

## D.H. Lawrence and *Writers of the Day*: The Commission That “Failed to Please”<sup>1</sup>

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Lawrence first refers to the project that became the “Study of Thomas Hardy” in a letter of July 8, 1914:

The man in Nisbet’s, Bertram Christian, has been asking me would I do a little book for him—a sort of interpretative essay on Thomas Hardy, of about 15000 words. It will be published at 1/ net. My payment is to be 11/ 2 d per copy, £15 advance on royalties, half profits in America. It isn’t very much but then the work won’t be very much. I think it is all right, don’t you? When the agreement comes I will send it on to you, and we need not make any trouble over it. . . . (*L* ii. 93)

The letter speaks of a small scale, unchallenging project which is not, as has often been claimed, significant solely as the work which Lawrence had to write in order to rewrite *The Rainbow* successfully. The outbreak of World War I in August 1914 and Lawrence’s personal circumstances—specifi-

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cally his marriage—affected its development into his first lengthy philosophical writing and his first extended work of literary criticism. When the work was rejected by the publisher who had commissioned it, it also became the first piece of writing that Lawrence intended for publication that was not published during his lifetime.

Until recently little was known about Lawrence's brief involvement with James Nisbet and Company and Bertram Christian, the General Editor of its fledgling book series, *Writers of the Day*. This was largely due to the fact that there are no known extant records of any correspondence between Lawrence and Christian, and that Nisbet and Company's records were destroyed during World War II (*Hardy* xx). We know, however, that the publishing house (established in 1810) published "educational, theology, economics, biography, travel, belles-lettres and juvenile" books, and that its directors other than Christian included H.G. Wood, A.W. Lidderdale, J.S. Young and H.J.M. Wood (Pine 730). However it is not widely known that *Writers of the Day* did in fact publish a book on Hardy, a year after rejecting Lawrence's manuscript. It was written by Harold Child, co-founder of the *Times Literary Supplement*, and its publication provides strong indications of Nisbet's series-requirements, requirements that Lawrence was unable to satisfy.

We also know that Lawrence's Hardy volume was one of the earliest projected issues in the new Nisbet series. Each volume was to involve "critical estimates of the works of famous authors and accounts of their lives, written while they are yet alive and done by fellow craftsmen of a younger generation distinguished for their imaginative work. . ." (*Dial* 2/16). English newspaper announcements tell us that the series was originally to include the following: *H.G. Wells*, by J.D. Beresford; *Joseph Conrad*, by Hugh Walpole; *Anatole France*, by W.L. George; *William de Morgan*, by Mrs. Sturge Gretton; *John Galsworthy*, by Sheila Kaye-Smith; and *Henry James*, again by Mrs. Sturge Gretton (*TLS* 1914).

This list of authors includes an interesting mixture of "establishment" and "new blood" writers. Mrs. Sturge Gretton (née Harrison) was the author of a 1907 work on George Meredith and a small book on Constable. Like Hugh Walpole (described by Henry James in *The New Novel* of 1914 as "a rare and interesting case" [339]), she was more clearly a member of the literary "establishment" than Beresford and Lawrence, who were both considered "unruly. . . so very much of [their] time, so hot, controversial, uneasy. . ." (George, "The Bookman Gallery: D.H. Lawrence" 244). Like W.L. George, Stephen Gwynn was a contributor to *The Daily News*, and

was an experienced author, while George himself had by 1914 published four novels and five other works, the latest of which, *Second Blooming*, he had dedicated to H.G. Wells. Sheila Kaye-Smith, author of numerous Sussex-set novels, the first called *The Tramping Methodist*, was said to write novels full of “virility,” “broader and deeper than the work of the women novelists of today. . .” (George, “The Bookman Gallery: Sheila Kaye-Smith” 35).

Both George and Kaye-Smith were part of the “new generation” of writers, as was John Palmer, whose “brilliant new novel” *Peter Paragon* had brought him literary attention. A June 1915 *Bookman* reviewer of that novel (“O.R.D”) trumpets that “Youth has long been hunted remorselessly out of critical work” (*Bookman* 6/15) and it seems that *Writers of the Day* was seeking to change that by including these three authors along with Lawrence, Beresford, and Rebecca West (after Mrs. Sturge Gretton’s withdrawal) in its choice of contributors. Perhaps what one reviewer saw in West’s *Henry James* is what these young writers were expected to provide: “acute, modern, probing, flippant, traditionless, open mind[s]” (Ervin 169). West herself may have drawn Christian’s attention to Lawrence in her favorable April 1914 review of *The Widowing of Mrs Holroyd* in *The Daily News* (7).

