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Jim Phelps and Nigel Bell, ed. **D. H. Lawrence around the World: South African Perspectives**. Empangeni: Echoing Green Press, 2007.

This book, in itself a thoroughly worthwhile contribution to Reception Studies in one country, seems to throw down in its title an invitation to others to follow suit elsewhere, with "French Perspectives" or "Australian Perspectives," or whatever. If so, it also provides in its basic three-part anthological structure a serviceable model of how to proceed.

Part One offers materials for a kind of cultural history of how from, say, 1950 to 1980 or even later, D. H. Lawrence came to have a predominant role in the discussion of modern writing amongst white South Africans, and then to suffer fairly radical decline thereafter. It focusses mainly, though not exclusively, on Lawrence's significance in university curricula, identifying a central figure—Christina van Heyningen—whose itinerant trajectory from Stellenbosch to Witwatersrand to the University of Natal enabled her measured yet fervent advocacy of Lawrence to gain wide dissemination.

But behind her of course stood the formidable figure of F. R. Leavis—the "Dr. Johnson of our age," she and other disciples felt. This anthology allows us to perceive clearly, through its valuable collection of testimonies concerning English Department syllabi and their impact in the Leavis era, that these were not then, in the context of apartheid South Africa, as reactionary as they would later appear. Leavisism, with its origins in lower middle class revolt against an establishment hierarchy of cultural taste, fitted in quite well for a time, for white liberals, with opposition to the Nationalist Government. But as things got worse, some of them realised how irrelevant it really was—Mark Kinkead-Weekes, for example, with his "sense that any talents I might have would be of no real value to the struggle after Sharpeville." The influence of Leavis, in his case

and others, led logically overseas, and to "the residual guilt felt by self-exiled South Africans."

Myself in the late 1950s and early 1960s thoroughly influenced, at school and at Cambridge, by Leavis and Leavisite teaching, I read this section with a mixture of feelings. On the one hand, it was good to be reminded of a time when literature still mattered in universities, before governments began to believe that one of the paths to re-election lay through making university education a servant of the job market rather than an end in itself. Also, to encounter an arresting and convincing description by W. H. Bizley of the quasi-religious atmosphere of the Leavisite seminar in those years—a kind of "séance" where "Lawrence's Lincoln Cathedral might become womb-like in the seminar-room," and where one might emerge from Christina van Heyningen's class "time-washed."

On the other hand, there is the rather comical effect of some of the writing in "Roy" Littlewood's essay, with its "representatively" hyperbolic title "Lawrence, Last of the English." "Representative," that is, for instance, in its self-inflatedly pompous Chadbandian rhetorical questions like "What chance has Mr. Maurice Hussey's excellent little article on 'The Horse Dealer's Daughter' in a recent number of *The Use of English*—and what grounds, other than his own humility, have we for sharing his hope that such insights as his will soon be common property?" What chance indeed? any reader outside the magic circle of initiati, then or now, will echo with a smile. I tend to agree with Bizley that it is "an example of 1950s Lawrence criticism at its worst," with "rather more 'buzz-words' than there should be," (including of course "representative") and to mildly regret that news of Littlewood's understandable desire not to have it reprinted reached Phelps and Bell too late for them to excise or prune it for the present volume.

But thereafter, as Geoffrey Haresnape observes in a perceptive and informative memoir on Lawrence's fortunes at the University of Cape Town, "the ousting of Leavis was a big blow to Lawrence." Globally, in fact, Lawrence's reputation was hit by successive waves of a multiple whammy—feminism, post colonialism, the "dislodgement" (a Leavisite buzzword come to haunt its maker) of the canon of English literature, and then perhaps of any canons of literature anywhere in favour of a version of cultural studies that tended to abandon any notion of cultural value or "critical standards." In South Africa, there were obviously quite specific circumstances (the ending of apartheid, the need to refashion or even invent a new national cultural identity) that conspired to intensify the brutality of his dethronement.

The extent of the punishment, many of us believe, did not fit the extent of the crime—at least not the crime of Lawrence himself (the absurd hagiographic mode of texts like "Lawrence, the Last of the English" is another matter, putting its idol on a pedestal from which he was more or less bound sooner or later to topple). Slowly but surely, Lawrence is regaining stature, at least amongst those who continue to believe in the idea of "literature" and/or the importance of understanding high cultural phenomena like "modernism."

