



THE UNIVERSITY OF  
**WAIKATO**  
*Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato*

Research Commons

<http://researchcommons.waikato.ac.nz/>

## Research Commons at the University of Waikato

### Copyright Statement:

The digital copy of this thesis is protected by the Copyright Act 1994 (New Zealand).

The thesis may be consulted by you, provided you comply with the provisions of the Act and the following conditions of use:

- Any use you make of these documents or images must be for research or private study purposes only, and you may not make them available to any other person.
- Authors control the copyright of their thesis. You will recognise the author's right to be identified as the author of the thesis, and due acknowledgement will be made to the author where appropriate.
- You will obtain the author's permission before publishing any material from the thesis.

# **Body and Spirit in the Poetry of T. S. Eliot and D. H. Lawrence**

A thesis

Submitted in partial fulfilment  
of the requirements for the degree

of

Doctor of Philosophy in English

at

The University of Waikato

by

Mark Thomas Prisco



THE UNIVERSITY OF  
**WAIKATO**  
*Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato*

2023

## Abstract

This thesis examines the poetry of T. S. Eliot and D. H. Lawrence in terms of its religious and aesthetic significance. I explore the common ground between these two writers, and their spiritual and philosophical differences as expressed in the content and style of their poetry, and other work. I argue that they were both driven by their dissatisfaction with the modern industrial age—the ethos that determined ‘utility’ and ‘progress’ as the means to fulfilment—which for them, however, was synonymous with the cultural and spiritual wasteland of modernity, a world without ‘god’.

Eliot’s response, implicit in his poetry, was to posit a spiritual unity, a homogenous community of shared values underpinned, eventually, by Christianity—a religion that ultimately dispenses with the body, and leads us toward the Divine Father, the bodiless God. Lawrence, in contrast, keeps his reader firmly grounded in the physical world of touch—for him, the only possible world, without which there can be no spirit. We are resurrected, Lawrence believed, in the flesh—or not at all.

Their respective views are evidenced throughout their poetry. We see, even in his ‘pre-Christian’ poetry, Eliot’s preoccupation with the body—his moral and aesthetic repulsion against it; and indeed I suggest that his negative depictions of the body are a prelude to his later ‘Christian’ poetry. This, I contrast with Lawrence’s glorification of the body, as manifested throughout *his* poetry; and I suggest that Lawrence’s ‘philosophy of life’ is morally more sound because it is grounded in nature. Although Eliot’s Christianity is not an attempt to escape the world and his responsibilities, it is nonetheless a dismissal of life in the flesh and all of its attendant joys and sorrows. It would annihilate the opposition (‘evil’, ‘darkness’, ‘lion’), and seeks release from the natural world, the tension that holds everything together, which would lead towards a cosmic imbalance, the extinction of nature, of everything—of time, into the bodiless Eternal, the resolution of body into spirit.

But if there is no darkness, there is no light. This, Lawrence expresses most explicitly in his non-fiction, but his poetry is alive with it—the cosmic significance of everything, the unbegotten spark from which a god is born: the present eternal moment.

The final section of my thesis is a collection of poetry (*to not let go*) written over the duration of three or four years. It represents my creative response to the critical component outlined above. My poems are not an imitation of Eliot and Lawrence, but evidence nonetheless of direct engagement with those two poets and the subject matter of my thesis.

## Table of Contents

Abstract	1
Table of Contents	3
Introduction	1
1. Eliot, Lawrence and Modernism	8
2. The Christian Idea of the Body	26
3. Shadow Fruit: Body and Spirit in the Poetry of T.S Eliot	36
4. Peach: Body and Spirit in the Poetry of D.H Lawrence	99
5. The Dry Salvages and The Ship of Death	165
6. Resolution, Consummation	182
Introduction to Poems	191
to not let go	196
2 wrongs	197
a girl can always hope	198
worm theory	199
once you peel back the bloody cloth	203
god	204
consummation	206
evil	207
silver	211
first man	212
snake	213
rumour	214
boy about town	215
once you go black	217
flowers	218
fuzz	219
cat	220
one dying animal to another	221
photo — 1991, i think	223
Athens 0, Sparta 1	225
put that in your pipe & smoke it	226
is Shakespeare still relevant	227
dystopia	230
what kind of a lover are you!	232
the kingdom of god is at hand	233

that's my Frappuccino, you cunt	234
shadows before	238
cat ghost	239
phil	239
discord	242
remembers	244
hole	245
liberate us from the tyranny of the useful	246
becoming	249
i, candy	250
coldcase	252
traffic	253
fire	254
sign	255
contact	256
superpower	258
scorpion	259
plane crashes in the mountains	260
travel's good for the mind	261
nature	263
when you're dead there's time to think	264
daylight	265
aeroplane	267
against nihilism	269
beaten up, not drunk	271
the blue curtains	273
avalanche	275
Conclusion	279
Bibliography	282

## Introduction

### 1.

I first encountered T. S. Eliot when I was 17, living in London, where I grew up. I mean, I read him, became familiar with some of his poems, and fell in love with “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock”—a poem, which encapsulated my own ill-formed longings and insecurities. I could instantly relate to the self-conscious agony endured by the narrator. I understood the poem, even if I didn’t know what being “formulated, sprawling on a pin” meant precisely.<sup>1</sup>

Around the same time, I read *Sons and Lovers*, a novel by D. H. Lawrence, but it was only later that I became familiar with his work and appreciated him—his poems in particular, which I had initially underestimated.

The point I want to make is that my thesis is in part the result of a long gestation period. I have been familiar with Eliot and Lawrence—two very different poets and personalities—and have loved their work for many years. This long-term relationship, this love, is the inspiration for a thesis which combines my appreciation for their work with an exploration of the concepts of body and spirit as represented in their poetry: their respective notions of those terms, their significance, relevance and implications—religious, aesthetic, political and philosophical; how they inform and are reflected by their poetry, and their religious, philosophical and socio-political sensibilities; how they frame their respective attitudes towards religion, and inform broad philosophical preoccupations like how one should live, what is our purpose, and how should we respond to the world, our cosmic surroundings. I look beyond their

---

<sup>1</sup> *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock* 57. All Eliot’s poems, unless otherwise stated, are cited by *line* number from *The Poems of T. S. Eliot, Volume 1, Collected and Uncollected Poems*, edited by Christopher Ricks and Jim McCue. Faber and Faber, 2015.

poetry<sup>2</sup> to the extent that it contributes to a deeper and broader understanding of these spiritual<sup>3</sup> preoccupations.

My method is based upon a close reading of the primary texts, complemented by a review of some of the key critical responses in this field. I rely, not always consciously, on *Affect Theory* to ground some of my assertions, given that it embodies feelings, subjective experiences—a prominent feature of my thesis, including my poems in the creative component. Generally, *Affect* can be understood as the “subjective, embodied manifestation of the interface between individuals or between individuals and their environment” (Bailey, 5).

I do not produce a *systematic* Literature Review—a review meriting its own chapter, or inserted in stand-alone paragraphs. I assimilate the literature into the body of my thesis, weave it into the text, rather than partition it off. This makes it more readable, more embodied—less static than if I had produced a separate chapter on it. This method is in keeping with my embodied approach, one which also locates feelings as a prime instigator of action, and which is endorsed by *Affect*’s preoccupation with “visceral forces . . . other than conscious knowing . . .”—a force that “more often transpires within and across the subtlest of shuttling intensities: all the minuscule or molecular events of the unnoticed” (Seigworth, 1; 2).

This, in part, accounts for my impressionistic responses—a reliance on subjective feelings that reflect the primacy of a-rational compulsions that govern the individual’s responses to their world—the drive behind the poetical responses of Eliot and Lawrence and, I would argue, of poetry per se. Originality would have been easier to achieve if I had chosen to write about one or two new poets. But I am deeply aware of Eliot’s and

---

<sup>2</sup> That is: their essays, letters and fictions, as well as social and historical context and contemporary approaches to their work.

<sup>3</sup> I use “spiritual” and “spirituality” as a synonym of “religious” and “religion”, but more broadly to incorporate numinous and existential feelings of wonder; and the apprehension of another world (so to speak) beyond the reach of ordinary sense, whether gods really exist or not; but without the connotation of dogma that “religion” sometimes has. The term is also used here in contra-distinction to ‘materialism’—in its ‘philosophical/physicalist’ and ‘consumerist’ sense, but elsewhere in my thesis, ‘materialism’ is synonymous with ‘consumerism’, unless otherwise stated, or made clear by the context.

Lawrence's body/spirit sensibilities, and my thesis gives me the opportunity to explore this further. While I'm aware that this subject is not new, what I try to offer is a bodily, poetical response. That is where, if anywhere, I can claim some originality: it is *my* poetical body and spirit reading and interpreting of body and spirit in the work of Eliot and Lawrence. This critical component of my thesis, then, is my direct response, as a poet, to the poetry of Eliot and Lawrence. It is a poet's embodied response to those poets. I might go as far to say that the poems in the creative component go some way towards elucidating the critical component, although this was not my intention.

Eliot and Lawrence are two representative figures of the modernist period, which was/is, in part, preoccupied with the effects and affects of industrialism (notably, with Eliot and Lawrence, on the individual)—the reduction of everything and everyone to 'cogs in a machine'. This was so (and still is) under capitalism, socialism and fascism; each of these systems places 'Man' (in the abstract) above the individual human. The point of cleaving Eliot and Lawrence together is to show and analyse their common and divergent reactions to their world vis a vis their conceptions of body and spirit, and how these concepts are invoked by their poetry. Their 'philosophies' represent two alternatives to the dominant influences of their times.

The question of the distinction between body and spirit has its origins, in modern times, in the Cartesian body/mind split (the dualism of Descartes) But for the purpose of this thesis, it's sufficient to state that Descartes' *Mind* is interchangeable with *Soul*, both of which, in my thesis, are approximately equivalent to *Spirit* (and occasionally with 'intellect' or 'mind') unless the context makes the distinction clear. But any thorough discussion of Cartesian philosophy is beyond the scope of my thesis, as are specific and watertight definitions of terms such as 'body', 'spirit', 'soul', 'mind' etc. By 'body' I mean that which is physical, and by 'spirit' I mean that which is not physical, but which is said to exist, to have reality (perhaps to the extent that it manifests itself in the form of something physical), whether that reality is God, or some other intangible 'thing', and whether or not it entails the existence of gods or an afterlife. A person, for example, or a flower, may be said to be endowed with 'spirit' (not just figuratively), their bodies being

physical representations, with the suggestion that there is an overlap between body and spirit, or that one cannot exist without the other.

These are broad and loose definitions, but still meaningful in the context of my thesis. They are sufficient, as will become evident.

**2.**

The first chapter of this thesis offers a summary introduction of modernism, the art 'movement' which arose as a reaction to the societal conditions of the day. I explore the significance of Eliot and Lawrence in the context of early 20th century society, and briefly discuss their attitudes and reactions to their times. I suggest that the response of each writer was spiritually driven, in line with the main current of modernism, however diverse the spiritualism of its practitioners; that Eliot's and Lawrence's art expressed spiritual and aesthetic longings that were to a great extent precluded by the rationalist and materialist principles of Western modernity.

This opening chapter on modernism gives me the framework to link these two poets, and is introductory; it sets the scene for the main thrust of my thesis. Eliot and Lawrence belong to that modernist period, and whether Lawrence, say, is a modernist, is secondary. He was part of that era, even if he appeared, at times, to be working counter to it.