To consider Lawrence from the point of view of his inclusion in this line up of series authors and their subjects is to look at his involvement in the metropolitan literary world from a new and interesting angle. His inclusion by Christian—however short-lived—reinforces more recent critical views of Lawrence, which question stereotypical views of him as a writer on the outskirts of the world of literary contacts by 1914, a man who did not “fit in,” yet was forced by the outbreak of war to stay in England. Instead of this stereotype, we can picture a writer not only considered a “fellow craftsmen” of his subject, Thomas Hardy, and “distinguished for [his] imaginative work,” but one voluntarily and actively becoming involved in a literary circle that would link his name with those of the other series writers.

Bearing in mind that Lawrence knew of the project at a very early stage in July 1914, and that the Nisbet list of volumes was advertised in October of that year, it is curious that no reference is made there or in subsequent advertisements to Lawrence’s projected study of Hardy, who was himself a very popular literary “drawcard” for a fledgling literary series. The omission suggests that the agreement for publication was not formalized, and was dependent on Lawrence proving his merit by producing a

partial draft, which he had not submitted by October. Bertram Christian was probably being cautious in not including Lawrence's name in the advertised list.

Although the vagueness of Lawrence's references to the project—and the distinctive styles of each volume author—suggests that it took the series some time to “get into stride,” as one might reasonably expect, each text nonetheless sticks to a fairly uniform structure. The formula of providing an introductory chapter, followed by three or four chapters discussing poetry and/or prose works, then bibliographies (both English and American) and indexes, is never abandoned, and each text is around 120 pages long.<sup>2</sup>

There is nothing innovative, then, in this formulaic structuring of the series format, but it is pertinent to a consideration of Lawrence's work that the *Writers of the Day* series seems (not only in terms of format) to develop in direct competition with Martin Secker's *A Critical Study* series, especially as Lascelles Abercrombie's 1912 *Thomas Hardy: A Critical Study* was to influence Lawrence's own study of Hardy. By 1914, volumes published in Secker's series included Frank Swinnerton on Gissing (1912), Arthur Ransome on Wilde (1912) and F.E.B. Young on Robert Bridges. In 1915, projected volumes included Gilbert Cannan on Samuel Butler, J. West on G.K. Chesterton, and Cyril Falls on Kipling (“English Literature—Special Periods and Authors” 509). The *Writers of the Day* volumes were much cheaper (one shilling per copy/ 50 cents in the United States as opposed to Secker's 7/6) but the Secker series had been longer established and its volumes were longer. A third series was announced in Britain in *The New Statesman* in July 1914 and announced nine months later in America by *The Dial* ;

Still another series (the third) of monographs on prominent writers of the day is announced by a London publisher. It will bear the general title, “Studies of Living Authors,” and in the first three volumes to appear Mr. H.G. Wells will be dealt with by Mr. R.W. Talbot Cox, Mr. Arnold Bennett by Professor J.R. Skemp, and Mr. Anatole France by Mr. Geoffrey Cookson. The books will be full length studies rather than brief outlines. . . . (*Dial* 4/15)

Clearly the three series follow similar agendas (Bennett, Wells, and France were among Nisbet's earliest subjects). Perhaps the rationale behind them can be explained by the wry comment of *The New Statesman*:

The publications show considerable good sense in including Messrs. Wells and Bennett in the first batch. Interest in their writings is exceedingly widespread, both in England and America, and there must be a very large public which wants to be told exactly what it ought to think about them. . . . (*New Statesman* 7/4/14)

The texts are aimed at an audience of “those folk who are neither, by profession, critics, nor (by love or hunger) authors—those who are just unworried readers and care for their [author]. . .” (Niven 112). The proliferation of such series as *Writers of the Day* follows closely on the heels of the success of *Everyman* books, established by Dent in 1906, and the generally increasing trend for cheaply reprinted classic novels. Of course World War I affected these trends greatly.<sup>3</sup> However:

Between 1880 and the First World War there must have been proportionately more popular interest in authors and the world of authors than at any time before or since. A large middle-brow public, with a limited range of other amusements available, asked to be painlessly instructed in what might be termed the folklore of literature; and there were plenty of instructors happy to come forward and satisfy the demand. . . . (Gross 216)

Lawrence was not destined to be one of them.

