Review by Mbuh Mbuh Tennu,

University of Nottingham, of

D. H. Lawrence around the World: South African Perspectives,

Eds. Jim Phelps and Nigel Bell,

Empangeni: Echoing Green Press, 2007,

in the ***Newsletter***, no. 82, Summer 2008,

of **The D. H. Lawrence Society** (UK), pages 20-26.

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The association of Lawrence's work with the Midlands and its impact on Anglo-European and Western consciousness has, in recent years, been enriched by the discourse of travel. The new momentum behind critical assessments benefits from his travel books and investigates the nature of his own movement around the globe; but also, significantly begins to redress a 'silence' in Lawrence studies on Africa in particular. Evidence from his letters and discursive writing together with insights from those with whom he was either directly or remotely related in his travel experiences, now revamps the textual perspective of his novels in particular, in order to give more meaning to his restive vagrancy as a multicultural phenomenon. Inevitably, this new and refreshing understanding of Lawrence's post-European vision has engendered what can be described as a locationist Lawrence criticism, one that offers a familiarisation with and appropriation of Lawrence and his work in localised critiques. Evidence of this abounds in the numerous 'checklists' of Lawrence studies all over the world, studies which culminate in what Michael Bell has described as a need to 'formulate' Lawrence afresh by a new readership 'outside his home culture.'[1]

D. H. Lawrence Around the World: South African Perspectives is one of such studies, and is interestingly unique in more than one way. The title's emphasis on 'around the world' summarises the resurgent scholarly interest in Lawrence and his work; while a South African point of view dramatises a tendency in these studies to appropriate Lawrence and his work to a local consciousness. Even more significant is the fact that this text is the lone full-volume critical work on Lawrence from Africa, and profits from previous research on Lawrence in *English Studies in Africa* since 1965, and other South African journals whose research on Lawrence is acknowledged. There is a new recognition here, as elsewhere, that through his controversial writing Lawrence actually spoke intimately to visions and sentiments beyond his native context. The only continent which Lawrence never visited or specifically wrote about, with the consequence that references to it in his writing are mostly speculative, Africa, has up till now received just a little more cursory attention from Lawrence scholars. If only for this reason then, *South African Perspectives* is an overdue publication that finally places Africa on the critical map of Lawrence studies.

As a pioneer endeavour, the volume is a five part composite compilation that ranges from familiar material, whether in 'retrospect' or as 'reprints' to incisively new essays, creative adaptations of Lawrence's poetic style and

[1] Michael Bell, 'Introduction', *D. H. Lawrence: Literature, History, Culture*, ed., Michael Bell et al. (Tokyo: Kokusho-KankoKai Press, 2005) 13.

subject, and a trajectory of Lawrence research in South Africa. To place Lawrence within an African discourse, the Editors make the bold claim that the book 'sends out tendrils in various directions toward South African and world-wide readers of Lawrence, the world circumnavigator who from England [...] ranged his imagination across the globe's peoples in space and time' (*Perspectives* xvi). What then follows is a breakdown of this claim in the various critical assessments of Lawrence over the years.

Even as Lawrence's reputation was undergoing serious re-consideration in the West after his death, critical and academic interest in his work in South Africa as far back as 1955 was already pointing to a contrary direction. This is what Part One of *Perspectives*, 'Retrospect,' highlights, by drawing attention to the enthusiasm (with slight moments of resistance) that characterised the introduction of Lawrence into the South African university. Initiated by later Lawrentians like H. M. Daleski, Mark Kinkead-Weekes, and Christopher Heywood (who were in one way or another connected to South Africa), the spirit persisted into the 1990s, (even if at times it was faulted for the enthusiast's such as J. C. F. Littlewood's 'militant evangelism,' (*Perspectives* 77). That the fervour was kept alive in numerous South African universities even with the hostilities of the Apartheid system against a text like *Lady Chatterley's Lover* is one proof of the undying, phoenix spirit that characterises Lawrence's writing.

Part Two contains reprinted articles, many of which are either 'reminiscences' or investigations of themes that have an echo of 'Lawrence around the world.' More than these, however, Kinkead-Weekes' 'Re-placing the Imagination: D. H. Lawrence and Bessie Head' and Heywood's 'The Impact of Bleek and Lloyd's *Specimen of Bushman Folklore* on *Birds, Beasts and Flowers*' trace a link between Lawrence's work and an African inspiration. Accordingly, Kinkead-Weeke's stress on the effect of exile on the 'frequent condition of writers' in the twentieth century focuses on Lawrence as 'the only English novelist before 1950 to anticipate a decolonising of imagination' (*Perspectives*, 130, 135); and comparable to Bessie Head's 'imagination which [her] own region [Botswana] had traumatised' and because of which it 'striv[es] then to re-place itself in another where it finds alien at first' (*Perspectives*, 138). On the other hand, Heywood argues that inasmuch as 'Lawrence saw himself as a modern Faust, trapped in a Mephistophelian complicity with a hell that he identified as the scientific ideas and cerebral activity that shaped the modern industrial thinking,' Bushman poetry was one of the avenues that 'provided an escape route out of that dilemma' by 'open[ing] a world that had become obscured to modern man but which remained retrievable, in the manner of the Bleek circle' (*Perspectives* 155, 158).