The second chapter discusses the significance of the body in terms of the orthodox Christian position that the body is separate and inferior to the spirit; that it is corruptible and liable to sin. This Christian view of the body is affirmed by Eliot, as evidenced in his poetry, and there are signs of this attitude even in his pre-conversion poems. This Christian 'body' is contrasted with the pagan view that the body is the only source of our existence and joy; that the spirit does not abide independently of the body. This latter idea corresponds with Lawrence's views.

In the third, fourth and fifth chapters, I discuss Eliot's and Lawrence's poetic instances of body and spirit and how these notions deeply inform not just their poetry, but all their work. I trace the root of their spirituality, the common ground from which it sprung, and the different paths they took. Eliot, the conservative, the orthodox Christian, was driven to find God, the Spirit, whereas Lawrence, the pagan, sought bodily (and therefore, for him, spiritual) joy in nature—from relationships with individuals and diverse communities, to the beasts and flowers—the flux and radiance of the physical world.

The exegetical section of my thesis concludes, in chapter 6, with a final summary of the connections and contradictions between Eliot and Lawrence. It is an attempt to 'resolve' what is, to my limited perception, unresolvable—the tension of polar opposites.

## 3.

“Our time, in Literature, may fairly be called the age of D. H. Lawrence and T. S. Eliot: the two, in creative preeminence” (Leavis, *D. H. Lawrence: Novelist* 303).<sup>4</sup> Both decried, through their poetry and prose, the intrusion of industrialism and the displacement of religion and the organic community, our intimate connection with god/s and nature. They had, as Sean Matthews said in 2020, “much in common emotionally, intellectually, and professionally” (9). And yet their respective attitudes toward life and literature are irreconcilable (Morris 11). Eliot’s poetry feels *mental*; a work of great technical accomplishment executed by the mind. But to dismiss it as (merely) dispassionate, the work of the ‘objective mask’, is to overlook its emotional resonance and power. The initial impulse for a work of art may come from a dark place, and is expressed, according to Eliot, not by the ‘personality’<sup>5</sup>, but through “a particular medium . . . in which impressions and experiences combine in peculiar and unexpected ways” and, under ‘favourable’ conditions, are transformed into a work of art (“Tradition and the Individual Talent” *The Sacred Wood* 56).

Eliot’s personal and intellectual struggles led him toward (or back to) Christianity. His sense of the futility of lives, the vacuous social rituals of the New England elite, “those verandah customs” and “White flannel” ceremonies (Vendler 89), the avarice of modern society, his theological and philosophical investigations, his shyness, perhaps, his bodily anxieties—all of these combined to produce the spark that led him toward the Christian God<sup>6</sup>, which informed his vision of body and spirit as discrete entities—in conflict, even though (in this world) inseparable. Eliot came to believe that we are saved by the incarnate God who lived, suffered and died in the body so that we may live eternally in the spirit. Whatever one’s view of Eliot’s Christianity, it is, for him, not an escape or an evasion, but a way to God; a necessary journey through the physical world—the means

---

<sup>4</sup> Leavis’ statement first appeared in a review of Father William Tiverton’s *D. H. Lawrence and Human Existence* in *Scrutiny*. Vol. XVIII, No. 1, 18 January 1951, pp. 66–73.

<sup>5</sup> “Poetry . . . is not the expression of personality, but an escape from personality” (Eliot, “Tradition and the Individual Talent” *The Sacred Wood* 58. This is a summary of his poetical theory of ‘impersonality.

<sup>6</sup> “Towards any profound conviction one is borne gradually . . . over a long period of time” (Eliot, “Christianity and Communism.” *Complete Prose, Volume 4*, 427.

by which the soul transcends it.<sup>7</sup> His poetic career, even before his induction into the Anglo-Catholic Church, can be seen as a spiritual journey, akin to that taken by the protagonist of Dante's *Divine Comedy*—the soul's transportation, via the body, through the tortuous streets of the poet's physical world. The world of flesh is "a state of revulsion and despair . . . obstacles on the way to the ascension to God", but necessary (Oliboni 176). Indeed, Eliot 'descends' into the squalor of contemporary society, where he wanders like a disembodied spirit through the sordid metropolis where crowds walk like the dead.<sup>8</sup> It is the 'way down' which leads eventually to God and the possibility of salvation. His journey is fraught with doubt, "With the voices singing in our ears, saying / That this was all folly" ("Journey of the Magi" 19–20).

For the Christian, the body is separate from the spirit, and secondary. The goal in Christian theology is salvation in God, who exists in the 'spiritual realm'. Our bodies are instruments to fulfil this goal, to respond to the higher command, which is God, a *non-corporeal* entity—despite the anthropomorphic tendencies evidenced in the Old Testament, and in the Book of Revelation. The problem with this view for Lawrence is that the joy of the body and the physical world are undermined as mere manifestations of God's glory, and that all life ultimately dissolves into the spiritual ether of God's Kingdom. Lawrence, like William Blake,<sup>9</sup> denies the distinction between body and spirit; nature and gods; humankind and god. Without the human, there is no god. The spiritual world has no meaning or reality apart from nature; and from this premise his art emerges like a flower from the soil, but robust, and vibrant.

For Lawrence, humankind and all of nature, animate and inanimate, are in themselves glorious, imbued with spirit, with life. The Christian idea of Love, for Lawrence, is a spiritual perversion, and has led to the coercion and submission of the body, of physical desire.<sup>10</sup> Salvation lies in finding joy in this world, living now, in the flesh; to be aware of

---

<sup>7</sup> "[M]y catholicism is [not] merely an escape or an evasion" (Eliot, Letter to Paul Elmer More, 3 August 1929).

<sup>8</sup> *The Inferno*, canto 3 (which features Dante's neutrals) is evoked, a line of which is directly reproduced (in English) in *The Waste Land* 63.

<sup>9</sup> "Man has no Body distinct from his Soul" (*The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*).

<sup>10</sup> See Lawrence's poem "The Ass" 377–380. All Lawrence's poems are cited by *page* number from *The Complete Poems of D. H. Lawrence*, edited by Vivian de Sola and Warren Roberts. Viking Press, 1971.

the “expanding infinite moment”; to experience life passionately, sensuously (Miller 139). “My great religion is a belief in the blood, the flesh, as being wiser than the intellect” (Lawrence, Letter to Ernest Collings, 17 January 1913). To be aware of this passionate experience “is what Lawrence meant by ‘obeying the Holy Ghost’”, which is to assert your humanness (Miller 139). Like Eliot, he takes the ‘way down’—but to a promised land of milk and honey: the world of flesh, of blood (Lawrence, *Fantasia* 14).

For both Lawrence and Eliot, poetry was a means and a form of *religious* expression—whether the feeling was external to the artist and the physical world, or internal. They were both deeply religious. Their quarrel with modern industrialised society was not explicitly political, except in a broad sense. They were not primarily concerned with traditional or liberal concepts of ‘social justice’: neither thought that material improvements, a mere wage increase, would make us happier, would make our lives more meaningful. Their protest was spiritual, cultural and aesthetic; government was thought of as being merely the means to facilitate a good way of life, not a good in itself. This attitude was maintained consistently throughout their writing, though with Eliot it developed, in his poetry, from (deliberately) ill-defined yearnings and sentiments to a more lucid ‘theology’: a poetry that conforms with his religious convictions; a more coherent spirituality, because aligned with Christianity.

Eliot’s later ‘Christian’ poetry is not devoid of uncertainty and the possibilities of despair, but it is more composed, reflected in his measured versifications. The scepticism remains (coexisting miraculously with his faith), but the indecision and angst are mostly absent, notwithstanding the doubt, replaced by a willingness to relinquish his self (or his will) to the will of God. But whether Eliot submits to God as an act of *freedom*, or whether this submission is an evasion of life and responsibility, it is, according to Lawrence, a sin against life, the flesh—a form of human sacrifice.<sup>11</sup> Lawrence maintained his ‘physical’ spirituality throughout his life as a writer. In his poems, all that changed was the style and quality of the poetry: early on, it’s rhymed, fairly conventional

---

<sup>11</sup> “There is only one sin in life, and that is the sin against life . . .” D. H. Lawrence. “The Duke De Lauzon” *Phoenix* 1 745.

and, despite flashes of great beauty, unexceptional. His later poetry catches the flame of his temperament, as had already been expressed in his prose: his lines, his rhythms feel like they're moulded from the soil and all of the life that grows from it and is nourished by it. In this, he is like Whitman, from whom he learns to dispense with rhyme, and to produce instead the organic rhythms of free verse, but without the latter's love of humanity en masse. Lawrence's 'romanticism' is darker, and his mood resembles Blake. But, like Eliot, he came from a Christian background, and was well versed in the Bible; and although he declared his anti-Christian sentiments as a young man,<sup>12</sup> Christianity (and the Bible) continued to exert an undercurrent of influence, not always negative:<sup>13</sup> "I was brought up on the Bible, and seem to have it in my bones" ("The Dragon of the Apocalypse" *Selected Literary Criticism* 164). Indeed, the Bible exerts its influence all throughout his work, from the infamous 'gas chamber' letter of 1908, where he leads the sick and the maimed to their death (a perversion of Luke 14.21) to his last completed work—*Apocalypse*. Note: he has it in his *bones*; not his brain. It is the passion of Christianity Lawrence admired, not the spirit-led notion of universal love and perfection. Lawrence said he would have been a passionate Christian if he had lived in the year 400 when Rome began to fall and the Christians were an unpopular minority ("Books" *Phoenix* 1 734). But the greatness of Christianity is past: "Dawn is no longer in the house of the Fish" (Lawrence, "Astronomical Changes" 616).<sup>14</sup> We must "start on a new venture towards God" (Lawrence, "Books" *Phoenix* 1 734). We must, like his human Christ, rise bodily from the dead, and live life in the flesh.<sup>15</sup> This, Lawrence did—through his life and his art.

The spirituality of Eliot and Lawrence is in part a reaction against the materialism and rationalism of late 19th and early 20th century Western society, the glib confidence in science and Reason to make life more bearable. This places both writers in the

---

<sup>12</sup> See, for example, Letter to Reverend Robert Reid, 3 December 1907.

<sup>13</sup> "For me, flesh and blood are the Scriptures . . . I often turn . . . back into the Bible" (Letter to Reverend Robert Reid, 27 March 1911).

<sup>14</sup> The poem "Astronomical Changes" refers to the effects of *precession*, which causes a shift from one astrological sign to another approximately every two thousand years. "Dawn" is the sun's location during the (northern) Spring equinox (21 March). The sun departing from the "house of the Fish" signifies the end of the Christian era—the fish being the symbol of Christ.

<sup>15</sup> See Lawrence's short story "The Man Who Died."

modernist tradition, and makes them feel contemporary: the conditions that prevailed in their time are with us still, but updated. Nietzsche's proclamation that "God is dead" (a reaction against the Enlightenment—its rationalism and philosophical materialism, but an opportunity, also, for greatness) resounds, remains pertinent (*The Gay Science* 125, 181–182). This is the world a hundred years on, more intensely globalised, and there is still nothing to fill the spiritual gap, but the narcotic of mass culture, and the seductions of progressive or populist politics.