In 1914 the Secker and Nisbet series’ critical focus was on very similar subject matter: one of the first published Nisbet volumes was John Palmer’s *Rudyard Kipling*, published in America at roughly the same time as Cyril Falls’ *Rudyard Kipling: A Critical Study*. The Nisbet decision to publish the *Kipling* volume at the same time indicates conscious rivalry and aggressive marketing, although Secker probably took little public notice, and from that time onwards no two volumes on the same writer were published by the two publishers at the same time. However in at least one American paper, the *New York Times Book Review* of November 28, 1914, the volumes were reviewed side by side under the same banner:

Living Authors As Seen By the Critics: Entertaining Sketches That Give Critical Views of the Work as Well as Glimpses of the Lives of Contemporary Men of Letters (478)

A full two page comparison of the four latest Secker volumes with the Nisbet series’ first three volumes followed. The other two Nisbet vol-

umes considered were *Arnold Bennett* by F.J. Harvey Darton and *H.G. Wells* by Beresford. The *Writers of the Day* volumes were quite kindly received in the article, which made little differentiation between the series, but certainly gave the impression that the volumes were designed for the ordinary busy worker/reader rather than the intellectual. The Nisbet books were described as

smaller. . . [and] belong to a new and briefer series, which undertakes to give critical estimates of famous authors while they are yet alive. . . . All these little volumes are terse and breezy, comprehensive, authoritative—the pioneers of what is evidently going to be a valuable series for busy readers. Each has a bibliography and a frontispiece portrait. . . .

In English reviews, the rivalry manifested itself slightly differently, as certain papers championed one series at the expense of the other, rather than comparing the volumes side by side. At the risk of generalizing, we might take *The Athenaeum* and *The Times Literary Supplement* as examples. *The Athenaeum*'s scorn of the Nisbet series is clear:

This is the age of little books which supply a multitude of short cuts to knowledge of various kinds. . . we do not see any great need for a series of short volumes on *Writers of the Day*. . . It is difficult to be frank about such writers and enough is already published in the press concerning their personal habits and preferences. We may be old fashioned, however, in supposing that a writer's private life is his own business, and he may even think it part of his business to get as much notoriety as he can to assist his sales. If biography and literary criticism are both to be attempted, 120 pages or so of good print do not seem adequate. . . . ("Our Library Table" 402)

The unnamed critic proceeds to damn the *Bennett* and *Wells* Nisbet volumes with faint praise, concluding that "in view of their restricted space both have done well. . . ." The partisan nature of this review is magnified by the fact that less than a month previously, *The Athenaeum* had glowingly reviewed the Secker series Kipling volume by Cyril Falls ("Review of *Rudyard Kipling: A Critical Study* by Cyril Falls" 327).

The concerns of the *Athenaeum* reviewer aside, the Nisbet works in fact tend to shy away from the biographical. In the *Conrad* volume, Walpole

tells us that “with the details of [Conrad’s] life we cannot in any way be concerned, but with the backgrounds against whose form and colour his art has been placed we have some compulsory connection. . . .” (8). Here Walpole seems keen to preserve the traditional separation between the writer’s life and art, yet the reference to “background” admits to the fact that art does have reference to a real world beyond it. His comment suggests a certain awkwardness in dealing with a writer yet alive, something that is also reflected in *The Athenaeum* reviewer’s comments (“we may be old fashioned. . .”etc.) “Backgrounds” are safer than the potentially revealing personal “details” of a writer’s life.

*The Athenaeum*’s comment touches on the contemporary debate between traditional and new journalism by questioning the value of Nisbet’s series. The younger writers seem here to be implicitly identified (unfavorably) with the new more democratic education system that was beginning to emerge by 1914 and that took account of the “busy” worker/reader. *The Athenaeum* reviewer sees Nisbet’s series as affronting the traditional aspects of literary works of this kind, and yet the series in its format (especially in preserving a detailed bibliography and a frontispiece portrait) consciously preserves many traditional elements.

In contrast to *The Athenaeum*, the *Times Literary Supplement* made great efforts to champion the Nisbet series, suggesting that “if we are to have books about living authors there is a good deal to be said for confining them to little essays of intelligent exposition such as these books provide. . . .” (*TLS* 4/15). Even here, in the grudging “if we are to have,” the *Supplement* registers a sense that the publication of books on living authors is not yet completely accepted. Part of the discomfort with such a concept lay in the fact that it drew famous authors into the contemporary educational debate rather than leaving them to be admired from afar and in isolation from “the present.” Most significantly for the series authors, the format brought the established author and the “new generation” critic into a close relation with one another.

The kind of criticisms that the Nisbet series attracted are perhaps best exemplified by the *Bookman*’s warning in a review of the early volume, Palmer’s *Rudyard Kipling*:

Really these extended essays (for such books are no more) require most careful concoction. You can blunder about in a treatise, and scarcely anyone will notice it, but in a booklet you must be deft and precise. . . I feel that something needs to be said, not specially to Mr Palmer, but to all the

authors of the many little books that publishers have competed in producing of late. It seems to me that a big book and a little book differ, not merely in degree, but in kind. If you write a big book about a popular author you give the reader much information, many facts, a wealth of detail. You give quantity. In a little book you cannot pretend to do anything of the sort. You have to allow for the absence of quantity. You must give quality. Now quality is just what Mr Palmer's book seems to lack. . . .<sup>4</sup>

Given that, on this account of the matter, Lawrence would seem to have had a choice between a "big book" which would give "much information, many facts, a wealth of detail" or a "little book" which would follow the *Writers of the Day* format but that took the form of a "quality essay" rather than a profound explanation of the subject, it is clear that Lawrence's long and idiosyncratic text would have been very lucky indeed to have found a publisher. But looking back to the original conception, and Lawrence's participation in it, we get an interesting picture of his struggle for a place in the metropolitan literary world of late 1914.