These views complement and, in fact, introduce four of the five 'New Essays' in Part Three, which I think constitute the core of this volume as far as re-evaluating Lawrence's connection with the communal, travel and the 'primitive' are concerned. (Francois Hugo's 'Judgement and Maturity in *Sons*

and Lovers and *The Fox*,' does not quite fit here as it dwells on Eurocentric themes such as relationships and sexuality that are rather removed from the multicultural and post-colonial concerns of the collection.) Accordingly, David de Villiers' 'Following the "shifting pole-star": Frontier Metaphysics in Lawrence' hinges on Lawrence's alienation as the 'wayward son' of England, whose eventual 'contact with a wide range of peoples and locales [...] sharpened his sense of what was lamentable and dangerous about modern, and especially British, civilisation' (*Perspectives* 194). Drawing on Anne Fernihough's 'Introduction' to the 1995 Penguin edition of *The Rainbow*, de Villiers then offers a compact analysis of Lawrence's awareness of, and response to, *gemeinschaft* or community 'as providing the space within which the individual can enact and fulfil his vital relation to his circumambient universe' (*Perspectives* 196). Recognising the fact that, for Lawrence, community had been 'eclipsed in England,' de Villiers instead argues, quoting from Lawrence's essay on Herman Melville ('I could never go back. Back toward the past, savage life'), that Lawrence was not nostalgic after what has been destroyed. He therefore aligns Lawrence's views of cultural decline with those of Oswald Spengler in *The Decline of the West*.

To the extent that this argument justifies Lawrence's '[interest] in tracing and analysing the history of decline' in England and Western civilisation, I think it stands. However, if we are to follow the volume's sighting of cultural values beyond the West, it will be important to point out, also, that the primitive, which is the alternative for 'community' beyond Europe, is more than merely 'go[ing] back [...] toward the past' in Lawrence. It is, above all, the reinvention or discovery of such feeling in alien, contemporary contexts, and returns, by extension, to the countryside of *Lady Chatterley's Lover*. In this way, we can fully appreciate de Villiers' conclusion that in Lawrence's approach, 'the confluence of the images of the "unmapped wilderness" [...] evokes the image of the frontier, that liminal space between a known, socially defined reality and an unknown space over which that reality has no effective power' (*Perspectives* 217).

The argument about the significance of the primitive in Lawrence is pursued by Jim Phelps in 'Conflicting Visions of the Primitive in D. H. Lawrence.' Not very concerned with the racial and historical character of the primitive, Phelps situates the primitive within creative feelings and instincts with which Lawrence struggled throughout his career; and juxtaposes these with contemporary insights into anthropology and science. For instance, artistic creation and migration are twined in Phelps' analysis, based on David Lewis-Williams' concept of the 'spectrum of consciousness' and Aldous Huxley's idea of the 'intensified trajectory' which both 'deal with the universal neurological conditions of the human consciousness that unite us as a specie across time, place and cultures' (*Perspectives* 229). This view coheres with de Villiers' frontier liminality, as it relates artistic creation to a need to find 'what the heart

really wants, for the next future' (*Perspectives* 233). Interestingly, and tracing a movement from hunter-gatherers within which 'some genetic diversity inevitably occurred,' Phelps links this futuristic vision to 'Lawrence's yearning for Rananim' and 'a renewal of consciousness through connection with the primitive, both as a past, and within ourselves, as vital for the future of our civilisation' (*Perspectives* 233). I believe that Phelps' use of '*our* civilisation' at this stage is more relevant in its multicultural inclusiveness than previous such identification in Lawrence studies, which defined hegemony rather than compatibility. For one thing, there is a shift in attitude in which the defined primitive functionally relates to Rananim as a realisable possibility and not, as is often the case, a utopian venture. Besides, in his use of Rananim, Phelps problematises the contentious issue of Lawrence's 'religious and social vision' in his most 'primitive' novel, *The Plumed Serpent*, and concludes that the novel's vision is 'hierarchical' whereas that of Rananim is 'co-operative and egalitarian' (*Perspectives* 238). For a specifically post-colonial reading of Lawrence, such an analysis is relevant in suggesting how the Rananim metaphor not only functions in the 'rediscovery' of community by Mellors and Connie at the end of *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, but also introduces a new notion of decolonisation by which both the colonial and colonised have to deny the instinct to dominate and retreat back into a basic community.