Parts Two and Three of Phelps and Bell offer a well chosen collection of articles that enable the reader, without editorial heavying, to form judgements on the current state of the Lawrence recovery in one particular country. The happy decision to include in a volume primarily devoted to Reception Studies a section (Part Three) consisting of unpublished essays by younger contemporaries, implying as it does faith that the cause of Lawrence in South Africa is not lost, enables us to see distinctive national patterns of continuity and change.

Part Two, a selection of essays belonging to the tradition, often but not invariably a Leavisite one, displays two particular features of South African writing on Lawrence. The first is a special predilection, with Christina van Heyningen again its mentor, for Lawrence the poet. (The fact that the anthology concludes with two South African poems inspired by Lawrence again unobtrusively underlines the point.) There is a degree of divergence here from Leavisite orthodoxy, where 'Lawrence the novelist' was undoubtedly the primary focus. This is mitigated, however, by the inclusion of a number of essays on Lawrence's school poems, including one by Phelps himself that strays over into questions of educational method and reminds us that the core strategy of the Leavisite circle was to spread its doctrine and practice through teaching.

The other noteworthy feature of this section is work in Comparative Literature—the comparison of Lawrence with both indigenous African and white settler literature in Southern Africa. Two essays stand out here, those by Mark Kinkead-Weekes and Christopher Heywood. Kinkead-Weekes proposes a comparison between Lawrence and the Botswana writer Bessie Head, new to me, who died in 1986 at the age of 49. If the essay itself didn't totally convince me of the connection, it made me want to read Head, and reminded me how fruitful a role Comparative Literature can have in preserving and enlarging literary studies. Christopher Heywood's "The Impact of Bleek and Lloyd's *Specimens of Bushman*

Folklore on *Birds, Beasts and Flowers*" is undoubtedly the jewel in the crown of this section, a magisterial compound of literary scholarship, anthropology, and intellectual and cultural history which does indeed (even if ever so slightly overplaying its hand) offer arresting evidence of the relation between Lawrence and San oral poetry and folklore.

In so doing, it seems, Heywood brings together the main strengths of the South African Lawrence tradition. If you believe, as I do, that the chief hope for the recuperation of Lawrence is to explore and emphasise his complex relation to philosophical and literary modernism in the light of contemporary theory (the work of Michael Bell exemplary in this respect), then Part Three offers plentiful support for your position. Its strongest pieces—those by de Villiers and Merrington in particular, but also that by Thurman —manage to contribute to various contemporary theoretical debates without leaving "close reading" behind. Merrington's essay, for instance, picking up from Heywood in exploring Lawrence's connection with Jan and René Juta, offers a stimulating discussion of colonialism, post colonialism, and "African orientalism" that discriminates nicely beween Lawrence and the two South Africans, taken independently as writers, and concludes convincingly that Lawrence is more anti-imperialist than they.

The book, then, offers a thoroughly satisfactory survey of its chosen subject, and is extremely well edited and produced. All readers of all books, perhaps, will have regrets: mine are, in this case, at the omission of two figures I would have thought added useful perspective to the debate of a by-and-large non-Leavisite nature. The first is Laurence Lerner, of Cape Town, Sussex, and later Vanderbilt, who devotes a third of his once influential *The Truth-Tellers* to Lawrence. He taught me at one stage, and I remember him as an unorthodox Lawrentian who had a role in weaning me off Leavis. Part of his take, as I remember it, was to distinguish sharply between Lawrence's insights at the personal level, which he admired, and his social and political views, which he did not. He was thus another of those in the tradition of Katherine Mansfield, who saw that the phenomenon called "D. H. Lawrence" was a multiple and shifting entity rather than a single and static one, and that rubbed off on me, I hope.

The other is arguably the most distinguished contemporary South African literary academic: Derek Attridge of York. The fact that he was one that flew over the cuckoo's nest from Lawrence to Joyce would I think have rendered his testimony all the more valuable. He has in fact given a partial account of his literary

education at school and university in South Africa in the "Mainly Autobiographical" section of his book *Joyce Effects,* in which he mentions the predominance of Lawrence at that time. But a fuller version of these memoirs here might have added an extra layer of icing, no more; it is the rich and nourishing cake already baked by Phelps and Bell that essentially counts.

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