The readers at whom Lawrence aimed *his* words were (to use his own words) English "folk"—intelligent people who did not identify with any particular literary group and who were not passive readers wanting to be told how to think. His readers needed to be open-minded enough to listen to the most extreme of Lawrence's views, for as he saw it:

I do write because I want folk—English folk—to alter, and have more sense. . . . (*L i*. 544)

Yet Lawrence also desired critical recognition within the metropolitan literary world. In fact Lawrence, it seems clear, was inspired by Hardy's success at cultivating an audience of both "literary" and "ordinary" readers. Only by engaging critically with an author about whom he felt intense conflicting emotions of admiration and disappointment could Lawrence successfully develop a new critical form, a new critical language, and a widespread audience. However, what Lawrence was attempting was something far beyond the requirements of *Writers of the Day* and consequently was never published.

It is important to question why Lawrence may have been chosen to work on the Hardy volume. None of Lawrence's novels could be regarded as "best sellers" in July 1914, and certainly by publishing standards, in view of the difficulties which were experienced with *Sons and Lovers*, he couldn't have seemed to Christian a "certain success" as a *Writers of the*



*Day* author. He had, moreover, published only one critical essay—the short essay on Thomas Mann.

That essay, however, was a very striking, if somewhat unconventional piece of criticism, published in *The Blue Review* of July 1913, and might have attracted the attention of Christian. After all, Lawrence had been firmly placed among the new young writers “to be watched,” as reflected in Henry James’ reluctant inclusion of him in his article “The New Novel” in early 1914. James’ lukewarm reference to Lawrence “in the dusty rear” of up-coming novelists was better for the young writer than being ignored altogether, as he was in *The Athenaeum*’s March 1914 review of “The Character and Tendency of Contemporary Fiction” (463-64). James’ inclusion of Lawrence was a sign that Lawrence was considered an up and coming author, who had “made a stir” with *Sons and Lovers*; why not offer him the opportunity to prove his ability?

Lawrence had not had the support of J.C. Squire, “in criticism, for a number of years the strongest and most successful of all those representing the younger generation. . . our chief literary reputation maker. . .” (Swinnerton 157). However another influential figure in critical opinion, W.L. George, had paid significant attention to him in the February 1914 issue of *The Bookman*, where he discussed the qualities in Lawrence which qualified him to join the “up and coming” and emphasized his diverse skills as “an authoritative critic of German literature and the author of a prose drama of colliery life. . .” The article is an odd mix of arguments: George notes the “newness” of Lawrence’s subject matter and approach to literature but, at the same time, stresses his possession of established literary credentials (such as the ability to read and criticize German literature “authoritatively”) as a means of justifying his importance.<sup>5</sup> George was

the first to tell America, from England, the full tale of our rising stars in the novel. . . He was a pioneer in spotting winners, and his list, compiled in 1913, was extremely shrewd. This was a new phenomenon in literary fashion. . . George dealt in a generation. He gathered a dozen or so names from among hundreds, and tipped them for the future. . . (Swinnerton 151-52)

Frank Swinnerton lists as Lawrence’s main rivals Gilbert Cannan (who published a Secker *Critical Study* volume on Samuel Butler in 1915), Hugh Walpole (*Writers of the Day* volume on Conrad in 1916) and Compton MacKenzie. Lawrence had already progressed from the days when he

was supposed at first, from the nature of his earliest work and the initials which concealed his Christian names, to be a woman; and only later did he emerge as a young schoolmaster from the North who was under the patronage of Edward Garnett and Ford Madox Hueffer. Compton Mackenzie had the laurels; E.M. Forster some fame from *Howards End* and the quiet applause of culture; but Lawrence, not yet a giraffe, was no more than a dark horse. . . as a young man he was but one of a dozen adventuring young novelists. . . . (Swinerton 160)

On June 5, 1914, Lawrence registered his desire for literary recognition in a letter to Edward Garnett—“. . . I shall get my reception, if not now, then before long. . .” (*L* ii. 184)—and Lawrence’s sense of the fragility of his literary status probably contributed as much to his acceptance of the *Writers of the Day* project as did the financial straits more frequently identified as his motive for writing. Lawrence had never been asked to do a work like this before, and it no doubt appealed to him as another opportunity to make himself known, for “such a book was a distinct indication of coming into the right sheepfold. . . .”<sup>6</sup>

Evidently Lawrence was at first willing to adapt the project to suit his needs. Nisbet and Company, ever mindful of a profitable marketing strategy, were no doubt keen to use Lawrence’s improving literary profile to boost their series. So in what is an unusual perspective of Lawrence’s career at this point, he can be seen, in being chosen as a *Writers of the Day* author (if not actually published as one), “in the thick” of the literary scene. Only a month later in August, Lawrence was introduced by Gilbert Cannan to Martin Secker, with whom he had corresponded in 1911, and who later claimed that “as early as 1911 I had marked him as an author whom I should wish to have on my list. . . .” (i).