In Peter Merrington's 'Lawrence, the Jutas, and the "Mediterranean" Cape,' we are reminded of how transposed geographical space represented cultural affinities between the Self and the Other, the colonial and the colonised, or the 'civilised' and the 'primitive.' Reminiscent of speculations in Lawrence's letters about Africa especially from Italy, Merrington not only suggests how 'Lawrence's particular version of the archaic Mediterranean enters South African topographical writing' but also brings out the urges behind Lawrence's choice of 'places and old peoples.' In this way, he explains how 'the Mediterranean becomes generic to topographical and travel writing concerning South Africa in the early twentieth century' (*Perspectives* 248). A vital link is thus established in this way between the need for the Western consciousness to recover its lost sense of pre-industrial society and colonial hegemony, by resorting ultimately to 'a primordial Africa.' Once more, the 'primitive' and 'community' merge suggestively as alternatives to the industrialised strain that characterises Lawrence's work.

Slightly more emphatic on theoretical influences and controversies over Lawrence's style, Christopher Thurman's article, 'Lawrence, Leavis, and Butler: Some Reflections on Appropriation, Influence, Association, and "Redemption,"' foregrounds the well-known debate between F. R. Leavis and T. S. Eliot over Lawrence's identity as an artist. According to Thurman, 'Leavis was recruiting Lawrence to something of a polemical position [...] against that form of Modernism represented by T. S. Eliot and Gustave Flaubert' (*Perspectives* 268). By introducing Guy Butler (who had been Chair of English at Rhodes

University in 1952) into this debate, Thurman bridges the controversial critical gap between Europe and (South) Africa, by pointing out that '[i]n his quest for a South African identity that synthesized his European identity with his African homeland, Butler validated both Eliot's "still point" [...] and Lawrence's pursuit of "dark gods"' (*Perspectives* 270-71). From this synthesis, Thurman then goes on to argue elaborately about a kinship between Butler and Lawrence's views on race, gender, and class identities. In the end, using a critic like Neil Roberts, Thurman challenges hostile criticism of texts like *The Plumed Serpent* and *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, rehabilitating them, so to say, within a multicultural, post-colonial context.

The last two parts of the volume are brief but revealing commentaries on the state of creative and critical inspiration, which Lawrence has stimulated in South Africa between 1945 and 1999. While the published articles, letters, and reviews on Lawrence in Part Five credit South Africa as perhaps the nucleus of Lawrence studies in Africa, the research work is mostly at the Masters level, thus insinuating a disturbing loss on interest in Lawrence at the doctoral level. On the other hand, the two poems in Part Four by Norman Morrissey and Jim Phelps are a significant tribute to the inspirational power of Lawrence's writing on personal and local 'colour.' Morrissey for instance personalises Paul Morel's 'shimmery' style in *Sons and Lovers* in order to confess his own 'shimmering sub-atomic fantasies;' a pattern which he again acknowledges in his allusions to *Lady Chatterley's Lover, The Rainbow*, and 'the travel books' which represent for him 'the wanderer's own filament held against other spirits of place' (*Perspectives* 295-6). If, as Morrissey confesses, 'those books touched something lost in the narrow nightmare of myself' and also provided 'rainbow bridges/to places without bounds' (*Perspectives* 296), it is in the fact of his real-life environment that the Lawrentian allure culminates, as '[h]e lives in retirement in a mountain village, sharing a five-acre plot with a troop of samango monkeys, a few thousand trees, seventy-two species of birds, some buck, and snakes, and whatever poems come lurking about his door'(*Perspectives* 323). On his part, Phelps' poem, 'Green Mambas,' is a Zulu version of Lawrence's 'Snake,' but unlike in the prototype, the persona in Phelps' not only refuses to welcome the mambas, one after the other, but successively kills them in an intellectualised and/or Christian justification of 'primal sin.' Yet, his reading of Lawrence's poem in-between the killings, haunts him as 'judge, defender' (*Perspectives* 300), and he wonders if 'I missed my chance with these two lords of life?' (*Perspectives* 302). The poem, like the articles on the 'primitive,' thus focus on Lawrence's concerns with the dilution of primal instincts through attributes of 'civilised' rationalisation whether educational, religious, or scientific.

South African Perspectives, therefore, offers a new challenging view of Lawrence, in which the individual articles describe the mutual 'vibration' between his work and formerly 'alien' cultures notably African. Indeed, any book on Lawrence and Africa is a significant contribution to the post-colonial frame in which Lawrence is now increasingly being (re)assessed. More than any other colonial location, the focus on Africa through a Lawrence lens is vital to a new definition of core terms like colonialism and post-colonialism in particular, and how the shift in interest is indicative of an emergent enthusiasm for Lawrence not from former colonial centres but instead from their former colonised peripheries. The effort, reflected in these articles, is to follow Lawrence's footprints and draw inferences from their physical, imaginative, and relational significance. Beyond the speculative conclusions in some of the analyses, the outcome underscores the hypnotic aura of Lawrence's work today, whether it is Bell's concession for a needful critical impetus from 'outside,' or Keith Cushman's recent claim (during the 11th International D. H. Lawrence Conference in Nottingham) that Lawrence actually passed through North Carolina, USA. The emerging picture, captured in *South African Perspectives,* is that of a geo-culturally-variegated personality who directly or indirectly, either infiltrates or is appropriated into cultural otherness.

Mbuh Mbuh Tennu
University of Nottingham