The Life of Such is Life
SYDNEY STUDIES IN AUSTRALIAN LITERATURE

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The Life of Such is Life

A Cultural History of an Australian Classic

Roger Osborne
Contents

List of Figures vii
Acknowledgements ix
Abbreviations xi
Chronology xiii

Introduction: Entangled in the Work 1
1 Bushman and Bookworm: Furphy's Literary Foundations 15
2 Such is Life: From the Writer's Sanctum to the Literary Marketplace 31
3 Versions of Such is Life: Typescript and Book 47
4 An Anabranch of Such is Life: Rigby's Romance as Typescript, Serial and Book 75
5 The Death of the Author: Kate Baker's Such is Life 97
6 Wartime Revival: Tom Collins in the 1940s 127
7 Shaping the Canon: Joseph Furphy Goes to University 155

Epilogue: Where the (adj. sheol) is Joseph Furphy's Such is Life? 169
Works Cited 173
Index 183
List of Figures

Figure 0.1 The relationship between pre-publication and printed texts to 1948. xii
Figure 1.1 Joseph Furphy in 1889. 22
Figure 2.1 A page of the extant manuscript of Such is Life, Miles Franklin Papers, State Library of New South Wales. 35
Figure 2.2 Joseph Furphy's New Franklin typewriter, Tom Collins House, Perth. 37
Figure 2.3 Joseph Furphy, ca. 1900, Australian Literary Society Photograph Collection, NLA. 42
Figure 3.1 The movement of text from typescript pages 1898–1903. 51
Figure 3.2 A section of typescript in which the story of Petersen is marked for extraction. 53
Figure 3.3 The first page of the first edition, Miles Franklin Papers, Mitchell Library, MSS 364/65. 56
Figure 3.4 The first page of the extant typescript, Miles Franklin Papers, Mitchell Library, MSS 364/65. 57
Figure 3.5 Letter from A.G. Stephens, predicting Furphy’s fame in 2002. 73
Figure 4.1 Typescript of Such is Life with the first extant page of Rigby's Romance, Miles Franklin Papers, State Library of NSW. 79
Figure 4.2 The front page of the Barrier Truth with the first instalment of Rigby’s Romance, 27 October 1905. 84
Figure 4.3 The abridged edition of Rigby's Romance, C.J. De Garis, 1921. 89
Figure 4.4 The unabridged Rigby's Romance, Angus & Robertson, 1946. 93
Figure 5.1 The subscription circular for the second issue of Such is Life, 1918. 106
The Life of Such is Life

Figure 5.2 The second issue of Such is Life with the Specialty Press title page and Kate Baker's claim of copyright ownership. 109

Figure 5.3 Such is Life, Jonathan Cape, 1937. 113

Figure 5.4 Such is Life, Angus & Robertson, 1944. 117

Figure 6.1 The 1944 edition of Such is Life with Commonwealth Literary Fund livery. Image courtesy of Neil James. 130

Figure 6.2 Kate Baker, OBE, planting the Joseph Furphy Centenary Tree, 2 October 1943, State Library of New South Wales. 130

Figure 6.3 Such is Life, Rigby's Romance, and The Buln-Buln and the Brolga. 141

Figure 6.4 The American Edition of Such is Life, 1948. 147

Figure 7.1 Australian Women's Weekly, Wednesday 4 December 1968, page 39. 159

Figure 7.2 Joseph Furphy sculpture. The site of Furphy's home at 138 Welsford Street, Shepparton, 2018. 167

Figure 7.3 The author, resting under the 77-year-old Joseph Furphy Memorial Tree, Melbourne Botanical Gardens, February 2020. 168
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Abbreviations

The life of *Such is Life* is manifested in a series of documents, dating from 1896. Some of these documents are not extant, such as the first manuscript version (SLMS1896), while others survive as fragments, such as the second manuscript version (SLMS1897) and the first typescript version (SLTS1898). For simplicity and clarity in referencing, the following abbreviations have been adopted.

SLMS1896 The non-extant 1896 manuscript of *Such is Life*, handwritten in exercise books and completed in 1896.

SLMS1897 The 1897 manuscript of *Such is Life*, fragments of which survive in the Miles Franklin Papers at the State Library of New South Wales, MSS 364/66.

SLTS1898 The 1898 typescript of *Such is Life*, of which 403 pages are preserved in the Miles Franklin Papers, Mitchell Library, MSS 364/65.

SL1901 The non-extant 1901 typescript, implementing Furphy's major revisions and used as setting copy by the Bulletin Newspaper Company.