It is probable that J.M. Murry first drew Christian’s attention to Lawrence, as Murry was working for the *Daily News* in 1913 when Christian was literary editor of that paper.<sup>7</sup> Murry would have known of Lawrence’s interest in Hardy: in November 1913 he had received a letter from Lawrence that suggested his interest in writing literary criticism:

you must stick to criticism. You ought also to plan a book, either on some literary point or some man. I should like to write a book on English heroines. You ought to do something of that sort, but not so cheap. Don’t try a novel—try

Essays—like Walter Pater or somebody of that style. . . .<sup>8</sup>

Already in this comment, by invoking Pater and the English essayist tradition, Lawrence makes it clear that his interests lie outside the traditional forms and audience of criticism, with which he identifies Murry.

It seems most likely that Christian and Lawrence first discussed the project informally at a social meeting some time after Lawrence's return to England in June 1914.<sup>9</sup> This might account for the vagueness of Lawrence's initial references to the project. To his agent Pinker he mentioned only "a sort of interpretative essay on Thomas Hardy" (8 July), to McLeod, "a little book of about 15000 words on Thomas Hardy" (8 July), and to Edward Marsh seven days later "a little book on Hardy's people" (which sounds not unlike the projected "book on English heroines"). By the time he next mentioned the book to Pinker he was expressing doubts about the project: "it will be about anything other than Thomas Hardy I'm afraid" (5 September). But again to Pinker he wrote that the work would be "more or less a propos of Thomas Hardy's characters" (15 September).

What *is* clear is that Lawrence originally took up the commission in July 1914 with no doubt that he could carry it out. Lawrence's first reference to the work in his July 8 letter to Pinker shows no reservation whatsoever about the undertaking—"the work won't be very much. . ."—but clearly Lawrence himself had underestimated the depth of his engagement with it. It is probable that Christian expected Lawrence to hand him some draft form of the work in progress, and although Lawrence intended to submit some writing in October<sup>10</sup>, it seems that he did not do so until December 1914. By November, Lawrence had expressed some doubts as to the suitability of his work for the series when he wrote to Amy Lowell, "I am just finishing a book, supposed to be on Thomas Hardy. . . I wonder if it will ever come out. . ." (*L* ii. 235). Yet on December 3, Lawrence told S. S. Koteliansky, "do please get my typing done. If I can send it in, I may get a little money for it. . ." (*L* ii. 239).

When exactly the commission was terminated is unknown. However if the manuscript was submitted in early December it is likely that this occurred in late December or early January 1915. No direct reference survives, although a number of letters might be significant, as they indicate a certain disillusionment. On 24 December, for instance, Lawrence wrote to McLeod, "we have been about, here and there in England, but very disheartened by the war and everything and without energy to write. . ." (*L* ii. 251). And by 5 February Lawrence was writing from Greatham:

What is the use of giving books to the swinish public in its present state. . . I have got a new birth of life since I came down here. Those five months since the war have been my time in the sepulchre. . . five months, and every moment dead as a corpse in its grave clothes. . . . (L ii. 276)

When Lawrence *did* submit a manuscript to *Writers of the Day*, Christian's reaction must have been swift and definite. That Lawrence's work was considered inappropriate is further magnified by the choice of Harold Child as replacement author for the Hardy text by May 1915. Child was definitely a "safe" choice as author, not exactly an "up and coming generation" member (born 1865), but well educated, and author of one novel, *Phil of the Heath* (1899). This text—although not a particularly significant work, nor Child's most recent accomplishment—was what qualified Child for *Writers of the Day* authorship. *Thomas Hardy* was advertised as "by Harold Child, Author of *Phil of the Heath* etc. . ." (TLS 11/15) a full sixteen years after the "etcetera" of Child's career began. By 1915, in fact, he was a highly experienced journalist, who had written a series of articles for *The Star* and was the first assistant editor of *The Academy* and *The Burlington Magazine*, as well as the dramatic critic of the *Observer* (1912-20). With his friend Bruce Richmond, he had been responsible for the inception and development of *The Times Literary Supplement* in 1902, and was the *Times* dramatic critic by 1912 (Child, *Essays and Reflections* vii-xii; Ward 125). However these achievements rather detract from the "up and coming" author tag of the Nisbet series (they may have been familiar to the readership anyway) and so are ignored.