## 1. Eliot, Lawrence and Modernism

“Make it new”

—Ezra Pound, *Make it New*

If we understand the societal conditions that spurred the political, spiritual and artistic reaction that was, in part, ‘modernism’, we are better able to understand and appreciate the art of Eliot and Lawrence, and the political and spiritual sensibilities that infused it. As noted in my introduction, Eliot and Lawrence are part of the modernist tradition, however “vague and slippery” that term is (Winkiel 4). While modernism doesn’t embrace a single style or ethos, there are more or less definite, or defining, characteristics that can be applied, with various degrees of precision, to a broad range of writers who began their careers in the first decade of the 20th century. There are no definitive dates, or at least no universal consensus to mark the start of modernism, and the end. As a literary movement, traditionally, “the core period of [modernism is from] about 1890 to 1945” (Mao and Walkowitz 738).

Modernism is, says Raymond Williams, culturally determined:

the occasion for the greatest changes ever seen in the media of cultural production [— a time which produced] the restlessly mobile emigré or exile [and cultivated a] narrative of unsettlement, homelessness, solitude and impoverished independence: the lonely writer gazing down on the unknowable city from his shabby apartment. (50)

Ulrika Maude also notes the connection between ‘the machine’ of modern technology—“the rapid advance” of the late 19th century, which “intensified . . . in the early decades of the twentieth”, and modernist writing, which has mapped “the manner in which technology changes the relationship to the world and ourselves” (116, 117). Indeed, one of the distinguishing features of modernism is its criticism of its own

time—its *dislike* of modernity—a time of mutual hostility between art and culture.<sup>16</sup> It rejects (or rejected) the “ideology of Progress, the overwhelming sense of ennui and despair at the whole condition of nineteenth-century modernity” (Tonning 241). It was a reaction against the sort of wholesome sanctimony, represented by the Christian Church and the conservative state; the moral claims of Empire, and the (Post) Victorian who continued to sing its praises—the ‘public poets’, like Kipling and Newbolt, who used the medium of verse to propagate the sentiments of *Rule Britannia*, who fictionalised blood,<sup>17</sup> and which culminated in the Great War—the jingoistic stupidity of *Dulcē et decōrum est prō patriā mōrī* (It’s sweet and fitting to die for the fatherland).

Towards the end of the 19th century there was a greater sense that the world was changing, that a new era was beginning, and a new art, a new emotion, emerged to express more explicitly the modern world and the anxieties of modern humans. *The ache of modernism*—a phrase which occurs in Thomas Hardy’s *Tess of the D’Urbervilles* (1891)—represents the *fin de siècle* crisis, a moment forged by a combination of sociological, political and historical factors: the end product of industrialisation, the view of time being a continual progression toward perfection (Sherry 7). Modernism was the result of the culmination of “ruptures”—revolutions, class conflict and industrialisation (Levinson 8), and it challenged the prevailing culture, morality and values of modern Western society, as represented in politics, religion and contemporary art. This was not of course the first time the Western world had experienced “ruptures” that led to massive upheavals. But modernism (in part) was a response to the crassness and spiritual apathy of modern Western society, the result of 19th century developments—the world of finance, advertising, a world in which

The sale of half-hose has  
 Long since superseded the cultivation  
 Of Pierian roses. (Ezra Pound, *Hugh Selwyn Mauberley*, sec. 12)

---

<sup>16</sup> As early as 1871, Nietzsche wrote: “[i]n no other . . . age have . . . ‘culture’ and art . . . been so mutually hostile as we see them today” (*The Birth of Tragedy* 97).

<sup>17</sup> See Stead 68–94.

The sense of physical or emotional displacement is reproduced by the modernist writer's departure from (or modernisation of) established literary forms and conventions, tending towards fragmentary images and expressions, discordant or jarring juxtapositions, as well as a certain amount of "introspective . . . self-gnawing."<sup>18</sup> The focus was on *sensations*, rather than facts (Winkiel 7–8).

What was the [modernist] revolution all about? Inner and lower were the directions modernist writers took literature, toward what goes on inside the head and below the waist (Menand, "Practical Cat: How T. S. Eliot became T. S. Eliot." No page numbers given).

'Lower' and 'inner' refers to the expression of a Self (in the disordered context of 20th century industrialism), but one beyond or beneath the facade of personality, in which the clattering rhythms of modernity are (unconsciously) assimilated, and transposed into art. Modernism's avant-garde techniques expressed more faithfully the realities of being in the Now, reflected a new anxiety, a societal and spiritual disorder, and the quest for values: why live if there is no God (or equivalent), no meaning, beyond "the taking of a toast and tea" (Eliot, "Prufrock" 34)? There was, moreover, a strong irrational strain in modernism, a recognition that instinct and feeling are dominant motives for action ("over and against reason"<sup>19</sup>), which reveals itself in its scepticism of a progressive view of history—the idea that humanity progresses to the march of time, and advances, as technology does, new and improved.

The existential 'crisis' is unresolved (or unresolvable): we remain mired in the capitalist world order, geared always toward production and big business, a world, as Emma Goldman recognised, in which "the sounds of machinery have replaced the music of the birds" (127). Life has (and had) materially improved for many people in the Western world, but that was never the issue for the early modernists, including Eliot and Lawrence. It wasn't a matter of material improvements, but spiritual, or aesthetic ones.

---

<sup>18</sup> Conrad Aiken. "Esoteric Catholicity", *Poetry Journal* 5, April 1916, pp. 127–129. Qtd in Jewel, Spears Brooker. *Contemporary Reviews*.

<sup>19</sup> Encyclopaedia Britannica, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/irrationalism>

The “great crime” of the moneyed classes was that they condemned the workers to “ugliness” (Lawrence, “Nottingham and Mining Countryside” *Phoenix* 1 133). The “tragedy of ugliness” was created by materialism, greed and industrialism (137). There was nothing to fill the god-shaped gap left by industrialisation and the disintegration of the organic community, other than the rote moralism of the Church, or the pronouncements of the rational world of politics, science and technology. This, I believe, was the primary impulse behind the art of Eliot and Lawrence. Both would redress the evils of modernity with a religion or spirituality, an understanding of what it means to be here, alive; and a purpose, a justification, for living and the reality of death.

[T]he end of a purely materialistic civilization with all its technical achievements and its mass amusement is . . . boredom. A people without religion will in the end find that it has nothing to live for. (Eliot; qtd in Ricks 812)<sup>20</sup>

Both Eliot and Lawrence looked back to the pre-industrialised past as a better time. This anti-modern sentiment is present in early modernism in general, for it took its inspiration from the detractors of modernity—writers like Ruskin, Carlyle and Nietzsche, rather than Marx, Adam Smith or John Stewart Mill—the defenders, in their different ways, of progress, of Rational humanity. Both Eliot and Lawrence (like Yeats, like Pound) had that aristocratic bent: they believed in an aristocracy, not (necessarily) based on blood,<sup>21</sup> and certainly not on money, but (as Augustine Martin says of Yeats) on “a sense of personal nobility”—a spiritual superiority (Martin, xxiv). For Lawrence, the “providing of *life* belongs to the aristocrat”—great men like Caesar who “established a *new* connection between mankind and the universe” (“Aristocracy” *Phoenix* 2 477, 478; Lawrence’s emphases). Aristocracy is a physical concept, then; it is based on vitality. But

<sup>20</sup> The original quote is from a conversation recorded in 1958 between Eliot and Lesley Paul.

<sup>21</sup> “Aristocracy of birth is bunk.” (Lawrence, D. H. “Aristocracy” *Phoenix* 2 477). But Eliot argues for an aristocracy of land and blood, not as an authoritarian alternative, but to restore the traditions of the hierarchical community—a functional thing, to maintain stability (Cooper, *Introduction to T. S. Eliot* 29).

The moment [the aristocrat] builds himself external evidences [sic], like palaces, he builds himself in, and commits his own doom. The moment he depends on his jewels, he has lost his virtue. (Lawrence, “Paris Letter 1924” *Life* 187–188)

This aristocratic feeling is a reaction against the levelling down, the democratising, of industrial society and is, correspondingly, a call for vitality, beauty, for spirituality—whether it resides in the mind, as with Eliot; or, as with Lawrence, is a physical experience.

Some critics<sup>22</sup> have linked modernism (including the art of Eliot and Lawrence) to reactionary politics because it idealises the past and laments the degeneracy of culture and the loss of tradition; or fascism because of its “anti rational, or Dionysiac element, its emphasis on myth, subjectivity, personal authenticity”—the sense “of a [new] beginning’, the mood of standing on the threshold of a new world” (Sultan 449; Griffin 1)—a mood that has resurfaced in contemporary world politics, driven, again, by technology, nationalism and big business.<sup>23</sup> Modernism is comprised of revolutionary and reactionary elements, as Griffin says; it is

*the generic term for a wide variety of countervailing palingenetic reactions to the anarchy and cultural decay allegedly resulting from the radical transformation of traditional institutions, social structures and belief systems under the impact of Western modernization.* (54; Griffin’s italics)

There was a perception, or feeling, among some writers of the modernists period (including Eliot and Lawrence), that modern civilisation is inferior to some real or imagined (past or future) golden age, that the ‘finer things’ have been displaced, a sentiment, however, not confined to right-wingers, whether modernist or not (Sultan 447–464). It is this sense of something lost or missing (an ache) that forms one of the

---

<sup>22</sup> Sultan, for example, cites articles by Terry Eagleton and William. H. Gass (447).

<sup>23</sup> See, for example, Enzo Traverso’s *The New Faces of Fascism*.

stimuli for modernist art. Modernism is focused in the present moment, not the past. If past civilisations are exalted, it is because they were vital, organic, more closely connected to the physical and spiritual needs of the community. They were, in short, more *religious*—whether Pagan or Christian; and closer to their mythic origins, as Bell notes, “a primordial and foundational significance in a culture” (“An Analytic Note on Myth in Modernism: the Case of T. S. Eliot” 66). But Eliot and Lawrence understood that it would be neither possible nor desirable to return to the *Ancien Régime*, or the ‘glory days’ of the First Crusade. Lawrence, moreover, understood “the barbarian rage against the great monuments of civilization” (“America, Listen to Your Own” *Phoenix* 1 89). Things must not stagnate upon the glories of the past. We can’t restore

the Chaldean vision of the living heavens. But the heavens will come back to life again for us, and the vision will express also the new men that we are.

(“The Dragon of the Apocalypse” *Selected Literary Criticism* 164)

“It is better to go forward into error than to stay fixed inextricably in the past”, Lawrence declares in his travel book of essays written before the War (*Twilight in Italy* 61). And yet the past calls to him, he feels an inexplicable nostalgia for it, his soul “crying . . . like an infant in the night” (146).

I sat on the roof of the lemon-house, with the lake below and the snowy mountain opposite, and looked at the ruins of the old, olive-fuming shores, at all the peace of the ancient world still covered in sunshine, and the past seemed to me so lovely that one must look towards it, backwards, only backwards, where there is peace and beauty and no more dissonance. (61)

In a similar mood, years later, after the War, Lawrence describes a nostalgic sensation when he sees two Sardinian peasants in traditional dress strolling in the sun (*Sea and Sardinia* 247). It was a dying world for Lawrence, which flashed occasionally in remote places. He wanted to demolish the static mechanised system of material production; to tear down the “pillars that hold up the dome of high ideal heaven [his prison]” (“The

Revolutionary” 287). He wanted a *new* order—the active collective of humans who are engaged in “organic life-production” to produce “the real blossoms of life and being”—the “incarnate moment: the quick of all change and haste and opposition . . . the immediate present, the Now” (“Education of the People” *Phoenix* 1 611; “Poetry of the Present” *Life* 183). This is Lawrence, the ‘body artist’, who exults life in the flesh over that which is not flesh—whether it is the bodiless Christian God or a moral abstract—morality divorced from any physical context.