SL1944 Joseph Furphy, *Such is Life* (Sydney and London: Angus & Robertson and Jonathan Cape, 1944).

The Life of *Such is Life*


Figure 0.1 The relationship between pre-publication and printed texts to 1948.
Joseph Furphy’s life may be seen as having several distinct phases: early life and adulthood in the Riverina as a selector and bullock driver (1843–83); the Shepparton years during which he worked as a mechanic in his brother’s foundry, writing and seeing to the publication of Such is Life before completing a typescript version of Rigby’s Romance (1883–1904); and his final years in the company of his sons in Western Australia (1905–12). The life of Such is Life intersects with the life of its author, but extends beyond Furphy’s death under the custodianship of Kate Baker and others (1912–53). After Kate Baker’s death in 1953, the life of Such is Life continues during the seventy years of university-based criticism and scholarship through which Furphy’s major work has maintained a prominent position as a classic of Australian literature (1953–present).

26 September 1843  JF born, Yering, Victoria, to Samuel Furphy and Judith Furphy, Northern Irish migrants who had disembarked at Melbourne in 1841.

Late 1850–52  Family moves to nearby Kangaroo Ground where the Furphy children briefly attend the local school.

Early 1852–57  To Kyneton, where Samuel Furphy sets up business as a carrier and then a storekeeper. JF continues his schooling.

1857–67  After completing his formal education, JF works as an agricultural labourer and by the mid-1860s is operating a steam-driven threshing machine throughout the district.

1867  JF’s brother, John, establishes his blacksmith and wheelwright shop in Shepparton. The business
evolves into Furphy’s Foundry by the 1880s, employing dozens of workers.

27 May 1867 Marries Leonie Selina Germain at Daylesford and, for a short time, owns and unsuccessfully operates the Vineyard Hotel.

December 1867 In a competition run by the Kyneton Young Men's Improvement Association, JF wins the £3 first prize for his poem “The Death of Lincoln”.

Late 1868–early 1877 Takes up an 80-acre block in Victoria’s Lake Cooper district. Several poor seasons in the wake of drought and flood events drive JF off the land.

Late 1876–80 Works for the local council as a road roller and begins to ply his trade as a carrier.

31 January 1880 First issue of the Sydney Bulletin published.

Late 1880–late 1883 To Hay in southwestern New South Wales. For three years, JF drives his bullock team along the stock routes of the Riverina, acquiring the experience that will inform the composition of Such is Life a decade later. JF's carrying business fails during the extended drought of late 1883.

Late 1883 To Shepparton, where JF works as a mechanic at his brother's foundry for the next two decades.

1886 Meets schoolteacher Kate Baker, who is boarding with members of his family. Baker becomes one of Furphy’s strongest supporters during his life, and literary executor after his death.


9 December 1889 Receives encouragement from Bulletin editor J.F. Archibald, but does not deliver the short sketches requested.

Early 1893 JF begins writing what will evolve over four years into the first version of Such is Life, MS1897.

1894 A.G. Stephens begins work as a sub-editor at the Bulletin.

1896 Stephens takes over the inside cover pages of the Bulletin to establish the literary Red Page.

4 April 1897 JF seeks advice from Archibald about options for publishing Such is Life. Archibald passes on JF’s letter to A.G. Stephens.
Chronology

23 April 1897 Acting on Archibald's positive report of JF's potential, Stephens offers his services as an editor and literary agent.

2 May 1897 JF mails the 1125-page handwritten manuscript of *Such is Life* to Stephens.

22 May 1897 Stephens responds with editorial and publishing advice, suggesting the need for a typescript to approach prospective publishers.

July 1897–July 1898 Using his newly acquired New Franklin typewriter, JF produces the typescript version of *Such is Life*, revising in response to Stephens' editorial recommendations.

26 August 1899 JF signs a contract with the Bulletin Newspaper Company for the publication of *Such is Life*.

April 1901 Despite JF holding a contract with the Bulletin, *Such is Life* appears no closer to publication. After visiting Stephens and Archibald in Sydney, JF outlines plans to reduce the size of the typescript version of *Such is Life* by replacing chapters two and five with shorter alternatives.

May–October 1901 JF executes the plan, reducing the size of *Such is Life*, and producing another typescript (now lost) that the Bulletin uses as setting copy.

January–March 1902 JF corrects galley proofs.

8 April 1903 Author's inspection copy delivered.

Late June 1903 Stephens reports that 2000 copies of *Such is Life* have been ordered.