Child must have been given the commission by the start of May, 1915, because he wrote to Hardy on May 2, 1915 announcing the book:

I have rashly undertaken to write a book about your work—a little book to be published in Nisbet and Co.'s new series of "Writers of the Day". (You must be getting tired of people who write books about your work!) The immediate impulse is to ask whether I may not come down and see you, and hear you talk about your life and work; but I feel that that can scarcely be fair. It might saddle you with an uncomfortable feeling of responsibility for anything that I might say. And therefore I feel more or less bound to deny myself the great pleasure that it would be, unless there should happen to be anything that you *wanted* said, or put

right. The books of reference give all the personal details that the public has any claim to know; and they should be sufficient for my little guide book (for that is what it will amount to) to your writings. . . .<sup>11</sup>

Child's attitude to the work helps to explain why Lawrence failed to complete *his* work in a form acceptable to Christian. The reference to the "guide book" hints at the small scale of the project, in which Child did "not propose to do more than touch upon the topographical side. . . ." ("Letter to Thomas Hardy" 1). His letters make it clear that the book would be less a critical analysis than a celebration of Hardy's literary achievements. Hardy, ever astute, responded with one "hint", suggesting that "you wd [sic] introduce an element of novelty into a worn subject if you were to treat my verse (including the D.) as my *essential* writings, and my prose as my *accidental*, rather than the reverse: the fact being that I wrote prose only because I was obliged to. . . ." (*Collected Letters Volume IV* 94).

This comment draws our attention to the fact that in 1914 poetry was still conventionally considered a "higher" genre and that Hardy was keen to be seen primarily as poet. By ignoring poetry, the pinnacle of art, Lawrence makes a semi class-judgment as to the scope of *his* appraisal of Hardy. Lawrence was more interested in "life" than "art," and perhaps because he foresaw what Hardy would like to see in a *Writers of the Day* volume, and that Hardy might try to saddle *him* "with an uncomfortable feeling of responsibility," Lawrence never wrote to him.<sup>12</sup>

Child's conventionally deferential response to Hardy's request must have greatly pleased Hardy:

I am very much obliged for the hint in the last portion of your letter. It gives me your own authority (which of course I shall not quote) for what may constitute the difference of my little study from the other books upon your work. From the time I first read *The Dynasts* through, I have been an ardent admirer of that great poem, and that naturally sent me back to the study of the other poems from a new standpoint. I do not propose to trouble you further on the matter; so may I take this opportunity of saying that I hope nothing I may write will seem to you impertinent or unfair? ("Letter to Thomas Hardy" 2-3)

Child succeeded in his aim, for *Thomas Hardy* contained nothing "impertinent or unfair." Neither, on the other hand, did it represent anything

critically challenging nor require its audience to be open to new perceptions of and perspectives on Hardy's achievements. Child's volume is divided neatly into chapters entitled "His Artistic Purpose" (23 pages), "The Novels" (50 pages), and "Hardy the Poet" (29 pages). Thereafter are included a five page bibliography by Arundel Esdaile and a two-page American bibliography (the series was published by Holt and Company in America). An index of three pages completes the work, which thus closely follows the pattern of the series as a whole.

Child's text leaves a lot to be desired as a critical work, not because Child promised something that he knew he could not deliver within the confines of a *Writers of the Day* text (his letters make clear his awareness of the limited scope of the undertaking), but rather because in delivering such a volume he trivialized Hardy in a way that Lawrence had simply been unable to do. The book's shortcomings are of a kind with those to which Harold Massingham objected in commenting on W.L. George's volume *Anatole France*. George's volume was "wrong," writes Massingham, because

he has not penetrated . . . deeper into the accepted generalisations about him . . . [Mr Child's] monograph is pleasant reading, but. . . too disconnected, and far, far too slight to be an . . . original portrait of a great genius. . . .  
(174)

Child's work is similarly "slight": it is concerned with neatly pigeonholing the "architecture" of Hardy's writing (a passion for the architectural metaphor is common both to Abercrombie and to Child). Lawrence had produced a work on a very different intellectual level, concerned not with plot developments or with superficial "form" but with giving expression to a deeply personal and considered engagement with Hardy's significance to contemporary conceptions of life and literature. The full scope of these differences cannot be adequately discussed within the confines of this article.

