised *The Bulletin* had an irreverent streak. At one point he is talking to the trade union leader "Willie" Struthers (actually "Jock" Garden) who tells him:

Australians are a good bit subtler and more disillusioned than the English working classes. You can throw Australians chaff, and they laugh at it. They may even pretend to peck it up. But all the time they KNOW, and they're not taken in. The Bulletin would soon help them out, if they were. They've got a natural sarcastic turn, have the Australians.

In the most important chapter in the novel – when Somers comes up to town to confront Cooley/Rosenthal – he goes to the GPO buy some stamps, then comes out and walks down Martin Place, where he sees "the pink spread of *Bulletins* for sale at the corner *George Street*" (where he buys a copy to read back in Thirroul).

Two chapters later, now deprived of any further secret army material from Rosenthal and his secret army, he pads out the narrative with an entire chapter filched from the famous Aboriginalities page of *The Bulletin*. He called the chapter "Bits" and it starts:

*...he looked at the big pink spread of his Sydney Bulletin viciously. The Bulletin was the only periodical in the world that really amused him. The horrible stuffiness of English newspapers he could not stand: they had the same effect on him as fish-balls in a restaurant, loathsome stuffy fare. English magazines were too piffling, too imbecile. But the "Bully", even if it was made up all of bits, and had neither head nor tail nor feet nor wings, was still a lively creature. He liked its straightforwardness and the kick in some of its tantrums. It beat no solemn drums. It had no deadly earnestness. It was just stoical, and spitefully humorous. Yes, at the moment he liked the Bulletin better than any paper he knew, though even the Bulletin tried a dowdy bit of swagger sometimes, especially on the pink page. But then the pink page was just "literary" and who cares? [it was actually *The Bulletin's* famous Red Page, which carried its (substantial) weekly literary content] So he rushed to read the "bits". They would make Bishop Latimer forget himself and his martyrdom at the stake.*

(This "Bits" paragraph was inspired by the copy of *The Bulletin* he had bought outside the GPO the previous Saturday.)

He quoted precisely eight separate "Bits" in this chapter, all word-for-word and from the same issue of *The Bulletin*: "Bits about bullock drivers and the biggest loads on record, about the biggest piece of land ploughed by a man in a day, recipes for mangle in hot twins, turnips, accidents to reverend clergymen, and so on."

He even cited cartoons in *The Bulletin*: "Then a little cartoon of Ivan, the Russian workman, going for a tram-drive, and taking his bundles of money with him, sackfuls of roubles, to pay the fare. The "Bully" was sardonic about Bolshevism."

One "Bit" was sent in by someone who called themselves "Cellu Lloyd" (all *Bulletin* Bits contributors were given such nicknames). He (apparently) wrote:

Before you close down on mangy horses here's a cure I've never known to fail. To one bullock's gall add kerosene to make up a full pint. Heat sufficiently to enable it to mix well, not forgetting, of course, that half of it is kerosene. When well mixed add one teaspoon of chrysophanic acid. Bottle and shake well. Before applying take a hard scrubbing brush and thoroughly scrub the part with carbol soap and hot water, and when applying the mixture use the brush again.

Lawrence added: "This recipe brought many biting comments in later issues." Which implied he was a regular *Bulletin* reader.

He acknowledged, however, that the *Bulletin's* sub-editors recognised that some of their readers were a little flaky when it came grammar and syntax. "Somers liked the concise, laconic style. It seemed to him manly and without trimmings. Put ship-shape in the office, no doubt."

Another "Bit" he cited showed he had learned something about the Australian character.

Lady (who has just opened door to country girl carrying suitcase): "I am suited. A country girl has been engaged, and I'm getting her to-morrow."

Girl: "I'm her; and you're not. The 'ouse is too big."

There, thought Somers, you have the whole spirit of Australian labour.

His final comment about *The Bulletin* came at the end of chapter 16. By this time he had some inkling of what those "horrible paws" represented. He had become disillusioned about Australia and its politics and people. He wrote: "Somers, looking through the *Bulletin*, though he could hardly read it now, as if he could not SEE it, in its one level, as if he had gone deaf to its note." The silvery freedom had suddenly turned ugly.

Yet, even after he left our shores, he retained a soft spot for *The Bulletin*. In her autobiography, his wife Frieda said "about the paper he ever read was *The Bulletin*."

That, however, was not quite right. While in Australia he also read copies of the *Sydney Daily Telegraph*, *The Sun* and the *Sydney Morning Herald* (this was delivered to his door every day he was in Thirroul). He was keen to keep in touch with events around him.

One chapter in *Kangaroo* is called "Volcanic Evidence" and it contains a long extract from the *Telegraph* about volcanoes – word-for-word, including the journalist's byline and cross-heads!

More significantly, the important chapter, "The Row in Town" – describing a riot in the Trades Hall (which is the climax of the novel) - is derived from reading back copies of *The Sun* in its office in Castlereagh Street. (He acknowledged this source, but tried to disguise it by changing the paper's politics from conservative to "the radical paper".)

A few chapters earlier he cites a swag of headlines from a June issue of the *SMH*.

In fact, there should have been a lot more from *The Bulletin* in *Kangaroo*. Indeed, he even contemplated the possibility of working for *The Bulletin*, or at least writing for it while he was in Sydney.

Before he came to Sydney, his main contact in Perth – "Pussy" Jenkins – gave him a letter-of-introduction to a senior staff member of *The Bulletin*, Bert Toy. (He later confessed to Mrs Jenkins that he had not "presented" the introductory letter – given to him probably in case he wanted some part-time journalistic work in Sydney – for within a few days of arriving he had the germs of a possible plot for his projected "romance": the secret army he had stumbled on.)

But it was probably Bert Toy, alerted by Mrs Jenkins about Lawrence's arrival in Sydney, who was responsible for the only two items about Lawrence published while he was in the Eastern States. (His time in Perth was reported by a local freelance journalist.) For *The Bulletin* reported (in a "social page") not only the fact that he had arrived in Sydney, but noted his departure as well.

That, however, was not the only service Bert Toy of *The Bulletin* did for Lawrence. For Lawrence used the address on the letter of introduction to Toy – 51 Murdoch Street (Mosman) – as the "fictional" address his "hero" Richard Lovatt Somers first goes to as he and his German wife Harriett arrive in Sydney.

There is one last connection between *The Bulletin* and Lawrence and *Kangaroo*. It was in a letter in the manuscript collection of Mitchell Library from the then assistant-editor of *The Bulletin* – Malcolm Ellis – to the second main character in Lawrence's novel of Australia that in early 1976 I first read the name of the secret army that he ran across in Sydney.

Ellis, writing to his friend Jack Scott (Jack Callcott in *Kangaroo*) said he hoped that Scott's upcoming trip to Japan was being prepared for by "The Garage". (The secret army was in essence a mobilisation plan based on car-ownership, and its members "reported at the neighbourhood garage of one of its more mobile secret soldiers.)

Scott was Rosenthal's 2-i-c in "The Garage" hierarchy. Lawrence in *Kangaroo* gave Callcott's profession as "a partner in a motor works place".



Contemporary Bulletin cartoon lampooning the imperialist pretensions of the King & Empire Alliance (here a "League")

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