1 August 1903 *Such is Life* published by the Bulletin Newspaper Company, Sydney.

1904 Completes typescript version of *Rigby's Romance*.

1905 To Claremont, Western Australia, joining his sons Felix and Samuel, who have established a foundry there.

27 October 1905–20 July 1906 *Rigby's Romance* serialised in the Broken Hill weekly newspaper the *Barrier Truth*.

1906 Completes typescript version of *The Buln-Buln and the Brolga*.

13 September 1912 JF dies.

1913 Kate Baker retires from the Victorian Education Department, devoting the rest of her life to JF's literary legacy.

1917  Comprising unbound sheets and linen covers of the Bulletin's first edition, the second issue of *Such is Life* published by Specialty Press, Melbourne. Paying £60 for these sheets out of her own funds, Kate Baker claims ownership of the copyright.


October 1934  Plaque memorialising JF's birthplace unveiled at Yarra Glen State School.


Early 1939  Commonwealth Literary Fund begins plans for a standard library of Australian works.

August 1939  “Who was Joseph Furphy?”, co-authored by Miles Franklin and Kate Baker, wins the S.H. Prior Memorial Prize.

May 1940  Plaque unveiled at Kyneton, memorialising JF's enrolment at the local school.

October 1943  Tree planting at Melbourne Botanical Gardens to commemorate centenary of JF's birth.

Spring 1943  Special Furphy issue of *Meanjin Papers*.

August 1944  *Such is Life* published by Angus & Robertson, Sydney.

September 1944  An expanded version of “Who was Joseph Furphy?”, *Joseph Furphy: The Legend of a Man and His Book*, published by Angus & Robertson, Sydney.

1946  *Rigby's Romance* published by Angus & Robertson, Sydney.

27 September 1947  Commemorative tablet unveiled at the site of Furphy's home in Shepparton.

1948  *Such is Life* published by Chicago University Press, offset from the Angus & Robertson edition.

1948  *The Buln-Buln and the Brolga* published by Angus & Robertson, Sydney.

October 1951  Samuel Furphy dies.

7 October 1953  Kate Baker dies.

### Chronology

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td><em>The Annotated Such is Life</em> with a photo-facsimile of the first edition is published by Oxford University Press, Melbourne.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>Sculpture and menhir erected at the site of Furphy’s home in Shepparton, commemorating the centenary of the publication of <em>Such is Life</em>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 2012</td>
<td>Joseph Furphy Commemoration, Shepparton, acknowledging the centenary of Furphy’s death.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 2013</td>
<td><em>Such is Life</em> published in the Text Classics series.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 2015</td>
<td>Joseph Furphy Digital Archive launched.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Introduction: Entangled in the Work

One day during the first few years of the twenty-first century, I approached Joseph Furphy’s *Such is Life* as an editorial challenge. No scholar had stepped up to answer the call from the Academy Editions of Australian literature project to edit this recognised classic of Australian literature,¹ and in reviewing the first volumes of that series for *Australian Literary Studies*, Laurie Hergenhan noted the absence, declaring that “An attempt to restore a text [of *Such is Life*] as close as possible to the ‘original’, no matter if problematic, would be generally welcomed”.² I decided to take up the challenge. But to what end? The first edition, published in 1903, and the lightly corrected second edition, published in 1944, had well served the scholars and critics whose commentary had positioned *Such is Life* as a foundational text in Australian literary history. In scholarly editing terms, what need was there to “prepare a version of [this] author’s work for presentation to a [new] reading public”?³ What was I doing by contemplating “the elimination of error and the selection of … authoritative readings for [a] new text, which [would] supersede all other authoritative alternatives”?⁴ If I were to select authoritative readings for a new version of *Such is Life*, where would I find them, and how would I

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² Hergenhan, [Review of the Academy Editions of Australian Literature], 119.
evaluate them? Where and what the (adj. sheol) is Joseph Furphy’s *Such is Life* anyway?\(^5\)