Nonetheless (no doubt to Bertram Christian's delight) Child's book was well received, as he was quick to inform Hardy:

The publisher has sent me a few copies of the little book; and I am sending one to you. If you have time to glance at it, I hope you will find nothing to annoy you with stupidity or misrepresentation. The publisher says it has been eagerly "subscribed," which is only what one would expect,

seeing the enthusiasm with which your work is increasingly read. . . . (“Letter to Thomas Hardy” 1)

Subsequently, a generally favorable review of Child’s book appeared in *The Times Literary Supplement* of January 27, 1916, under the title “The Meaning of Thomas Hardy”;

Little books about great writers are apt to shy away from the best part of the story. It is so hard to know for whom you are writing, and where you should begin. There is none of this uncertainty in Mr Child, who goes boldly on the principle of attacking the important, and devotes the first part of his book. . . to examining the “artistic purpose” of his author. . . . (TLS 1/16)

Like the majority of reviews, it praised Child’s championing of *The Dynasts*, and in so doing spectacularly underestimated Hardy’s novels:

Mr Child is quite firm about *The Dynasts*, he thinks it is by far Mr Hardy’s greatest work and the one on which his fame will chiefly rest; and on the whole we agree with him; for while we can imagine the novels going out of fashion for a generation, we cannot believe in that happening to *The Dynasts*. He reminds us that poetry was Mr Hardy’s first choice and justifies it as his ultimate expression. . . .

Two months later, *The Bookman* praised *Writers of the Day* for including Hardy, arguing that “the slow unfolding of Hardy’s greatness. . .” qualified him for inclusion in Nisbet’s series. “It is a pleasure to find. . . that the little volume is a worthy tribute to an artist of austere dignity and unimpeachable rectitude. . .” (Sampson, “Our Epic Hardy”). In this and in a subsequent September article Child is praised for finding “the true fulfilment of Mr Hardy’s artistic prose in *The Dynasts*. . .” (Harris 168).

As Child’s book consolidated this view of Hardy, as a man of “unimpeachable rectitude” and author of *The Dynasts*, it is no surprise that Hardy’s response to it was encouraging, although he had not actually read the text when he wrote to Child, pausing to point out two misprints (“I mention these unimportant items in case you should be reprinting. . .” [*Collected Letters Volume IV* 143]) before concluding in a subsequent letter that “. . . your little book is wonderful for its size. I don’t know any other that comes near it. . .” (*Collected Letters Volume V* 302).

Hardy’s comment suggests that Child had, as he certainly does in his

letters, successfully followed in the footsteps of the great Victorian belle-lettrist Augustine Birrell, who had seriously advised that “every author, be he grave or gay, should try to make his book as ingratiating as possible. . .” (Gross 133). Certainly Hardy’s response was far more encouraging than that of Arnold Bennett to J.F. Harvey Darton’s efforts. Bennett’s response to Darton’s “booklet” was to list its “faulty” and “inexcusable” errors in a letter to the influential J.C. Squire, justifying the list on the grounds that “I thought you might possibly be saying something about Darton’s booklet on me . . . especially as you, like all of us, enjoy the opportunity to display exact learning. . . .”<sup>13</sup>

On the basis of the few reviews of Child’s book considered here, one is tempted to venture that Lawrence’s brief inclusion in the *Writers of the Day* literary circle could have been halted by three brief words: “sheer rubbish, fatuity.” Those were the words with which he summed up *The Well Beloved* and “a good deal of *The Dynasts* conception. . . .” (Hardy 93) and arguably they describe what he felt about the caliber of most contemporary Hardy criticism. The very fact that he considered undertaking the commission (desire for literary profile aside) would suggest a dissatisfaction with the then current state of criticism in general and with Hardy criticism in particular. In undertaking the commission, Lawrence sees the opportunity to develop a new and dynamic critical method, freer and more challenging than the old “Jamesian” type. What resulted, in an age when James’ aloof, measured, and highly sophisticated criticism was most authoritative, and in spite of Nisbet’s rejection of Lawrence, was his invention of a new critical language, aimed at a new critical audience.

Two significant points must, in conclusion, be made concerning Lawrence’s work on Hardy. The first concerns the surviving copy of Kot’s typescript. As no original manuscript survives, there has been much scholarly debate over the typescript and whether it is unfinished or simply patchy in construction. I believe the explanation for its awkwardness might be quite simple, as it is highly possible that this surviving manuscript is not that which Lawrence sent for approval to Bertram Christian. Lawrence had asked his friend S.S. Koteliansky to type *two* copies of the work: only one survives.<sup>14</sup> Professor Bruce Steele has suggested that Lawrence “probably destroyed” the second untraced copy (xxxii).

However I believe it is probable that, as occurred with other Lawrence typescripts, one copy was finally corrected and sent to Christian, and the other kept, uncorrected. When the corrected copy was rejected it was probably not returned, and the uncorrected copy was therefore possibly the one



later given to J.M. Murry, who preserved it.<sup>15</sup> If it is this uncorrected copy which survives, and not the one which was sent to Christian, this would account for the numerous mistakes and omissions (a whole page at one point) which feature in the surviving text.