Eliot’s position vis-à-vis the past is similar to that of Lawrence’s, but framed, from 1927, by Christianity. Eliot wanted the re-establishment of traditional hierarchical communities, but realigned to the requirements of modern society: “I am not advocating any complete reversion to any earlier state of things, real or idealized” (*The Idea of a Christian Society* 60). He acknowledged the need for change, but insisted that tradition must nevertheless form the backdrop to any development, whether in society or art.<sup>24</sup> For Eliot, the need for order was vital<sup>25</sup>—in society, art and in his personal life—and he thought that the key for “the framework of human life” was religion.

Despite this Eliot is regarded as a modernist innovator, primarily because his early poetry represented a break from his immediate literary predecessors, and a peculiar consciousness of his time. He wrote “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock” between 1910 and 1911 (first published in 1915) when he was still in his early twenties:

Let us go then, you and I,  
When the evening is spread out against the sky  
Like a patient etherized upon a table; (1–3)

There, with those opening lines, the scene is set—the insidious urban landscape of the new century, along with a new aesthetic, fit for the purpose of encapsulating it. Eliot, of

---

<sup>24</sup> See for example “Tradition and the Individual Talent”.

<sup>25</sup> “Eliot’s life and the nature of his personality would impel him in his search for order and authority.” (Ackroyd 156).

course, had a vast tradition behind him, but no-one, in English, had written quite like this.

He<sup>26</sup> had taken something primitive and recast it in a contemporary idiom . . .  
 What was important for . . . Eliot was that the bones of the old are legible . . .  
 under the contemporary skin. That's what produces the modernist dissonance.  
 (Menand, "Practical Cat"; no page numbers given)

Modernism, like romanticism before it, affirms the centrality of the individual, but within the community, in the context of his or her world, and a writer like Eliot understood, was deeply conscious of, the human condition, the aloneness of the individual, and the joy or angst that occasionally attends this realisation.

Shall I say, I have gone at dusk through narrow streets  
 And watched the smoke that rises from the pipes  
 Of lonely men in shirt-sleeves, leaning out of windows? ("Prufrock" 70–72)

These lines are reminiscent of the mood expressed by Lawrence in the 'lemon-house' quote in *Twilight* (quoted above). A great deal of their 'meaning' (as with the whole poem) is captured by the *tone*—a concept whose power, as Sianne Ngai says, "resides precisely in its amorphousness." (30) There is a sense of *proximity*, of "narrow streets" and intense moments of awareness: "descend the stair, / With a bald spot in the middle of my hair" (39-40); and, simultaneously, *distance* (or remoteness)—of "lonely men" "leaning out of windows"—a vague sense of detachment, which the reader metabolises. This "detachment", as Ngai notes (in regard to Melville's novel, *The Confidence Man*), actually reinforces the aesthetic experience (86)—in my example, "Of lonely men in shirt-sleeves, leaning out of windows[.]" The felt emotion, coupled with Eliot's detachment, suggests an analogous relationship with body and spirit, which, in much of Eliot's poetry seem to alternately merge and part—wavering in "the uncertain hour"

---

<sup>26</sup> He refers to Igor Stravinski, but Menand, in his article, implies that this is just what Eliot achieved in "Prufrock".

(“Little Gidding” 2.25)—like a fog blown about by the wind. Moments of impressionistic imagery are interspersed with, or interrupted by, concrete visions of the physical world; or they merge, subject and image, as one unified expressionistic whole, actually or emotionally: “The yellow fog that rubs its back upon the window-panes” (“Prufrock” 15).

This is the direction that modernism took: inner and lower, towards—as Eliot expressed it in a 1921 essay, but in relation specifically to poetry—“the cerebral cortex, the nervous system, and the digestive tracts” (“The Metaphysical Poets” *Selected Prose* 113). The lines above, the whole of the *Prufrock* collection is redolent of the *affects* of modernity, the ache, as in Hardy’s phrase—the individual excommunicated, as it were, emotionally alienated, remote. The body is there with its ill-formed feelings but feels disconnected from its environment—an *exile*, as Williams expresses it (50). But here, too, Eliot tempers the emotion, or tampers with it, by the use of high-brow irony, a light dramatic touch, something that Lawrence would never do. The Prufrock *persona* wants to expose himself, but can’t quite bring himself to do it. He asks the question (“Shall I say?”) as a way of distancing, or dissociating himself from the feelings of alienation and loneliness the lines evoke—a classic modernist technique. The sensations and emotions, in Eliot’s early poetry particularly, are articulated as symbols or representations of modern dis-ease and disintegration, and, as Nancy Gish notes, are simultaneously claimed and disavowed (110). This diffidence creates the mood of much of his early poetry. He (or Prufrock) is weak, indecisive, too thin, balding, etc.—the antithesis of the ideal masculine form and character of previous eras—the joyous masculine type celebrated in Whitman’s poetry, for example. The mood of disgust, irony and disbelief contrasted sharply with the “beefy enthusiasm” the age demanded (Orwell, “Review.” *My Country Right or Left* 239). Shakespeare’s Hamlet was also weak-willed and indecisive. Prufrock is “not Prince Hamlet”; he is “an attendant lord . . . / . . . no doubt, an easy tool” (“Prufrock” 111, 112, 114). He is “no prophet” (83). And yet, he experiences “the existential tremors and tremblings which may be thought of as constituting the conditions for prophecy” (Mousley 54). He feels the significance of life, asks the “big questions” (55), but they elicit no worthwhile response (56): “the women come and go /

Talking of Michelangelo" ("Prufrock" 13–14). Like Hamlet, he had some serious business to attend to and failed.

Eliot's apparent detachment—his "extinction of personality" and "process of depersonalization" is a (modernist) technique as much as it is an expression of Eliot's (or his persona's) insecurities, and it functions as the means by which he *underscores* the emotion: we know it's there, like a presence in the dark, and because of this we feel it more ("Tradition and the Individual Talent." *The Sacred Wood* 53). The emotion is objectified, but there is an acute subjective element in which we sense personal distress, psychological paralysis. This exemplifies his 'objective correlative' theory, which states that the expression of emotion in art is achieved by "a set of objects, a situation, a chain of events"—an "objective equivalent" to the feelings expressed by the artist—"such that when the external facts, which must terminate in sensory experience, are given, the emotion is immediately evoked." (Eliot, "Hamlet and His Problems." *The Sacred Wood* 100). In such a way, the yellow fog in "Prufrock" (15-22) evokes, via its "external facts", a vague feeling of torpid melancholia, a vacancy, suggested by the slow creep of the stanza's opening two lines, the desolation of "pools that stand in drains" (18), and a restlessness, relieved by the repose of the final line of the stanza.

Eliot's poetry, as representative of modernism, reflected, as Jewel Spears Brooker (summing up Edmund Wilson's position) says, "a new subjectivity", which grew from the expressionism of the previous century, in which "painters and writers began to show more interest in the world within the self than in the world of objects or of society" ("Introduction." *Reviews* 9). The objectivity of Eliot's poetry is in its depiction of spiritual distress, and mirrors the "starvation of a whole civilization—for people grinding at barren office-routine in the cells of gigantic cities, drying up their souls in eternal toil" (Edmund Wilson, "The Poetry of Drouth" *Dial* 73 (December 1922), 611–16, qtd in Brooker, "The Waste Land." *Reviews* 12). The idea that art can (and should) be impersonal, as expressed by Eliot's criticism, may suggest that art, the *idea*, exists in a pure state, removed from the artist who creates; that the role of the artist is to represent an external reality, which exists detached from the feelings of the artist himself or herself. This is

not, however, what Eliot means when he speaks of impersonal poetry. It is not a bloodless retreat, but a fashioning of a new art emotion—a transfiguration (Moody; no page numbers given). Eliot objectifies his emotions into art: finds for each (subjective) feeling a corresponding concrete expression.

When Eliot affirmed the truths of (Anglo-Catholic) Christianity, however, he distanced himself, morally, from his literary associates—fellow modernists like his friend Ezra Pound, who was troubled by Eliot’s conversion, his so-called break from secular modernism:

In any case, let us lament the psychosis  
Of all those who abandon the Muses for Moses.<sup>27</sup>

Apparently, Pound thought that Christianity and poetry were antithetical. Orwell thought so too:

In theory it is still possible to be an orthodox religious believer without being intellectually crippled in the process; but it is far from easy, and in practice books by orthodox believers usually show the same cramped, blinkered outlook as books by orthodox Stalinists or others who are mentally unfree. (“Review” *My Country Right or Left* 241)

As Tony Sharpe notes: “In espousing Anglo-Catholicism the poet became an apostate from Modernism” (27). Eliot’s fellow modernists acknowledged that one of the symptoms of contemporary culture was its lack of ‘God’ or a credible substitute—spiritual and physical displacement. But Christianity, for these artists and critics (right and left), was a step back (in the wrong direction). It was generally agreed that industrialism was evil, but Christianity wasn’t the fix—certainly not for Pound whose ideas surged forward, with the individual, not God, as the centre of the universe; even though (like Eliot) the mediaeval and classical past (and beyond) informed his outlook—that is, mediaeval

---

<sup>27</sup> Cited in Gallup, *T. S. Eliot and Ezra Pound: Collaborators in Letters*, 62.

Europe, or “the Mediterranean sanity” that produced, for example, “the clear lines and proportions” of “the Duomo di Modena”, not the “anti-flesh . . . asceticism” of Savonarola (Pound, *Make it New* 352, 351). Christianity was/is (or is perceived as being) static, and so far removed from the world and its real-life problems, despite its dynamic and passionate origins. It represented (or represents), at best, a resignation from the world, and at worst (for Joyce, notably) something much more pernicious, harmful to society and the individual.<sup>28</sup> For Eliot the reverse was true:

when morals cease to be a matter of tradition and orthodoxy—that is, of the habits of the community formulated, corrected and elevated by the continuous thought and direction of the Church—and when one man is to elaborate his own, then personality becomes a thing of alarming importance. (*After Strange Gods* 54)

Eliot had in mind writers like Lawrence.

Eliot’s journey as a writer can be seen as a religious response to the spiritual and political deficiencies of modern society. The crisis was political and religious, and Eliot, as Topping notes, tried to “define [through Christianity] a whole new start for an ailing and threatened culture” (237). The causes and remedy for “the psychological disorders that are characteristic of modernity” were, for Eliot, theological (Colón 69).

Lawrence’s connection with modernism was marginal, however (Bell, “Lawrence and Modernism” 179). He was, perhaps, as Frances Wilson says, a modernist “only by mistiming” (43)—“an outsider inside” (Laird 204). His art is closer to some of his 19th century predecessors than his contemporaries.<sup>29</sup> His ‘new poetry’ “had little in common with the ‘modernist poetry [of] . . . Pound and Eliot” (Banerjee 5). Lawrence might even be called *anti*-modernist. He loathed the Cambridge-Bloomsbury group, their

---

<sup>28</sup> See his *Portrait of an Artist as a Young Man*, for example—especially the chapter that vividly describes the torments of Hell that await the sinner.

<sup>29</sup> I’m thinking primarily of the Brontë sisters, George Eliot, Hardy, and Whitman. The first three named are dominant influences in his early poetry, and in his early novels, terminating (loosely) at *The Rainbow*.