The version of *Such is Life* that established Furphy’s reputation was published in 1903, a much shorter one than the version he mailed to the editor and literary agent A.G. Stephens in 1897. After submitting the handwritten manuscript of his *magnum opus* to Stephens, Furphy followed the more experienced man’s instructions, first producing a typescript, then, after three years of delay from the publisher, he shortened his work to satisfy the concerns of management. Despite the author’s forthright declaration that “I’ll shorten the beggar down to any size you like; and trust me to serve up the scraps in some other form”,\(^6\) his submission to the demands of the marketplace did not occur without discomfort. For three years he had stressed that any “attempted condensation would amount to mutilation”;\(^7\) and while shortening the typescript version, he confided to a friend that “I find this job too much like pulling down a house and rebuilding a skillion”.\(^8\) The version he created under instruction from his editors is still widely considered “one of the great masterpieces and challenges of Australian literature”\(^9\) – but, at the same time, it has been considered “one of the great scandals of Australian literature” because it does not include the “socialist core of Furphy’s vision”.\(^10\) In a review of Michael Wilding’s *Studies in Classic Australian Fiction*, Laurie Hergenhan cites Wilding’s disagreement with G.A. Wilkes as good reason for a scholarly edition of *Such is Life*: “In his reading of *Such is Life* Wilding sees socialism as an absence in the published texts because of excisions made for publication and hence that the positive values Wilkes fails to see in stressing the work’s scepticism and stoicism does not take this sufficiently into account. But one could argue that the two critics are really talking about different versions.”\(^11\) Originating in the fifth chapter of Furphy’s typescript, this “socialist core” was replaced by a shorter chapter that, combined with an associated replacement in the second chapter, changed the work’s “centre of gravity”.\(^12\) The extracted

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\(^5\) For the uninitiated, Joseph Furphy employed “(adj. sheol)” and other similar textual devices to stand for swearwords.


\(^7\) Joseph Furphy to A.G. Stephens, 21 December 1899, *Letters*, 52–53.


chapters were revised and expanded to become *Rigby's Romance* and *The Buln-Buln and the Brolga*, anabranches of the original typescript version that were eventually reunited with *Such is Life* when Angus & Robertson published editions of all three works during the 1940s. Considering this history in the first decade of the twenty-first century, the lenses of editorial theory and practice presented me with a variety of approaches that ranged from ones that aimed to honour the author's intentions, wishes or expectations to those that aimed to honour the social conditions of publishing or the social milieu of the first readers. With a number of legitimate editorial approaches and a complicated textual and material history, determining which version of *Such is Life* best presents the work to readers of the present day presented me with significant challenges.

For many, finding the work is easy; it is found in the familiar book they have on their shelf or the electronic text they call up on their computer, tablet or smartphone – convenient editions of the work. As Peter Shillingsburg puts it, “Given easy access to contextual information about the texts being studied, few would say ‘I really do not want to know.’ In practice, however, many proceed without knowing because it is convenient. They also might not know the consequences of not knowing.” Such convenience is closely related to the myth of the “verbal icon” that Hershel Parker attempted to dispel with studies of American classics interrogating biographical, historical, bibliographical and textual evidence to reveal the “flaws” in familiar versions. Convenient editions can also conceal acts of multiple authorship, such as those that Jack Stillinger describes, or the “series of fascinatingly rich engagements of the author with the developing work” that Paul Eggert saw all around him when distinguishing textual processes from textual products. What scholars such as these “see” in their engagement with a literary work is the full archival and bibliographical record: manuscripts, typescripts, serialisations, editions, correspondence, publishers’ records, and a network of human agents of change that is never restricted to the solitary figure of the author. Finding the work, or, more correctly, describing the

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13 For the first use of the term anabranche to describe the relationship between Furphy’s three works, see A.G. Stephens, “Preface”, in *Rigby’s Romance* (Melbourne: De Garis, 1921), vii.
work, within such a complex system of material, textual and biographical entities is not easy.

We can therefore engage with Such is Life by reading the versions available to us, but we do so with a variety of conceptual challenges. In addition to being “one of the great masterpieces and challenges of Australian literature”, conveniently encountered in the many paperbacks available in second-hand bookshops, the archival and bibliographical record adds further layers of complexity to any engagement with Such is Life (see Fig. 0.1). Fragments of manuscript survive with substantial portions of the typescript that Furphy produced on his New Franklin typewriter. Copies of various editions that descend from this typescript can be found in most research libraries or purchased online; Rigby’s Romance can be read as a serial in Broken Hill’s weekly Barrier Truth, as an abridged edition, or as an unabridged edition, while a surviving typescript of The Buln-Buln and the Brolga can be read alongside the Angus & Robertson edition published in 1948. Human involvement in the archival and bibliographical processes is witnessed in a large amount of correspondence, business records and biographical writing, comprehensively discussed in the scholarly work of John Barnes and Julian Croft. We know that except for some discussion with friends and co-workers, Furphy wrote the first versions of Such is Life by lamplight, alone in the skillion he built alongside his house – and that after contact with A.G. Stephens and the Bulletin Newspaper Company, the contributions of others to the textual and material history of the work began to grow. After Furphy’s death in 1912, Kate Baker devoted her life to the literary legacy of her long-time friend and correspondent by organising memorials and overseeing many of the publishing projects that kept Furphy’s work in print until her own death in 1953. After studying these surviving documents and the related correspondence for many years, it became clearer to me that cases like this one confirm that “the life of a long-lived work or collection of works may be understood as a cultural index unfolding over time”, and that any “new editions of the work or works are implicated in the shifting cultural awarenesses that they simultaneously perform in their productions and receptions”. Locating and describing a literary work requires a much broader field of view than that provided by the surviving documents alone.