I also believe that the text ought to be recognized by Lawrence's only known title for it: *Le Gai Savaire*. That Lawrence intended the text to be published under that title is suggested by the fact that it appears at the head of Koteliansky's only surviving typescript. The first reference Lawrence made to any title was in a 1915 letter to Bertrand Russell: "I wrote a book about these things—I used to call it *Le Gai Savaire*. . . ." (L ii. 295). The comment was made in February 1915, after Lawrence's rejection by Christian, and so supports the evidence that *Le Gai Savaire* was Lawrence's final choice of title for the work (if not the first). As far as the evidence suggests, Lawrence never called the work "Study of Thomas Hardy": that title was added to the manuscript in 1930 and later used by Edward McDonald, in preparation for the printing of *Phoenix* in 1935.

The key to the importance of the title lies in Lawrence's attitude to the *Writers of the Day* series. Lawrence's vague early references to an "essay on Thomas Hardy" mirror the pattern of titles for the *Writers of the Day* series, in which all titles were simply given as the name of their subject. Bearing this in mind, the fact that Lawrence chose to call the work *Le Gai Savaire* is significant: it seems suggestive of his desire to avoid association with the formulaic requirements of the series. So, although it is possible that Lawrence's title *Le Gai Savaire* was only formulated in the latest stages of the drafting process around November 1914, I believe this title is a deliberate and meaningful signal of Lawrence's determination to produce a new kind of criticism, and so should be retained.

### Notes

1 Carswell, "The Phoenix Shakes His Feathers," Review of *Phoenix: The Posthumous Papers of D.H. Lawrence* by D.H. Lawrence, edited by Edward D. McDonald, *Spectator* (27 November 1936) 960.

2 There are approximately 180 words per page, and the text is printed on 111 pages between pages 7 to 118. Therefore there are approximately 19 980 words in the volume.

3 *Dial* (15 July 1915) 73. In July 1915, *The Dial* quoted a report in *The New*

*Statesman* that “publishing in England is almost at a standstill. . . New enterprise is altogether too speculative for most people. . . .”

4 Sampson, “The Essential Kipling,” *Bookman* (Nov. 1915) 52. The *TLS* considered Palmer “brave” for his efforts. *TLS* (16 Sept. 1915) 308.

5 George, “The Bookman Gallery: D.H. Lawrence” 246. The list included Sheila Kaye-Smith.

6 Aldington, *Portrait of A Genius But. . .* 97. Aldington seems unaware that the book was commissioned by Nisbet. Lawrence did not stay in any “sheepfold” for long, and Aldington’s perspective is that of a man inside the literary sphere, who would have no conception of his particular sheepfold as anything other than “right.”

7 Murry, *Letters to Katherine Mansfield* 28. Letter 13. That Murry knew Christian personally is evident in this letter to Mansfield.

8 See *L* ii. 110-11. In this context “cheap” seems synonymous with “popular.”

9 *TE* 131. See Carswell, *Pilgrimage* 19. Carswell writes that Lawrence “had been personally approached by another publisher” (Nisbet).

10 On October 13, Lawrence announced that he had finished “one-third” of the work and intended to send it on to Christian when typed. However by 31 October he was still sending Kotliansky manuscript. See *L* ii. 228.

11 Child, Letter to Thomas Hardy, 2 May 1915, MS. p.1-2. Unpublished. See Child, *Thomas Hardy*: In the volume’s bibliography are references to “Before Marching and After” in the *Fortnightly Review* of October 1915. It seems likely that Child was writing the text in mid-1915 (in time for these insertions to be made in the proofs) before publication in January 1916. *TLS* (16 Sept. 1915) 311 announced the volume “will be ready in October”, but it was delayed for reasons unknown. By November, it was advertised for release “shortly” *TLS* (4 Nov. 1915) 387.

12 Carswell, *Pilgrimage* 81-82. “I wanted him to write to Thomas Hardy. And it seemed that the idea had occurred to him too. Hardy, especially in *Jude the Obscure*, had meant much to Lawrence. . . but after a moment’s thought he shook his head. ‘No,’ he said, ‘old age is a queer thing. It would be no use. There’s something gone dead, I feel, in Hardy these days. He’s given way somewhere—gone. Nothing there you can appeal to anymore. . . .’”

13 *The Letters of Arnold Bennett: Volume II* 364-65. 18. Apr. 1915. See Squire’s response in “Belles Lettres”, *British Review* (Oct. 1915) 154.

14 *L* ii 220: "I should like a duplicate copy also."

15 It is probable that Lawrence gave the manuscript to Murry as a means of jettisoning excess baggage, possibly at around the same time as he gave Willie Hopkin his spare proofs of *The Prussian Officer*, in 1915. See *L* ii. 259.

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