“incontinently flippant talk and the shiny complacency, snub-proof in its obtuse completeness” (Leavis, *The Common Pursuit* 257)—not out of jealousy or a sense of inferiority; or because he was “an inexperienced prude, but for quite opposite reasons” (258).<sup>30</sup>

He had been formed in a working-class culture, in which intellectual interests were bound up with the social life of home and chapel, and never out of touch with the daily business of ensuring the supply of the daily bread. (258)

There is a touch of snobbery in Virginia Woolf’s objection to Lawrence’s lack of tradition, that he “echoes nobody, continues no tradition, is unaware of the past” (Oates, *New Heaven* 39).<sup>31</sup> Another way of expressing this is to say that Lawrence was original, that he had “no prototype” (Lowell 87). Eliot referred to Lawrence’s “lack of intellectual and social training” (*After Strange Gods* 59):

Lawrence started life wholly free from any restriction of tradition or institution . . . had no guidance except the Inner Light, the most untrustworthy and deceitful guide that ever offered itself to wandering humanity. (59)<sup>32</sup>

The critic R. P. Blackmur also dismissed Lawrence’s ‘inner light’: “When you depend entirely upon the demon<sup>33</sup> of inspiration, the inner voice, the inner light, you deprive yourself of any external criterion to show whether the demon is working or not” (289). This is, according to Blackmur, the “fallacy of . . . expressive form”—the mis-placed faith that the artist’s intensity of expression is a valid substitute for form, which Lawrence

---

<sup>30</sup> Leavis is alluding to the derisory comments and attitudes of people like Bertrand Russell and John Maynard Keynes. Eliot himself had good relations with “Bloomsbury”, but was aware of his Americanism all the same, complaining that “in England he felt on ‘dress parade’”; and, as late as 1926, was refused admission as a fellow “in the Senior Common Room of All Souls College, Oxford” (Gordon 68, 67).

<sup>31</sup> Oates quotes John Patterson’s *The Novel As Faith*.

<sup>32</sup> This embodies Eliot’s classicism, a corrective to the chaos of wholly subjective judgments, the submission of “the intellect to an authority outside the self, rather than one’s own intuition or emotional sense” (Woelfel 100).

<sup>33</sup> Blackmur is referring to Lawrence’s famous ‘demon’, Lawrence’s symbol or metaphor for uninhibited writing, the true voice of poetry, which the “young man” stifles. See Lawrence’s “Preface to Collected Poems” *Complete Poems* 27–29.

himself was aware of, “only thinking it a virtue” (289). Blackmur’s argument reduces to the statement: *expressive form equals no form*; the intensity of expression precludes form, or rational structure—that is to say: “[Lawrence’s] peculiar insight lacks the protection and support of a rational imagination, and . . . fails . . . to employ the formal devices of art in which it is couched” (287). Blackmur assumes that passion and spontaneity entail formless chaos. It is true that these do suggest lack of discipline and control, and Blackmur is right to suggest that the ‘inner light’, by and in itself, is insufficient as the means of creation or truth-finding. But Lawrence the artist knew how to shape raw emotion into art, even if his conception of art (or the aesthetic) doesn’t match the modernist world-view. As Michael Bell in 2021 notes, Lawrence shared with “other modernist writers their principled distrust of indulgent, unthinking, readymade emotionality” but, equally, distrusted the overreaction of the classical ideal, which for him was the equivalent of the Apollonian suppression, prompted by fear, of wild Dionysian nature, as expounded in Nietzsche’s *Birth of Tragedy (The Idea of the Aesthetic* 13). Lawrence was profoundly aware of the past and present. He is also (in Eliot’s and Woolf’s sense) part of *the* tradition—now if not then—despite his originality. Certainly, the Inner Light can be “most untrustworthy and deceitful”. It depends whose light it is: Saint Paul, Joan of Arc, Luther—or Lawrence? Each of these—reformers, heretics, and other greats like them—drew on their ‘inner light’; their *individual* relation with God. Eliot’s criticism of Lawrence’s ‘inner light’ is not just a statement of aesthetic principle, but a religious one as well in which Lawrence’s personal insights are contradistinguished from Anglo-Catholicism, the latter promulgating the voice of authority: the doctrines and dogmas—the teachings of the Church. But Eliot himself, like Dante, like the Magi, took heed of the “day star”—Faith—that arose in his heart.<sup>34</sup> For Eliot, this ‘light’ is God (or from God)—something objective, fired from without the self. But nonetheless it is apprehended by something inside himself—if not the ‘inner light’, then the intellect, and that too is fallible.

---

<sup>34</sup> The allusion is to 2 Pet. 1.19, which is cited by Lancelot Andrewes: “St. Peter calls faith, ‘the day-star rising in our hearts’” (246).

When Lawrence criticises ‘tradition’ he means it in the conservative sense, of it representing something static:<sup>35</sup> “[t]o submit the conscience to a creed, or an idea, or a tradition, or even an impulse is our ruin” (Lawrence, *Fantasia* 131). But, like Eliot, he understands and accepts it as something that lives and develops.

[W]e cannot live purely by impulse. Neither can we live solely by tradition. We must live by . . . ideal, impulse, and tradition, each in its hour. But the real guide is the pure conscience, the voice of the self in its wholeness, the Holy Ghost. (131)

Even more than Eliot, Lawrence was disenchanted with his times. Eliot at least creates beautiful moments out of urban decay—the tenderness “Of lonely men in shirt sleeves, leaning out of windows . . .” (“Prufrock” 72); whereas Lawrence’s poetic attack on modernity is mostly confined to a few blunt, unlovely statements (“Wages” and “Nemesis”, for example). Lawrence’s modernism is evident in his ‘free verse’, the “poetic image as a concrete vehicle for abstract emotions . . .”, but he combined this with a visionary voice in which he resembles, in some respects, romantics like Blake and Wordsworth, contrary therefore to the conscious classicising of mainstream modernism—a reaction to the “perceived dangers and errors of Romanticism itself . . .” (Sword, “Lawrence’s Poetry” 120; Bell, “Lawrence and Modernism” 180). Helen Sword says that Lawrence was “a modernist poet who cultivated . . . a distinctly anti-modernist stance” (“Lawrence’s Poetry” 120).

Lawrence met Frieda Von Richthofen in 1912, and broke through into the ‘Poetry of the Present’, free of rhyme and conventional metre restrictions, an organic form, which reproduced the rhythms of nature—of living, breathing life:

Not I, not I, but the wind that blows through me!  
A fine wind is blowing the new direction of Time.  
If only I let it bear me, carry me, if only it carry me!

---

<sup>35</sup> His poem “The Revolutionary”, for example.

If only I am sensitive, subtle, oh, delicate, a winged gift!  
 If only, most lovely of all, I yield myself and am borrowed  
 By the fine, fine wind that takes its course through the chaos of the world  
 Like a fine, exquisite chisel, a wedge-blade inserted;  
 If only I am keen and hard like the sheer tip of a wedge  
 Driven by invisible blows,  
 The rock will split, we shall come at the wonder, we shall find the Hesperides.  
 (“Song of a Man Who Has Come Through” 250)

It is the nymphs of the evening Lawrence evokes—“the three strange angels”—“knocking at the door in the night” (250):

Admit them, admit them. (250).<sup>36</sup>

The demon—his inner light, “the dark side of his nature” (Sword, “Lawrence’s Poetry” 121)—is liberated.<sup>37</sup> There is in these lines a visionary voice, and an unmitigated vulnerability. Lawrence is bare, unclever: he does not hide behind the ironies, the personas and the chic verbal gestures of the orthodox modernist. Lawrence’s most distinctly anti-modernist feature perhaps is his lack of, and disdain for, the morbid and gratuitous (as he sees it) displays of self-consciousness in art. Notably absent in his art are those psychological tropes which explore the ‘horror of the body and self’—a common feature in modernist art, including Eliot’s:

I feel like one who smiles, and turning shall remark  
 Suddenly, his expression in a glass  
 My self-possession gutters; we are really in the dark. (“Portrait of a Lady”  
 2.16–18)

---

<sup>36</sup> This might also be an allusion to Genesis 18 where Abraham is visited by three angels.

<sup>37</sup> Blackmur thought that Lawrence, in his earlier poetry, was “poet as craftsman, and the demon was . . . that outburst of personal feeling which needed the discipline of craft to become a poem” (208).

There is, in the lines quoted above, as Lawrence notes of Hamlet (Shakespeare's character), a "convulsed reaction of the mind from the flesh" (*Twilight* 77). Lawrence has no place for this self-absorption in his own art,<sup>38</sup> the "Paralysed force, gesture without motion",<sup>39</sup> of "prostituting himself to knowledge and suffering the endless torture of unattainable self-analysis" (Glicksberg 299). This excessive self-consciousness is, according to Lawrence, the artist's attempt, as Joyce Carol Oates says, "to exalt himself over his subject" (*New Heaven* 40). It is, for him, the bloodless poetry of the mind, in which the body is absent, an apparition projected onto a screen—the embodiment of disembodiment. It is the means by which Eliot delivers his emotional punch. Lawrence, however, is direct, and physical. He "loves the true marriage of heaven and hell" and "exalt[s] the apparently unbeautiful" (48).

I love you, rotten,

Delicious rottenness.

I love to suck you out from your skins . . . ("Medlars and Sorb - Apples" 280)

But like Eliot, his work can be seen as a religious response to the deficiencies of modernity. He was intensely aware of the present moment, and the spiritual void where "the dead tread heavily through the muddy air" ("In the Cities" 704)—a line which could almost have come from Eliot himself.

Lawrence's religious solution, however, was physical, a religion of the body; a glorification of beast, flower, man and woman. As Shirley Bricout notes (of *Apocalypse*):

. . . Lawrence insists on the absence of abstract thought, on the concreteness of everything which enables the artist to find God in plants, in beasts and also in objects. Thus, as a poet, Lawrence aspires to depict a religious experience. (100)

---

<sup>38</sup> "Did I feel a twinge in my little toe, or didn't I?" asks every character of Mr [James] Joyce . . . " Lawrence, "The Future of the Novel" *Life* 179.

<sup>39</sup> Eliot, "The Hollow Men" 1.12.

What Lawrence wished to recapture in his art and life was an intimate sense of awareness, a sense of interrelatedness between the individual and their environment. This spiritual awareness, present in pre-classical societies (such as Egypt, Etruria and pre-Socratic Greece)—“a repressed and forgotten mode of fulfilled being”—has been eroded by progress, by civilisation, and has resulted in the supplanting of instinct and intuition by Reason as the means of knowledge acquisition and thought (Gutierrez 179). This goes to the heart of Lawrence’s hatred of the modern world, devitalised and reduced to the needs of Industrial Man: the mass forces of modern society that stifle the emotional, vital instincts of people, and reduce living to the acquisition of material possessions.

For Lawrence, unlike Eliot, there is no finality, no cosmic or religious fixed order; the water shakes the moon’s reflection, always (“Poetry of the Present” *Life* 78).<sup>40</sup> The *instant moment* is the “incarnate, carnal self”—the supreme unconquered mystery (82)—the only reality. The Now is incarnate because it can only be represented by the carnal self: *the bird on the wing*. The past and future are bodiless abstractions; they exist in the mind only. We must, according to Lawrence, find “fulfilment in this life or not at all” (Murry, “Creative Iconoclast” 6)<sup>41</sup>—now, in the flesh; for it is only in the flesh we commune with Nature. His poetry, all of his work, is an expression of the human instinct—a celebration of what is vital and strong in the individual or the community. The chief nemesis, for Lawrence, is mechanical, the machine, by which we become automatic wage slaves, a shadow of the intuitive creature that first stood tall and craned her soul to the stars.

O! Start a revolution, somebody!  
 Not to get the money  
 But to lose it all for ever. (“O! Start a Revolution” 453)

---

<sup>40</sup> See the chapter called “Moony” in his novel *Women in Love*.