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Broadening the field of view to include the cultures that assemble around any one version of a literary work brings with it additional complications that are exacerbated by the subjective nature of scholarly work. For instance, attributing authority to any of the versions that descend from Furphy’s typescript is not straightforward, especially when we accept that “authority is a concept about which there is legitimate disagreement and that it is not an inherent quality of works of art but is, instead, an attribute granted by the critic or editor and located variously or denied entirely depending on the critical orientation of the perceiver.” This is further complicated by the unsteady grounds of authorship if we acknowledge the role of the critic, scholar or editor in biographically constructing the author of any authoritative version: “It is all a matter of language, of choosing a particular set of verbs, adjectives, and adverbs that will create, as a biographer would, the author necessary to justify the editorial approach.” By the time I was contemplating all of these complications as they related to Such is Life, I was following Peter Shillingsburg’s reasoning: “To produce a scholarly edition rightly is to do so self-consciously and explicitly. There being no single correct way to edit, one ought to edit in the light of alternative legitimate methods and goals, declaring one’s procedures in relation to them.” Or, as Paul Eggert has persistently reminded scholarly editors, the product of their scholarly labour is, at best, an argument about the work, “embodied in the reading text and supported by apparatus and other editorial matter.” This argument is often addressed to an ideal or implied reader because scholarly editions, often shunned by literary critics and general readers, “have failed, or at least partially failed, in their transactional” role. At the front end of a potentially long-lived editorial project, I understood these issues but I had yet to work out the implications for Such is Life through the implementation of an editorial rationale, and a project plan that included print or digital publication.

Having completed a scholarly edition for my PhD, I was acting on impulse, an editorial impulse, not yet understanding that there was also an archival impulse associated with the work I had set myself to do. Although I had witnessed the emergence of various digital archives in the

20 Shillingsburg, Scholarly Editing in the Computer Age, 14.
22 See Shillingsburg, Textuality and Knowledge, 95.
23 Eggert, The Work and the Reader in Literary Studies, 64.
1990s and acknowledged the broader scope that a digital environment provided, I had a printed book in mind when thinking about *Such is Life*, especially when Lurline Stuart’s edition of Marcus Clarke’s *His Natural Life* was published in the Academy Editions series in 2001. With its sixty-page introduction, foot-of-page textual apparatus, and over one hundred pages of scholarly appendices, I saw a model for what I thought could contain everything my implied reader needed to know about *Such is Life*, and, having contributed editorial assistance to a number of the other volumes in that series, I felt comfortable with the procedures the series had followed. The “General Editor’s Foreword” set out the aims:

The Academy Editions volumes clarify the often confusing textual histories of these works and establish reliable reading texts. Notation of textual variance in the different versions is provided, together with historical and other explanations of whatever in the texts may be no longer clear to the modern reader.

The Academy Editions provided a model, but not the institutional support needed to pursue an edition of *Such is Life*; the tenth and last volume was launched in 2007, ending the most productive period of scholarly editing that Australia is likely to see.

*Such is Life* became a test case for much of my thinking in the Aus-e-Lit project (2008–11), a digital humanities project which aimed to develop eResearch tools for scholars of Australian literature who used the AustLit Web portal to access the bibliographical and biographical information to be found there. This experience was enhanced by my work on the AustESE Project (2012–13), which aimed to develop an open-source workbench to support the production of electronic scholarly editions by distributed collaborators in a Web 2.0 environment. Again, *Such is Life* provided the

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27 In 2001, the William Blake Archive, the Walt Whitman Archive and the Rossetti Archive provided me and many others with models for thinking about the potential of digital archives, but the costs of establishing and maintaining such an infrastructure were prohibitive. As early as 1995, plans were also afoot for a Digital Conrad that only glimpsed at the potential of the internet, which was then in its earliest stages of use for scholarly purposes. See S.W. Reid, “Conrad in Print and on Disk”, *Studies in the Novel* 27, no. 3 (1995): 375–86.

