

The 'Lady Chatterley's Lover' Trial, edited by H. Montgomery Hyde (London: The Bodley Head, 1990; pp viii + 333; cloth £18.00).

It is a little difficult to work out the rationale behind the publication in 1990 of *The 'Lady Chatterley's Lover' Trial*. Of course there is the chronological impulse, or should we say pretext? It is, as the cover blurb reminds us, thirty years since the trial; and maybe thirty years on is as good a moment as any to remember. But there is nothing intrinsically significant in the anniversary itself: 25, 50, 100 would all be as apposite.

If there were new material involved - perhaps charting the pre-trial jousting, or the process of publication - one might feel something worthwhile had been achieved. The problem, though, is that, apart from H. Montgomery Hyde's introduction (of which more later), there is nothing new at all. Penguin themselves - the defendants in the case - rushed out a transcript of the trial as early as 1961, edited by C.H. Rolph. Admittedly, the format of that edition was somewhat different, and rather flawed. Rolph edited the words of the trial into a continuous narrative, linked by his own 'authorial' observations. The book looks and reads rather like a novel. For instance, during the prosecution's cross-examination of Graham Hough, we have the following passage:

'I am not asking what he is trying to do: but is it realistic?'

- 'I think it is a failure then.'

'You agree with me in this, that in this book of such high merit there is at least one passage which is of very low merit?'

- 'There are others too; there are several, in my opinion.'

Mr Griffith-Jones (prosecuting counsel) thought there were several too. He went on reading them out, from pages 316, 270, 34, 271, passages in which, it seemed, the claim to literary merit was destroyed by the use of the four-letter words. Then he raised the matter of the gamekeeper's lunch-time conversation with Lady Chatterley's father, looked at 'as a portrait of our society' (49).

The main flaw in this approach is that large chunks of the trial are either missed out altogether, or at least severely truncated. Although the narrative flows, helped rather than hindered by Rolph's rather jaunty style, there is a feeling of incompleteness.

The 'new' version is a more straightforward account of the evidence. It is done in 'dramatic' format, without editorial intrusion. It is undoubtedly more satisfactory to be able to read the text, to follow the ebb and flow of evidence, cross-examination, judicial intervention and so on, without having the editor constantly guiding one's arm.

But, still, there is no significant addition to existing knowledge, since no doubt, the bulk of the evidence was published daily at the time in contemporary newspaper accounts. And - maddeningly in a way - Hyde departs from his own rules on occasion. The evidence of one or two witnesses is merely paraphrased.

For instance, while we get all the details on some of the witnesses - down to full christian names, addresses etc. - for others we have only a brief synopsis in parenthesis. For Joan Bennett, Hyde gives us only:

(Mrs Bennett, fiction critic and academic, supported the previous witnesses and identified the theme of the book, 'that the physical life is of very great importance indeed and is neglected, that many people live poor emaciated lives because they are living with only half of themselves'.)

Rolph's edition of Mrs Bennett's evidence took up almost five pages. There is no sort of logic in such arbitrary editorial methods, and one's confidence in the 'purity' of Hyde's text is jolted.

Hyde's introduction offers little new either. He briefly runs through the life and works of Lawrence, in what is little more than a synopsis for beginners. He gives us a useful excursion through the legal and political background to the Obscene Publications Act 1959 under which the prosecution was brought. He has some interesting words to say on the careers of the main legal protagonists in the proceedings. And he quotes at length from evidence which is set out again in full a few pages later in the body of the book.

Having said all this, there are reasons why the appearance of a new book on the Chatterley trial is most timely. First, the parallel with the saga of *The Satanic Verses* is not to be overlooked. Whilst the nature and origin of the censorship differ markedly, it is interesting to note that, with Rushdie's book as with *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, much of the hottest debate has centred on whether or not to publish in paperback (and the beleaguered Penguin - at the heart of the storm again - have still not grasped their courage to do so). Oddly Hyde's introduction does not touch on the Rushdie affair at all. This may be because Hyde died during 1989 (the book appeared after his death) and the full significance of Rushdie's fate may not have been apparent by then.

The second thing that strikes most forcibly concerns Lawrence's reputation. Reading again the testimonies of the distinguished witnesses on the novel's behalf, one realises sadly how far Lawrence's standing amongst the English literary establishment has declined from what was perhaps its zenith in 1960. Almost 70 worthies were ready to speak, though in the end only 35 gave evidence, by which time the prosecution had lost all heart for the fight, at least on the literary merit argument. No one testified *against* the novel's merit. The roll-call for is astounding: Rebecca West, Richard Hoggart, the Bishop of Woolwich, Vivian de Sola Pinto, Raymond Williams, Cecil Day-Lewis, Norman St John Stevas, Noel Annan, Roy Jenkins, E.M. Forster; one need not go on. Despite - who knows, perhaps because of - Lawrence's almost outlaw status in the 30s, 40s and 50s, this august band of men and women was prepared to stand up in court and speak for him. Almost all identified Lawrence as being among the three or four leading English twentieth century writers.