<sup>41</sup> See also Lawrence’s *Apocalypse* 110.

This is the aspect of modernity he wants to smash—the rational, irreligious money world, which is the root of our evil. The fix for Lawrence is, vaguely,

. . . some sort of communism  
not based on wages, nor profits . . .  
but on a religion of life. (“The Root of Our Evil” 483)

He wants a revolution of the body and spirit, not the replacement of one materialistic society (Capitalism) with another (Marxist Socialism). If we make a revolution, we should

. . . do it so that we can all of us be little aristocracies on our own  
and kick our heels like jolly escaped asses. (“A Sane Revolution” 517)

Eliot and Lawrence start from the same premise: modern society is corrupt; humanity has abandoned god, its mythic origins, strides toward the light of ‘progress’, of reason, the modern world. The solution for both is religious. But the idea of Eliot kicking up his heels like a jolly ass is unthinkable, or, at any rate, discomfiting—despite having once been likened to a drunken helot.<sup>42</sup> The image suggests disorder and poor discipline; and it has a physicality that doesn’t sit well with his reserve, Christianity and cultural conservatism.

In the rest of this thesis, I explore the religious response of Eliot and Lawrence to their times: specifically, their notions of body and spirit as represented in their poetry.

---

<sup>42</sup> In 1916 critic Arthur Waugh thought Pound and Eliot subversive anarchists “bent on destroying English tradition.” Pound embraced it in an *Egoist* article in June 1917 with the very modernist, jarringly juxtapositional title “Drunken Helots and Mr. Eliot” (Brooker, Jewel Spears, *Reviews*; no page numbers given).

## 2. The Christian Idea of the Body

He will command his angels concerning you,  
and they will lift you up in their hands,  
so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.

—Psalms. 91.11–12

[The Devil] saith unto [Jesus], If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee: and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone.

—Matthew. 4.6

A useful parallel can be drawn between Christian attitudes toward the body and Eliot's representations of the body in his poetry. This in turn can be contradistinguished from Lawrence's representations of the body in *his* poetry, and pagan attitudes toward the body. My basic point is that Eliot's 'body' (and 'spirit') is informed by Christianity, and Lawrence's by paganism.<sup>43</sup> If we understand the Christian ideal of body/spirit, we understand (or nearly understand) Eliot's. Likewise, we understand Lawrence more easily in the context of his revolt against Christianity, which is based on its elevation of the spirit and its undermining of the body and, therefore (for Lawrence), life.

Genesis, in the story of the Fall, relates the origin of sin and body shame—as Burack states, a “shame-ridden sexuality, and . . . a sense of separation from the living environment around them and from the passionate forces within” (4). This was the moment that people distinguished themselves from animals, became aware of the presence of good and evil. But it's important to note that the sin of Adam and Eve was not of the body. The sin was intellectual, of the mind; it was the striving towards self-knowledge and knowledge of the world that led the first humans away from God—and from themselves: by becoming conscious of their bodies, they became *other*

---

<sup>43</sup> I use 'paganism' generically to encapsulate religions or 'philosophies of life' that are grounded in nature, rather than the moral precepts of dogmatic/doctrinal religions such as Christianity.

*than* themselves; so that even something as natural as sexual intercourse becomes *mental*, tainted with shame and, in time, through Christianity, with Sin. The Torah's Decalogue was the first code to prohibit sexual immorality—"lust and covetous desires", and here the difference between religious and moral 'laws' disappears: Judaism is the world's first *ethical* monotheism (Epstein 21,12, 23). But the sexual prohibitions are restricted to '*immoral*' sexuality, like adultery, sodomy and incest. Christianity, however, raised these concerns, eventually, to a hysterical pitch, which necessitated various responses, including apologias, the careful formulations of doctrine, and, once it became institutionalised as the religion of the Roman Empire, torturous bodily violence.

So why does the body matter? Christianity posits a spiritual afterlife—an eternity compared to which the joys and pains of the flesh are negligible or nothing. The physical world is a state through which we emerge, *ideally*, toward God; it is preparation for the Spiritual Kingdom, and our purpose now is to live as God commands. But Christianity, nevertheless, had to come, and is still coming, to terms with the problem of the body: *what* was Jesus? The Council of Nicaea (325 AD) decreed that He was fully God *and* fully human, and so steered between two opposite heresies: the Docetist notion that Jesus, the Son of God, was not human, not flesh, but merely *appeared* to be; and Arianism, which claimed that Jesus was *created* by God, the Father (in time therefore), not *eternally begotten*. The former heresy implies that Jesus did not *suffer* during His crucifixion, and thereby nullified an important element of Christology—its role in mankind's salvation; as Lawrence noted, the body had to be destroyed "to testify that He was Spirit" ("Hardy" *Phoenix* 1 452). The latter heresy demotes Him to a human, not divine, not *consubstantial* with the Father. This challenged the unity of God, and has bodily connotations that are disconcerting: the thought of Jesus' body being subject to the same needs and limitations of the mortal human body is, for the orthodox Christian, unpalatable.

But, despite Christianity's suspicion of flesh and lust, the body was not initially hated or discounted (Bynum 11), and nor has Christianity always considered the body inferior to the spirit. In the early centuries, it focused more on bodily resurrection than on the

immortality of the soul (D. Brown 25–26): “I believe in . . . [t]he resurrection of the body . . .”; “[He] rose again on the third day in accordance with the scriptures.” (“The Apostles’ Creed”; “The Nicene Creed”). In *accordance with the scriptures* here entails that Jesus was resurrected *bodily*<sup>44</sup>. As Swanson says: “The human Christ, living and dying, was central to the relationships created through religion. Christ, as human, as accessible, approachable” (1). It was largely under the influence of Saint Augustine that “sexual congress” was seen as having been corrupted by the Fall, motivated by desire and base motives (D. Brown 26). Augustine, in his later writings, departed from the generally benign or positive views of the body as expounded by the Christian Fathers of the first three centuries: he regarded sexual desire as shameful, and unnatural, and went so far as to explain that Jesus was born without libido (Pagels, *Adam, Eve and the Serpent* 112, 130, 112).

But even before Augustine (who died in 430), the body was something to be suppressed: Origen (reputedly) castrated himself<sup>45</sup>, and the Egyptian Anthony wandered the desert hungry. This religious instinct for bodily deprivation, poverty and austerity became more prevalent in the centuries that followed, exemplified most famously perhaps by Saint Francis. Today, flagellation, for religious reasons as well, is still practised. These are extreme examples, but nonetheless, the body remains problematic for the Christian: humans, although there is wickedness in thought, sin via the body. The body is, or ought to be, the servant of the spirit, of God—and so, the Christian dichotomy of body and spirit: if they are one, the spirit too is corrupt. They are necessarily separate. Even if Jesus rose in the flesh and, in that state, ascended to heaven<sup>46</sup>, the body, in Christian theology, is maculate, tied to its sinful and sexual connotations.

There is, of course, even in Luther’s theology, a place for the body: “[n]ow, if one should say that Abraham’s soul lives with God but his body is dead, this distinction is rubbish”

---

<sup>44</sup> See Metzger, 649.

<sup>45</sup> “Origen . . . had been so determined to win his struggle against passion that as a young man he had castrated himself . . .” Pagels, *The Origin of Satan* 157.

<sup>46</sup> A contentious detail, even within the New Testament.

(Luther 119). The body is revived, but *delivered from “gross appetites and necessities”* (Hazlitt 322; my emphasis).<sup>47</sup> The body is beautiful by virtue of being created by God (in His image); not as an entity independent of the Spirit, or because of its functions. The predominant Christian view of the human body, *in itself*, was (from the third century onwards) negative. It is conceived primarily as the means by which we exercise our will, our desire—a perpetuation of Adam and Eve’s Sin, the original act of disobedience. It is the means through which we copulate, but because it is *desirable*, not (primarily) to procreate. Because the body is the means by which we gratify our desires, in spite of God’s will, it is seen as an obstacle to salvation.

There is even the suggestion that the physical world belongs to Satan, for it is Satan who offers Jesus the glories of this world, with the implication that this world is Satan’s to *give*.<sup>48</sup> With these sorts of cosmic views, it’s no wonder the Christian seeks solace in God’s Kingdom: the material world, though not of course devoid of goodness, is vile, ultimately—but necessary. Just as Jesus courageously faced the world of the flesh and all its wickedness, so did his most devout followers, some to the extent of being martyred.

It is from this despair of humankind and earthly existence that Eliot, through his poetry, stretches his “aged wings”<sup>49</sup> toward spiritual salvation: he submits, for his good or for his ill, to the will of God. But there is joy in understanding “that the soul cannot be possessed of the divine union until it has divested itself of the craving for all created beings.”<sup>50</sup> Eliot takes this *Dark Road*, then, where there is no joy, unless it is the joy that comes from physical or spiritual deprivation and suffering. He converted to Anglo-Catholicism in 1927,<sup>51</sup> but his faith brought him no direct relief: “Faith is not a *substitute* for anything . . . it does not make one ‘happier’. Perhaps it makes it more possible to dispense with ‘happiness’.”<sup>52</sup> The sufferer does not even *will* the end of their

---

<sup>47</sup> Hazlitt’s translation of Luther’s *Table Talk*.

<sup>48</sup> See, for example, Matt. 4.3–9.

<sup>49</sup> *Ash Wednesday* 1.6.

<sup>50</sup> Eliot, Letter to Geoffrey Faber, 18 Sept 1927. Eliot cites John of the Cross.

<sup>51</sup> Eliot was “baptized and received into the Church of England” on 29 June 1927. See Ackroyd 162.

<sup>52</sup> Eliot, Letter to John Hayward, 2 Feb 1931; Eliot’s emphasis and inverted commas.

suffering, and sometimes even welcomes it: “in love with the burning arrows” (Eliot, “The Death of Saint Narcissus” 271).<sup>53</sup> It is the spirit that emerges purified and free of bodily impediment, a state, however, *not* to be hoped for: for hope is a temptation to overcome, a desire. What is sought is *humility*, total surrender of the self and the needs of the body. The body, of course, cannot be denied, but the orthodox Christian has tended to carry it as if it were an encumbrance, or a means to an end, which at death is nullified, dispensed with:

As the soul leaves the body torn and bruised,  
As the mind deserts the body it has used. (Eliot, “La Figlia Che Piange” 11–12)

If the body is resurrected after death, it is made perfect—purified: liberated from its sexual and excremental functions, and the moral and aesthetic limitations of its former self; it is not a natural (physical) body, according to St Paul, that is resurrected, but a spiritual one.<sup>54</sup> And if Man is made in God’s image, then that image is an imperfect reproduction of the Ideal Form.

It is this ideal form that Christianity, following Plato, aspired to, whatever the precise nature of the resurrected body, and Eliot, through his poetry, echoes it: the body is often portrayed as corrupt and abject, especially the female who undergoes the ‘indignities’ of childbirth and menstruation, and who is therefore more closely linked to ‘impurity’.<sup>55</sup> It was Eve, the temptress, who first tasted the ‘apple’, who succumbed to the serpent and brought down the man with her:

the guilty party, the one we love to hate and blame, is Eve—more than the serpent . . . and certainly more than the first man, Adam. Eve, as the ‘original’

---

<sup>53</sup> This part of the poem recalls the death of a different saint: Sebastian.