28 “General Editor’s Foreword”, *His Natural Life* [by Marcus Clarke], ed. Lurline Stuart (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 2001), viii.


primary test case for me to compile user stories and develop the event-based ontology required for a workbench of this type to be conceived, developed and implemented. Implementation proved to be the stumbling block, however, when project funding ceased and project partners returned to other research priorities. The AustESE Workbench has not been implemented as a sustainable project, but the intellectual work that lies behind the archived repository proved invaluable to my thinking and the thinking of others involved in the project. For me, working alongside leaders in the field of editorial practice and theory, the project extended my approach to the work concept and also to the practical implications of web-based platforms and open-source tools to present the work to the implied reader I had in mind for a scholarly edition of Joseph Furphy’s Such is Life.

Ten years after first approaching Such is Life as an editorial challenge, and then working alongside these digital humanities projects, the limitations of the printed book in containing Such is Life had become much clearer to me. As the 2011 Nancy Keesing Fellow at the State Library of New South Wales, I digitised the extant pages of typescript and manuscript, and would eventually publish them on AustLit as part of what I came to call the Joseph Furphy Digital Archive. Chastened by ongoing discussion about open-access scholarship, AustLit’s subscription paywall encouraged me to look elsewhere for publication platforms, leading me to establish Tom Collins and Company with a minimal computing website theme developed by Alex Gil. At the same time, I was taking advantage of other web services such as Juxta Commons, which produced collations of the versions of Such is Life, Google Maps, which allowed me to plot and share significant localities, Timeline JS, which enabled me to publish a simple timeline of events, and Hypothes.is, a web-based tool that supports collaborative annotation. I was

using these web services by necessity, but also with the idea of “distributed editions”\textsuperscript{37} that might be built when semantic web technology supported the necessary resource description framework to more effectively curate disparate digital images, transcriptions, and other resources made freely available on the internet.\textsuperscript{38} In this spirit, I was “computing with the infrastructure at hand”,\textsuperscript{39} continuing the “cheap and good” variety of editorial project that I had begun years earlier, but, as I came to learn, I was actually responding to a different impulse.

Who, then, is the audience for a scholarly edition of \textit{Such is Life} and what would they do with it? These classical questions endure and, as Fredson Bowers pointed out in 1966, the responses to them still tend to split between the views of literary critics and textual critics.\textsuperscript{40} As we have seen, in 1999 the Academy Editions of Australia project was castigated by several specialists in Australian literary studies who questioned the goals of the project. Laurie Hergenhan, editor of \textit{Australian Literary Studies}, fired the first shot:

\textit{Part of the difficulty is that literary criticism and “critical editions” like these can part company to some extent. In editorial work there is a tendency for editorial procedures to “take over” because their pursuit of a kind of thoroughness and consistency may become both self-engrossing and self-validating. Yet, given the high goals of critical editions, the process is set on an inevitable course not necessarily commensurate with a significant result for the literary critic or general reader.}\textsuperscript{41}

The cost of the Academy Editions Project, funded by the Australian Research Council and supported by the Australian Academy of the Humanities, provided much of the fuel for Hergenhan’s critique. In a response to Hergenhan’s critique, Paul Eggert, the series’ general editor, made clear the distinction between publishing and scholarship by characterising the critical editions as reference books:

\textit{As reference books, critical editions have a great deal of organised and digested information to offer, and not all of it meets the eye on first reading.}

\textsuperscript{38} Anna Gerber and Jane Hunter, “Authoring, Editing and Visualizing Compound Objects for Literary Scholarship”, \textit{Journal of Digital Information} 11, no. 1 (2010).
\textsuperscript{39} Geoffrey Rockwell, “Computing with the Infrastructure at Hand: Collaborative Research for the Arts and Humanities in Times of Scarcity” (2010): https://philosophi.ca/pmwiki.php/Main/ComputingWithTheInfrastructureAtHand.
\textsuperscript{40} Fredson Bowers, \textit{Textual and Literary Criticism} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1966).
\textsuperscript{41} Hergenhan, [Review of the Academy Editions of Australian Literature], 115.
The potential of critical editions is fulfilled by readers and critics making use of the information and accepting or contesting their argument, as well in the act of quoting their reliable reading texts.42

The question of readership remains a sticking point, especially with a novel like Such is Life, notorious for being widely known but rarely read. Scholarly editors might hope that the product of their labour is “fulfilled by readers and critics making use of the information and accepting or contesting their argument”, but it is rare that such an outcome is achieved when a new scholarly edition competes with cheaper, readily available, convenient editions, and the uncritical attitude of a vast number of literary critics and readers that “any text will do”.