It is inconceivable that the same could happen today. If one mustered half a dozen moderately famous *litterati* to speak for Lawrence, one would have done well. The prevalent mood today mirrors that of Lawrence's own lifetime; the establishment does not quite know how to take Lawrence, so he tends to be mocked and belittled, subject to all manner of snobbery, his novels condemned for the content of his political essays. There is an eerie quality about it all, all the more disturbing in the light of the highly equivocal reaction amongst writers to the Rushdie affair.

Philip Larkin wrote:

Sexual intercourse began

In nineteen sixty-three

(which was rather late for me)-

Between the end of the *Chatterley* ban

And the Beatles' first LP.

('Annus Mirabilis')

Leaving aside Larkin's heavy irony, there must indeed have been an epoch-making feel about the 'end of the *Chatterley* ban', something which is difficult fully to grasp today. Something did change - at least in public life - in the early 1960s and the *Chatterley* trial was part of that change. For a reminder of that, the book is a welcome publication. We should not forget how far ahead of the main procession Lawrence's pilgrimage ran. Certain freedoms and values do own their origins in part at least to Lawrence's vision - and to the courage of Graham Hough and the others in defending that vision.

Andrew Cooper

Joseph Davis, *D.H. Lawrence at Thirroul* (Sydney: Collins Australia, 1989; distributed in the United Kingdom by Gazelle Book Services, Lancaster; pp. x + 252; paper £8.95).

This is a racy popular history of the small township of Thirroul, where Lawrence and Frieda lived between May and August 1922, and at the same time a study of the influence that the spirit of this place had on Lawrence and the writing of *Kangaroo*. Perhaps its most useful function will be to appeal to the pride of Joseph Davis's fellow-citizens and to encourage them to support the campaign for the preservation of 'Wewurk', the house where the Lawrences stayed, as part of Australia's literary heritage. Joseph Davis writes from a life-time's knowledge of Thirroul and has an infectious enthusiasm for the novel and the picture it paints of Australia.

Unfortunately the book is written in a colloquial, matey style which abounds in slang, grammatical solecisms, clichés, mis-related participles, split infinitives and actual linguistic errors such as a 'affect' for 'effect' and 'flaunting' for 'flouting'. Paragraphs are short and chapter-headings journalistic. There is no index; the one map omits mention of many places referred to in the text; and I think most readers would be glad of maps of Thirroul and environs of Sydney, which have great

significance for the comings and goings of the Lawrences and the various mysteries surrounding their stay. But at the same time it is important to judge the book in accordance with the aims of the writer, without importing criteria that are perhaps not relevant.

One significant aspect of Davis's examination of earlier studies of *Kangaroo* is his scepticism about Robert Darroch's questionable arguments in *Lawrence in Australia* (1981) and his constant warning against the dangers of using fiction as a guide to real events - though he in his turn does not entirely avoid the temptation to speculate. In the main his method is to examine local records of all kinds and he comes up with a number of new facts which may or may not throw light on the problems regarding the Lawrence's movements. For example, he lists the 'To Let' advertisements that appeared in the *Sydney Morning Herald* for Saturday 27 May 1922, the day the Lawrences arrived in Sydney. He also checks on the local residents who might have met Lawrence and discussed politics with him. A number of gratuitously interesting facts also emerge, such as that 'Strike-Pay' was published in *The South Coast Times* for Christmas 1913 and that there was a Harriette Street in Sydney.

The writer shows at times a certain naiveté about his subject, as when he writes that 'Thirroul is not the sort of place over which one would expect a great writer to wax lyrical'. Again, on several occasions he describes the Lawrences as being forced into 'slumming it on the outskirts of the Riviera of New South Wales.' He also suggests that there has never been such a detailed study of the spirit of place as it affects Lawrence's work.

One of the most valuable aspects of Davis's criticism is his stress on Lawrence's changing attitude to Australia and the Australians as the novel proceeds. He prints in sequence (pp.118-20) all the paragraphs about Lawrence's developing reactions to Australians and those describing his growing appreciation of the natural environment (pp. 140-1). On the whole, however, I think that Davis underestimates the political significance of the novel. To me, *Kangaroo* is a searching study of how far it is the individual's moral obligation to be committed to political activity, coming to the Lawrentian conclusion that duty to oneself is paramount. At another level, the novel is a vivid study of relationships within a marriage. I think Davis overstates his case in stressing the pre-eminence of the pastoral element: all three aspects are of equal importance. Nonetheless, there are good things in Davis's book, not least its readability.

Rosemary Howard