<sup>54</sup> See 1 Cor. 15.44, 50. “There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body”; “flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom.” This is contradicted by passages in some of the other ‘Pauline’ books, like 1 Tim., but the genuine Pauline letters are ‘anti body’. See Pagels, *Adam* 23–24. Bible references are from the KJV.

<sup>55</sup> See, for example, Lev. 12 and 15.

woman, has come to personify all that is base, lustful, untrustworthy, wily, beguiling, deceitful and evil in the universe . . . (Lawless 241–42)

The point Lawless makes is that these negative conceptions of Woman remain intact in the cultural ‘mind’, consciously or not. The prime exception to female fallibility, in scripture and Eliot’s poetry, is the Virgin Mary, that Person (or symbol) of ideal femininity, who features prominently in Eliot’s later poetry. Contrast, for example, “[t]he silent sister veiled in white and blue” in *Ash Wednesday* 4.23 with

that woman

Who hesitates toward you in the light of the door

Which opens on her like a grin. (“Rhapsody on a Windy Night” 16–18)

Matthew Geary notes the prevalence of critics (especially feminist critics) to highlight Eliot’s misogyny, and Geary himself lists several examples of negative female portrayals in Eliot’s early poetry (5-6). He says, however, that these critics overlook Eliot’s transformation in his later poetry where his women are figures of “motherly benevolence” (6). This observation fails to rebut the ‘feminist’ claim against Eliot; it merely emphasises, by way of contrast, Eliot’s problematic relationship with the ordinary, modern (independent) woman, if texts such as “Prufrock” and “The Waste Land” are anything to go by. His reverence for the Virgin Mary reflects his Christianity, not his enlightened attitude towards women.

Sin, in the Judeo-Christian tradition, is linked to the body, but more profoundly, the female body, and Eliot, via his negative portrayals of the female form (before his conversion), follows suit. He reveals not so much a dislike of the female per se, but a mistrust or wariness, first formed, perhaps, as a result of the New England Protestantism with which his young mind was inculcated, or as an atavistic hangover of a creation story of female depravity. I note that Eliot reveals *misanthropic* tendencies, evidenced in his negative depictions of male characters, as well as female characters. But women in his poetry, nevertheless, are stained, in a way that men are not, by this

notion of impurity, an attitude which is also, as Pagels phrases it, embedded in “traditional [Christian] patterns of gender and sexual relationship”, and one which marked “a departure from both pagan practices and Jewish tradition” (*Adam* xvii).

Lawrence, in his last essay, notes the distinction between the old and new in terms of morality:

The old religions were cults of vitality, potency and power . . . morals were just social manners . . . But by the time of Christ all religion . . . instead of being religion of *life*, here and now, became religion of postponed destiny, death, and reward *afterwards*, ‘if you are good’. (*Apocalypse* 32; Lawrence’s emphases and inverted commas)

Religions as “cults of vitality” and of “life, here and now”, allude to the unity of body and spirit, a unity schismed by Christianity. The Hebrew Bible, as Bratcher notes, did not conceptualise the human in dichotomous terms (body/spirit split). Christianity, in this respect, is more indebted to Greek Philosophy, especially Plato (7–8).

The Hebraic view that dominates Scripture does not conceptualize human beings this way. There is only a whole person animated (alive) by the breath of God. . . . The biblical writers . . . never developed dualistic notions of a person being made up of divisible parts. . . . [F]rom the biblical view there cannot be a person without a body. That’s why the biblical conception of afterlife requires a bodily resurrection . . . (8–9)

The conceptual corruption, Bratcher explains, was initiated by problems of translation—concepts in one language that have no corresponding meaning in another— “the imposition of Greek metaphysical concepts on to Jewish metaphors” (Wright 33). ‘Soul’ in Greek (and English), for example, is not equivalent to the Hebrew concept of that term, which connotes, rather, something physical (Bratcher 9–10). Lawrence, in an early essay, notes, “For centuries, the Jew knew God as David had perceived Him

. . . It was the God of the body . . . of physical laws and . . . functions” (“Hardy” *Phoenix* 1 450). The relationship between people and God, he asserts, was physical: “David, when he lay with a woman, lay also with God” (450). In the Old Testament, Job, in effect, had said the things that are Me *physically*, are God (453)<sup>56</sup>, even if “[God] is not a man, as I am” (Job. 9.32). But Christ overturned this and said: God is what is “Not-Me” (Lawrence, “Hardy” 453).

As I have noted, the Original/Jewish Sin was *intellectual*—the striving for *mental* knowledge, despite the apple’s sensuous and sensual connotations.<sup>57</sup> It was not quite “*sexual* knowledge [that] was learned in the Garden of Eden”, as Lawless maintains, (241; my emphasis), but *consciousness* of sex and sexuality, which made it dirty, abject. When Eve ate the apple, “she became aware of her own womanhood, mentally” (Lawrence, *Fantasia* 81). Adam and Eve felt ashamed of their bodies (Gen. 3.7) because they became conscious of them, like no other animal. They were driven out of Paradise, not because they had intercourse, but because, as Lawrence expresses it, “we got our sex into our head” (*Fantasia* 81). Before they ate from the Tree of Knowledge, “they were both naked . . . and were not ashamed” (Gen. 2.25). The body in itself was not an object of shame, associated with sin: indeed God instructed the first humans to “multiply” (1.28). The Torah, as David Brown notes, was not the prime impetus for this body angst; Hebrew scripture ‘promoted’ fruitfulness in marriage as a sign of God’s blessing (27).<sup>58</sup>

Nor should the purity laws of Leviticus be misunderstood. Recent sexual activity precluded admission to the Temple not because sex was seen as dirty but

---

<sup>56</sup> The phrase is not explicitly uttered, but the narrative implies a physicality. That God has hands, for instance, and eyes, is probably meant figuratively; but there is a strong verbal interaction between Job and God (as there is in other Old Testament books), as well as references to material things, including possessions, which are dependent on God. In the Christian Bible, the physicality of God is represented only by the human Christ. The monism of the Jewish tradition, then, is overcome, and the body and spirit of God is torn in two.

<sup>57</sup> “*Mental* knowledge” seems tautological, unless one notes Lawrence’s belief in bodily knowledge: “. . . knowing is not only a mental act. Acts of emotion and volition are acts of primary cognition and may be almost entirely non-mental.” (“Education of the People” *Phoenix* 1 618); Thought is an “adventure of the whole man”—not just “with his head and . . . spirit. But thinking is of the blood too.” (Lawrence, “Books.” *Phoenix* 1 732).

<sup>58</sup> Brown footnotes Ps. 77. 3–5 as an example.

precisely because of its potency: for the Jews of the time it represented a possible source of power to rival that of God. (27)

The body became an object of shame, in Lawrence's view, because it challenged the status quo of Paradise (a Christian concept)—“much more prison than paradise” (“Art and Morality” *Life* 229). On this basis, one could conceptualise Eve as the courageous heroine, the liberator who opened “the door to knowledge and consciousness” (Lawless 241).

The early Christian primacy of the body (noted above) had been acknowledged by Lawrence, but since the middle ages it has, he said, been striving from an animal nature toward self-abnegation—“towards the elimination of the flesh” (*Twilight* 42). This culminated in the execution of King Charles I of England, according to Lawrence, a puritan attack on “the God who is Me” (47).

Pagan religious systems, according to Lawrence, “gave the true correspondence between the material cosmos and the soul”: “science and religion were in accord” (“Two Principles” *Phoenix 2* 227), as they were for the Chaldeans, who knew “the stars . . . two thousand years before Christ”—who knew the moon, intimately, as “the white wonder of the skies” (“The Dragon of the Apocalypse” *Selected Literary Criticism* 162). But even the moon—“the pock-marked”, “dead lump of the astronomist” has been *civilised*, and so has the sun (160, 162).

[O]ur sun and our moon are only thought-forms to us, balls of gas, dead globes . . . things we *know* but never feel by experience. By *experience*, we should feel the sun as the savages feel him . . . as the Chaldeans knew him, in a terrific embrace (161; Lawrence's emphases).

The moon is not dead, says Lawrence. Maybe we are, “half-dead little modern worms stuffing our damp carcasses with thought-forms that have no sensual realities” (162). For Lawrence, for the pagan, the world of nature, the real, physical world, *is* the spiritual

world: the spiritual world has no meaning or reality apart from nature. “There is no utterly immaterial existence, no spirit” (“Two Principles” *Phoenix* 2 230). The spiritual comes from physical needs and reactions, the most potent of which is sex, in contrast to Christian dogma which says we have an immortal soul which is at odds with our physical needs that can only be purged by death (Fletcher 81–82). The flesh, for Lawrence, is the soil from which the spirit blossoms (82).

[F]lesh and blood are the Scriptures . . . If only we were allowed to look at Scripture in the light of our own experience, instead of having to see it displayed in a kind of theatre, false-real, and never developing, we should save such a lot of mistakes. It’s the narrowness of folk’s barb-wire restrictions we get our raw wounds from—and then blame the world. (Letter to Reverend Robert Reid, 27 March 1911)

Eliot’s Christianity, leads him (or his soul) away from the world of flesh, but Lawrence will not be *Uplifted* (Lawrence, “St Matthew” 320). Like the apostle Matthew, he is a man, and as a man his home is

. . . The brown soil  
 Where flowers sprout in the acrid humus . . .  
 Where beasts drop their unlicked young . . . (321)

### 3. Shadow Fruit: Body and Spirit in the Poetry of T.S Eliot

First, the cold friction of expiring sense  
 Without enchantment, offering no promise  
 But bitter tastelessness of shadow fruit

—T. S. Eliot, “Little Gidding”

#### Death in the Body, Resurrection in the Spirit

The body is prominent in Eliot’s poetry, but it suffers; and, especially in his later poetry, is like *dust*, absorbed by the spirit. Some of his early, uncollected poetry, however, is bold, replete with bodily and sexual references. Notable examples are “The Love Song of St. Sebastian”, and “The Death of Saint Narcissus.” Even irony is dispensed with in these two poems, and they have a vulnerability which is absent in most of his ‘collected’ poetry, where sexual allusions are “veiled” and “hushed” and objectified (“Sweeney Among the Nightingales” 10). In “Sebastian” and “Narcissus”, the narrators revel in their bodily suffering, which is transfigured into sexual-cum-spiritual ecstasy, reaching its apotheosis at death, the supreme moment of release. The burning arrows penetrate the martyr’s skin: orgasm at the moment of death; delivery unto God; the exquisite pleasure of surrender. It is an instance of what Lawrence meant by “the crucifixion of the procreative body for the glorification of the spirit, the mental consciousness” (“Introduction to these paintings” *Life* 397).