Stymied by the lack of opportunity to find a way to complete a critical scholarly edition of Such is Life, my energy was directed towards an associated impulse, an archival one, manifested in the two digital archives mentioned above that provide access to fundamental bibliographical, biographical and archival information. A digital scholarly edition has the potential to satisfy both archival and editorial impulses, opening the door to the more direct involvement of readers of all types. As Eggert has stated, “The archival impulse aims to satisfy the shared need for a reliable record of the documentary evidence; the editorial impulse to further interpret it, with the aim of orienting it towards known or envisaged audiences and by taking their anticipated needs into account.”43 Imagining these scholarly impulses on a sliding scale on which the “document-facing” archival impulse is positioned on the left and the “reader-facing” editorial impulse is on the right, Eggert’s conception also prepares space for literary criticism, which “looms further to the right” as a potential source of commentary, especially for digital scholarly editions.44 I have gone some way in addressing the archival impulse with the Joseph Furphy Digital Archive and Tom Collins and Company, the former providing access to images and transcriptions of the extant manuscript and typescript, and the latter deploying an open-source scholarly editing platform to publish the unabridged version of Rigby’s Romance online for the first time.45 The value of this work became more apparent in 2013 when Furphy scholar Julian Croft undertook the task of imaginatively reconstructing the 1897 version of Such is Life by reading the three published versions that descend from the manuscript version “as one”. Croft’s scholarly

42 Eggert, "Why Critical Editing Matters: Responsible Texts and Australian Reviewers", 197.
The Life of *Such is Life*

disclaimer is significant: “Of course, what we now have of *The Buln-Buln and the Brolga* and *Rigby’s Romance* are much different from the 1897 chapters [of *Such is Life*], but they are as close to them as present scholarship allows.”46 Without mentioning a new edition, Croft echoes Hergenhan’s call from decades earlier: “An attempt to restore a text [of *Such is Life*] as close as possible to the ‘original’; no matter if problematic, would be generally welcomed.”47 Launched in 2015, my aim in assembling the Joseph Furphy Digital Archive was to fill this gap in “present scholarship” until a critical scholarly edition could be considered.

The Joseph Furphy Digital Archive is built on the solid bibliographical foundations of AustLit by employing an exhibition platform designed for that purpose. This solid bibliographical foundation is held together by a data model based on the International Federation for Library Associations and Institutions’ Functional Requirements for Bibliographic Records (FRBR) model to describe literary and creative works.48 In this model a work is an abstract concept (for example, *Such is Life* by Joseph Furphy), realised as an expression or version, manifested or made concrete (for example, the first Bulletin edition of *Such is Life*), and ultimately encountered as an “item” (for example, one physical copy of the first edition found in the University of Queensland Fryer Library). The detail of this data model is not the point to be made here, but, rather, *my presence* in that data model as a scholar with an archival and editorial impulse. I became more acutely aware of my presence when preparing the first digital edition of the unabridged *Rigby’s Romance*. In effect, I had created a new version of *Rigby’s Romance*, implicating myself in the bibliographical record as the “agent” (editor and publisher) participating in the “event” that “manifested” that version – I now had a practical understanding of Paul Eggert’s remark in *Securing the Past*: “Ambitious maps, models and taxonomies hack usable paths through the forest of textuality. But to the extent that they install a subject-object relationship, they obscure the editor-conservator’s role in the work.”49 Of course, I had known this, underlining it in my own copy of *Securing the Past*, but being forced to see myself in the bibliographical record changed the way I saw the editorial and archival impulses that kept me bound to my long-lived project.

I was just one more reader in a long line of readers who have resuscitated *Such is Life* in the act of reading, editing, typesetting, or even in conversation.

46 Julian Croft, “Reading the Three as One: *Such is Life* in 1897”, *JASAL* 13, no. 1 (2013).
47 Hergenhan, [Review of the Academy Editions of Australian Literature], 119.
In considering the relationship between *Such is Life* and this broad network of readers, Eggert’s definition of the literary work comes to bear:

[T]he work emerges, not as a transhistorical essence, not as an aesthetic object ideally shaped for New Critical study, but as a series of historical processes. For a literary classic, this includes a set of material products, all of which claim to present or represent the work. To accept this starting point is to be able to model the relationship between the material object and the readings carried out in the name of the work; and it is to redefine the fundamental unit of literary study.  

