

portunity for Canadian educators to follow-up Kezar and Lester's work with an article or book from the Canadian standpoint. Particular areas which are in need of a Canadian perspective include internal and external funding structures and government influence with policy strategies.

Overall I believe this is an excellent resource for campus leaders and change agents within higher education institutions to draw on. The authors provide a logical and practical approach to discussing collaboration. In a concise manner this book addresses why collaboration is important, what campus leaders should address to initiate a collaborative reorganization as well as providing a model on how leaders can implement a sustainable and successful collaborative structure. ♣

Mitchell, Leslie (2009). *Maurice Bowra: A Life*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Pages: 400. Price: \$50.00 USD (hardcover).

Reviewed by David L. Leal, Associate Professor of Government & Director of the Public Policy Institute, The University of Texas at Austin.

Maurice Bowra is a name little recognized outside of a declining number of academic circles. If we remember him at all, it is for his personality (formidable), wit (often obscene), and conversational abilities (legendary). Nevertheless, he was among the most famous Oxford dons of the 20th century, and possibly the most infamous. Fortunately, Leslie Mitchell's comprehensive and carefully balanced book brings Bowra alive for new generations, thereby rescuing him from both oblivion and stereotype. In addition, we learn not only about one unique individual but also about 20th century higher education reforms and transformations, which Bowra both experienced and influenced during his long career as Oxford student, don, dean, warden, and vice chancellor.

But first, his famous personality. Mitchell's portrayal confronts the reader with an unavoidable question: if I had met Bowra, what would I have thought? He was either loved or reviled, and the attempt to answer this question can lead to a good deal of introspection. More importantly, the book suggests a second thought, what political scientists call the "who cares?" question. Although I would not want to needlessly offend his undoubtedly vigorous ghost, one might well ask about his legacy today. While he was an influential figure, he was also *sui generis* – a talkative controversialist, except when he was not; insular but well traveled; forward thinking yet looking to the past; charming and off putting; both elite and outsider.

Is this a book of purely local interest, to be read only by devotees of Oxford, or does it raise questions that continue to resonate in the academy? Maurice would have bellowed – apparently his primary means of communication– a YES to the question of relevance, a position I came to support as the chapters progressed. In addition to feeling both deprived and relieved that I was too young to have encountered this charismatic but disconcerting figure, I was

continually provoked to think about higher education issues. Bowra held strong views, with which I would not always agree, but I was invigorated by the sense of engaging in a debate with a long gone but vividly portrayed presence.

John Sparrow, a Bowra contemporary, famously asked “What will remain of the works of a man whose prose is unreadable and his verse unpublishable?” But if Bowra’s life is seen as a text, then it is more readable than anything he wrote. While one need not adopt his every thought – for instance, his antipathy to science and doubts about coeducation – there is much to learn from his engagement with many recurring academic questions.

Among the higher education issues encountered by Bowra during his lifetime were the growing cost of higher education; government funding and subsequent dictates; the rise of science; the relevance of the humanities; the education of undergraduates; academic self-governance; the growth of centralized administration; the balance between research and teaching; and the place of Latin in schools. All of these are debated today. Bowra also favored opening Oxford to merit, and he worked to admit talented students rather than those from advantaged backgrounds. Such issues of access, merit, and affordability continue to bedevil higher education.

While he vigorously advocated academic publication and disdained those who were unproductive, his worries about the specialized research of “German scholars” (p. 79; Bowra 1967, p. 260) echo William James’ concerns about the “Ph.D. Octopus.” This is also reminiscent of Lindsay Waters’ more contemporary essay *Enemies of Promise*, in which he laments the “mountains of unloved and unread publications” (2004, p. 7) created under the threat of publish-or-perish. Bowra was nevertheless broad-minded in his view of scholarship. As president of the British Academy, he supported the “opening up of British scholarship to the claims of other cultures” (p. 273).

We might not be surprised that many of the issues Bowra encountered are still relevant. Despite significant changes in higher education over the last two centuries, some problems are perennial. In *From Clergyman to Don*, A. J. Engel found the following difficulties in pre-modern Oxford: faculty governance questions; degrees as means rather than ends; too many students studying law; faculty lack of interest in teaching; not enough financial assistance for graduate study; and the need to fundraise from patrons. The literature on higher education, whether examining college fellows in the 19th century or eccentrics in the 20th century, can offer lessons and perspectives for those who care about these fragile institutions today.

Bowra was a vigorous and colorful personality, as the book makes clear, but we should not let this obscure the points of connection between his life and times and our present. While he was born in the Victorian era, his life nevertheless strikes me as a fairly modern one. We live in a globalized world, and Bowra was born in China and traveled extensively (“In a period when most people never owned a passport, this degree of travelling was remarkable” [p. 206]). We now live in an era of continual warfare, which leads us to reflect further

on Bowra's experience in the Great War and its effect on his post-war life. We are said to fight culture wars, and Bowra would be recognizable as a culture warrior, taking joy in opposing Puritanism. We live in an era when advertisers desperately seek to appeal to the 18-29 year old demographic, and Bowra was an early advocate of freeing young people from adult oversight and rules. Even his dislike of science – "facts, facts, facts. Is that education?" (p. 151) – has lessons for our Internet age, when data are common but discernment less so.