Accepting this starting point, I began to look beyond the aesthetic object I once imagined in the form of a print-based scholarly edition. Statements I had read and heard started to come together in a moment of realisation. What happens, asks David Carter, when the field of book history becomes “agnostic towards literature”:

Is the object of our research still literature or is it books, publishing, or print culture? Is what we’re doing still literary history or is it book history, the history of reading, or something else again – the history of cultures or subjectivities? Are we still talking about “literary studies” or is the literary simply dispersed into all other studies?

This subsequently reminded me of John Barnes’ call for “studies of Furphy [that] look more closely at *Such is Life* as a cultural creation”, and more recent investigations of “literary sociability”, a practice that “[shifts] attention from individual writers and great books to examine the various forms of community that facilitate and sustain writing and reading”. In a shifting “field constituted by power and competition”, I take my place at the tail

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end of a long cultural history in which Joseph Furphy’s *Such is Life* was a touchstone. As a biographical entity and as an active reader, I am entangled in the work.

The aim of this book is to trace the life of the literary work we know as *Such is Life* by studying each item in the archival and bibliographical record “as an index of broader social and cultural change”. Chapter one provides a biographical account of Joseph Furphy that depicts him as the isolated, autodidactic writer that he was, before he reached out to more experienced figures in the publishing world. Making this distinction has an effect on how we read the extant typescript as a culmination of Furphy’s isolated creativity, or as the carrier of the result of this activity to the wider world. Chapter two provides an account of Furphy’s engagement with the publishing world, particularly the influences of A.G. Stephens and other Bulletin Newspaper Company stakeholders who had one eye on the literary value of the work and another eye on the realities of the marketplace. The tension between Furphy’s initial resistance to the recommended editorial contraction of *Such is Life* and his subsequent acquiescence to it provides the context in which to look more closely at the two versions that resulted from this environment. Taking Furphy’s resistance and acquiescence into account, chapter three reads the typescript version of *Such is Life* against the first edition in order to show how the work was transformed, but, more importantly, how these two documents have represented the work for readers down to the present day. As archival and bibliographical objects, they have more than pragmatic value; they also accrue symbolic value because of their preservation in institutional repositories and the commentary of general readers, critics and scholars. This symbolic value plays a significant part in the subsequent chapters. Chapter four traces the life of Rigby’s *Romance* from its origins in the typescript through its publication as a serial in the *Barrier Truth*, in an abridged edition in the 1920s, and then in full-length book form in the 1940s. This chapter lays more of the groundwork for the cultural history that emerges in conjunction with the textual history of Furphy’s second novel by introducing stakeholders in Furphy’s literary legacy who maintained a significant influence over the accrual of Furphy’s symbolic value for more than forty years in the middle of the twentieth century. The cultural history is further extended in chapter five, which investigates Kate Baker’s role in keeping Furphy’s legacy alive through her oversight of new editions such as the abridgement of *Such is Life*, conducted by Vance and Nettie Palmer, and published by Jonathan Cape in London. The vociferous objections to this abridgement amplified the voices of several stakeholders,

setting the scene for some atonement in a series of publishing projects in the 1940s. Kate Baker’s claims to the copyright of Such is Life are explored in the chapter, demonstrating the importance of acknowledging agency as well as authorship in the history of long-lived works. Chapter six examines the Furphy cult that emerged in the 1940s and considers the impact that had on Angus & Robertson’s decision to publish unabridged versions of Such is Life and Rigby’s Romance, accompanied by the first edition of The Buln-Buln and the Brolga, a revised version of the original second chapter of Such is Life. Such is Life and its associated works had accrued a broad mix of symbolic value, enabling a variety of stakeholders to claim Furphy as their own for political, aesthetic and cultural purposes, providing a market for his works that had not existed until that time. Out of this 1940s enthusiasm, an American edition was published, indicating the transnational nature of Australian literature and Furphy’s position in that. The seventh and final chapter accounts for the multiple editions of Such is Life that have appeared since the 1950s, and examines the waves of scholarship and literary criticism that fixed Furphy and his work in the canon of Australian literature. Drawing on the editorial theory discussed in the introduction, this concluding chapter positions me and my “envisaged audiences” for future editions of Such is Life as ongoing participants in the life of the work, a “book-historically oriented literary studies” that best “[unlocks] the history of meanings, including, importantly, our own”.