Bowra also raised larger questions about culture and society that are still relevant. His life's scholarly quest was to champion the classics, but his view of their importance was not that of contemporary conservatives. For Bowra, the ancient Greeks provided an alternative to Christian and English inhibition and guilt – a valuable perspective on "western culture." He also worried whether a mass democracy was compatible with the high culture he so loved. In particular, Bowra was a believer in the value of poetry, especially its role in nurturing an "inner life" (p. 45), which may have saved his sanity, and life, during the war. While poetry may be less celebrated today, his linking of poetry to war could give it new meaning to a generation with hundreds of thousands of its own serving in Iraq and Afghanistan.

His complex and perhaps contradictory views of religion might also resonate in many quarters today. On the one hand, he was probably an atheist, even in a foxhole; certainly skeptical of organized religion; abolished mandatory chapel at his college, Wadham; did not allow visiting clerics to stay at Wadham; and may have bit a visiting bishop. On the other, he regularly attended evensong; urged Pope Paul VI to preserve the Latin mass; and took seriously the selection of chaplains for Wadham. Mitchell observed that "no issue divided Maurice's friends more" (p. 310) than his religious views, which Bowra once described as "50-50" (p. 317). Mitchell, who approached Bowra's life both chronologically and thematically, even included a chapter specifically addressing this topic: "Heaven or Hell."

The book was commissioned by Wadham College, and as such it is part of an emerging effort to take seriously the history of Oxford colleges (see Neale, 2009). As essential parts of the story of higher education, these institutions and their affiliates require serious scholarship. While this volume is sympathetic to its subject, it is far from a hagiography. The author was an undergraduate at Wadham and a fellow of University College, but he is also an historian with several biographies to his credit.

This raises the question of how the book compares to accounts of Bowra's Oxford contemporaries. Having recently read some of the don literature – books and essays by and about John Sparrow, A. L. Rowse, and Isaiah Berlin – I would particularly recommend Mitchell's book for those with interests in contemporary higher education. While Mitchell suggests that Bowra is now in the realm of history, Bowra ages better than do his contemporaries. His life is relevant, fresh, and compelling, while the other lives do not time travel well. Their concerns seem parochial – fights over collegiate leadership, debates about specific

scholarly questions, and personality issues. While such subjects are invariably present in this biography, Bowra's life continually touches on more touches on more consequential higher education topics.

The book is all the more important because Bowra himself left us a somewhat disappointing autobiography (*Memories*, 1967). While it addresses some of the above questions, it does not give the full flavor of the man. In addition to being self-censored and somewhat dull, it also stops at 1939. From the perspective of scholars of higher education, the 1940s are when key transformations begin to take place. While Oxford saw some changes after World War I, it was this later period when more substantial change commenced as a result of the Butler Education Act and the Lord Robbins and Lord Franks reports. Bowra, as Warden of Wadham from 1938 to 1970, not to mention Vice Chancellor of Oxford from 1951 to 1954, was uniquely positioned to discuss these changes. That he did not comprehensively do so is regrettable, but it means that Mitchell's book is all the more valuable. A biography can only discuss a limited amount of background material, however, and the reader may decide to explore in greater depth the higher education issues raised. For those interested in Oxford specifically, two places to start are Joseph Soares' *The Decline of Privilege: The Modernization of Oxford University* and Sir Anthony and Robert Kenny's *Can Oxford Be Improved?*

Lastly, we might consider the relevance of the book for contemporary students. As Mitchell suggests, and earlier recounts in his contribution to *Maurice Bowra: A Celebration*, the experience of Bowra could be transformative. To read about Bowra is to see the often unrealized potential of university life ("The traditional picture of Oxford in the twenties, a collage of drunkenness, idleness, and teddy bears, was unrecognizable in Bowra's rooms" [p. 166]). Does his life have meaning for students in a higher education system that is increasingly practical, expensive, and crowded? While his persona would be impossible to imitate, and the educational context has changed substantially, a student who comes across this book may well decide to appropriate aspects of Bowra for herself. ♣

REFERENCES

Bowra, C. M. (1967). *Memories 1898-1939*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Engel, A. J. (1983). *From clergyman to don: The rise of the academic profession in nineteenth-century Oxford*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

James, W. (1903, March). "The Ph.D. octopus." *Harvard Monthly*.

Kenny, A. & Kenny, R. (2007). *Can Oxford be improved? A view from the dreaming spires and the satanic mills*. Exeter: Imprint Academic.

Mitchell, L. (1974). "An undergraduate's view of the warden." In H. Lloyd-Jones (ed.), *Maurice Bowra: A Celebration*. London: Duckworth.

Neale, G. (2009). "History in the making". *Oxford Today*, 21(3), 28-31.

Soares, J. A. (1999). *The decline of privilege: The modernization of Oxford University*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Waters, L. (2004). *Enemies of promise: Publishing, perishing, and the eclipse of scholarship*. Chicago: Prickly Paradigm Press.