Because his flesh was in love with the burning arrows  
 He danced on the hot sand  
 Until the arrows came.  
 As he embraced them his white skin surrendered . . . (“Narcissus” 34–37)

. . . he had been a young girl  
 Caught in the woods by a drunken old man  
 Knowing in the end the taste of his own whiteness . . . (28–30)

The “hot sand” recalls Dante’s *Inferno* 15, where the sodomites are punished, made to walk the hot sand *because* they were “in love with the burning arrows”: these are the homosexuals in love, as it were, with their own male image, just as the narrators of “Sebastian” and “Narcissus” are in love with their mortification. One of the narrators of the former “would come in a shirt of hair” (“Sebastian” 1), and:

I would flog myself until I bled,  
 And after hour on hour of prayer  
 And torture and delight  
 . . . . .  
 I should arise your neophyte (4–6, 9)

Years later, Eliot wrote:

I am one whom this sense of void tends to drive towards asceticism or sensuality, and only Christianity helps reconcile me to life, which is otherwise disgusting. (Letter to Paul Elmer 12 February 1929)

In the Sebastian and Narcissus poems he combined both of these impulses at once. The two poems convey their emotion by the mingling of the sensuous and spiritual—overt sexual imagery juxtaposed with profound religious feeling. The dominant emotion is akin to the love a martyr feels for their physical suffering, which is experienced as the means to atonement. The feeling is so intense that the spiritual and physical elements cannot be distinguished. The fire, the ‘burning arrows’ meld them into one (physical and spiritual) element. These poems are intensely emotional and physical, and (yet), although the action is narrated, the mingled sexual and spiritual elements suggest the need to transcend the physical world of sensations: in “Sebastian”, the lover’s (the neophyte) body is “mangled” by the beloved, (the one worshipped):

And I should love you the more because I had mangled you  
 And because you were no longer beautiful  
 To anyone but me. (36–38)

Why must the body be mangled, and why is the mangled one loved more because of it? Eliot, via the narrator of the second stanza, brutally splits the body from the spirit, because the body is the object of ‘improper’, (and) homosexual feeling; its beauty torments him. With the body disposed of, the love is pure, free from sin. As Donoghue says in regard to “Little Gidding”—but it applies here too: “The communication of the dead is tongued with fire beyond the language of the living because the dead are now complete . . . perfected in death” (287).

The sentiment expressed in “Sebastian” feels like Eliot’s<sup>59</sup> elevated, however, from the physical world: the ‘objectivity’ of the poems resides in their presentation, the representation of the imagery. Eliot waits in the wings, but we know he’s there, peering into the pool of himself, and we observe *the scene arrange itself—as it will seem to do* (“Portrait of a Lady” 1.2; my emphasis). This is not to say that Eliot is homosexual or enjoys pain; but it suggests, at least, some lurking *tendency* (not necessarily a homosexual or masochistic tendency) in that part of his Self which lies beneath the personality, “*further into the self*” (Stead 127; Stead’s emphasis)—his fascination and repulsion for the body, expressed most emphatically in regard to the female body, a complex ‘borrowed’ from Laforgue (Crawford, *Young Eliot* 122). It suggests a deep sense of shame, of bodily mortification and sin, which the poet wishes to overcome. The body is a burden to the spirit, and the poet wants to shake it off, even if the *man* enjoys a good dinner now and then.<sup>60</sup>

“Sebastian” and “Narcissus” are unrestrained in their representations of masochistic pain and sexual ‘depravity’ (in the form of rape, sado-masochism, homosexuality and

---

<sup>59</sup> It accords with what we know about the man—with what he has written elsewhere, in his poetry and his prose.

<sup>60</sup> A reference to Eliot’s “The Dry Salvages” 3.44. Also: “I get solid satisfaction still from the memory of meals eaten many years ago” (Eliot, Letter to Dorothy Richards, 9 Jan 1943).

possibly masturbation<sup>61</sup>). These elements, when they re-emerge in his collected poetry, are rarified, transmuted into a “twittering world” (“Burnt Norton” 3.24), a world “Neither flesh nor fleshless” (2.16).

Eliot’s bodily preoccupations are retained (in veiled form), but disciplined by his “intellectually controlled perspective” (Mahaffey 606), or modified by irony. The reader is like a spectator, or a *voyeur*. So is Eliot himself: in his early collected poetry, especially, he steps aside: the emotion is channelled by the masked persona, or narrated by the disinterested observer. We observe: “This oval O cropped out with teeth: / The sickle motion from the thighs” (“Sweeney Erect” 15–16); and we hear the woman “shriek” (30)—“The epileptic on the bed / . . . clutching at her sides” (31–32). Ultimately, we’re out in the corridor with the ladies (33–44), who would remedy this “lack of taste” (36) with “a glass of brandy” (44). Eliot distances himself from the scene. He divests himself of emotional responsibility. He leaves the reader to straighten the sheets and tidy up.

Eliot steps off the page but, as Gish notes, Eliot’s apparent detachment is a means of communicating emotion, which reveals disorders and internal divisions—various “forms of psychological distress”, conditions known prior to Freudian theories (107).

In psychological theories of dissociation Eliot found, first, a way of understanding the seemingly fragmented modern self and, second, a way of depicting “modern” states of consciousness in which desire is simultaneously present and absent, in which sensual and abstract converge. This poetic strategy helps explain the continuing fascination of readers with a poetry obsessed with death and etherized numbness, yet powerfully evocative in its sensation and emotion. (108)

The action, in “Sweeney Erect”, narrated thus in neat quatrains, far from ameliorating the sense of depravity and dis-ease, actually sharpens it; we feel mixed up in it somehow, and it feels more sordid, more scandalous, for being “veiled” and “hushed”,

---

<sup>61</sup> See “Narcissus” 25–27.

and for its blithe and comic tone: the action is presented as if performing a daily routine, like shaving. It is this contrast between tone and meaning which provides much of the poem's impact. Similarly, in "Sweeney Among the Nightingales", the sordidity is *insinuated*, partly by the use of contrast—light and shade: the imagery is sharp; the characters appear as if in a dark room occasionally illuminated by a match, or a lightning flash. The *darkness* is moral: we understand that the characters are motivated by sex or money, or relief from boredom (which persists nevertheless), but there is mystery and the sense of foreboding—of something or "someone indistinct" as the 'camera' zooms out to the dark "bloody wood", and murder (33, 37). We enter, with the poet, the *selva oscura*, the way out of which is barred by Dantean beasts<sup>62</sup>—'real', phantasmic representations of Mortal sin—fraud, violence, but in particular, or more prevalently in Eliot, *lust*. Eliot's presence in the "Sweeney" poems is veiled by his measured versification and cool third persona. He could be "The person in the Spanish cape" or the spirited nightingale in the "bloody wood" ("Sweeney Among" 11, 37). There is, as Gish says of his later poems, a "sense of something deeply disturbing just out of reach or just beyond vision" (120). Again, the action is presented in neat quatrains—"pat rhymes . . . like a straightjacket controlling an excess of horror", as Lyndall Gordon observes—and the sense of horror is intensified because of this (62).

### Detachment

The direct emotional representations of "Sebastian" and "Narcissus" are refined by Eliot's collected poetry, but the vulnerability is retained by the first-person narrators in "Prufrock" and "Portrait of a Lady", for example. In these latter poems, the protagonists seem to fumble their way in the dark, and mount stairs on their "hands and knees" ("Portrait" 3.4), literally and figuratively. They don't know whether to smile, or speak. The body wants to disappear, to be extinguished, and other bodies—the physical world in general—are "twisted", "damp souls" who peer down at the "trampled street" from

---

<sup>62</sup> The reference is to the first canto of Dante's *Inferno*. The three beasts (lion, leopard and she-wolf) represent the three types of mortal sin, sins connected with lust, violence and (worst of all) *fraud*. The latter encompasses a wide array of sins, including treason against God. It is disputed among critics which beast belongs to which sin. "Selva oscura" is commonly translated *dark wood*.

behind “broken blinds”, clasping “the yellow soles of feet”, their emptiness.<sup>63</sup> This, for Eliot, is the modern metropolis: old men in rented rooms who cough all night; shadowy women with twisted grins. The physical world, in these early poems especially, is ‘ugly’, and if not, it is tainted always with some ambiguity, some moral or aesthetic defect, or doubt—a distraction usually, or a barrier to personal happiness, moral fulfilment or spiritual salvation:

Arms that are braceleted and white and bare  
 (But in the lamplight, downed with light brown hair!)  
 Is it perfume from a dress  
 That makes me so digress?  
 . . . . .  
 And should I then presume?  
 And how should I begin? (“Prufrock” 63–66; 68–69)

“Prufrock” undermines the manly self-assurance of the Victorian period.<sup>64</sup> The narrator wants to annihilate himself bodily; he is tormented by self-consciousness, doubt and self-loathing: “I should have been a pair of ragged claws / Scuttling across the floors of silent seas” (73–74). But he must endure the endless rounds of “tea and cakes”, and “marmalade” (79, 88), in the midst of which, however, he *witnesses* (self-detachment!) his “slightly bald” head (the self-conscious agony!) “brought in upon a platter.”<sup>65</sup> Eliot juxtaposes moments of spiritual crisis and Hamletian paralysis with the quotidian banalities of living. It is a poem about the failure to connect—like “Portrait”—to articulate wordless, vaporish sensations into human speech, which however descend into ordinary gestures: “Let us / . . . correct our watches by the public clocks. / Then sit for

---

<sup>63</sup> “Twisted faces”: “Morning at the Window” 6; “twisted things; / . . . A twisted branch”: “Rhapsody on a Windy Night” 24–25; “[T]wist of the knife”: “Rhapsody on a Windy Night” 78; “damp souls”: “Morning at the Window” 3; “trampled street”: “Preludes” 2.3; “broken blinds”: “Preludes” 1.10; “the yellow soles of feet”: “Preludes” 3.14.

<sup>64</sup> Cooper calls the poem a “Comic derangement of the . . . late Victorian man of action” (*Introduction* 54). I note, however, that Queen Victoria died in 1901, ten years before the poem’s composition; and yet after such a long reign, the Victorian era would have lingered on, like an Eliotic fog (or a miasmal mist), for a few years after.

<sup>65</sup> Line 82. The reference is to the death of John the Baptist. This is the language of bodily dissociation: Eliot hides behind his character, who hides behind himself, who hides behind John the Baptist.

half an hour and drink our bocks" ("Portrait" 1.36, 39–40). Eliot, in these poems, and in the other poems of his first collection (*Prufrock and Other Observations*) evokes midnight visions, fleeting moments that wither in the turbid air, real or phantasmic, where life dissolves like a memory (you shake it, but it's dead), and bodiless creatures that inhabit the imagination—the readers of *The Boston Evening Transcript*, who "[s]way in the wind like a field of ripe corn ("The 'Boston Evening Transcript'" 2). He "mounts the steps" and rings the bell (6), which recalls him to the physical world of "Cousin Harriet" (9). This is a world of alienation, where people wander the daily rounds of their discontentment, estranged and spiritually dead. *Prufrock and Other Observations* and the early 'uncollected' poems mark the beginning of Eliot's spiritual journey towards God; he is conscious, long before his religious conversion, of the dangers of desire for the wrong things; for lust: for

The singèd reveller of the fire,  
Caught on those horns that toss and toss,  
Losing the end of his desire  
Desires completion of his loss. ("The Burnt Dancer" 34–37)

The dancer is *burnt* in the sense that he is *spent*, physically; and has exhausted himself emotionally and spiritually in the satisfaction of his desire. Even in "Sebastian", which portrays, frankly, a love "without shame" (18), the sexual love and desire is strangled to keep alive the beauty, the eternal beauty of the world of the spirit. Desire is flogged, is bled, until fulfilled, dies: the beloved is pursued where their "feet are white", where the "gown is white" (12, 14). This whiteness is associated with death, with the world of the spirit. Eliot seeks to recover something of permanent beauty from the infamy of physical desire. He seeks, in the end of desire, a higher spiritual realm, beyond desire, beyond desire for the wrong thing. He fuses bodily bliss with spiritual ecstasy, but at the moment of death, the physical self becomes wholly spiritual. And after death, "the inspired days"—the physical world—seems "futile" ("After the Turning of the Inspired Days" 1, 13).

These poems employ, to cite Gish again, “*strategies of dissociation* in which what is denied intellectually is most present emotionally” (111; my emphasis). This is accomplished by the use of various personae, through which the expression of desires are “carefully detached from the narrator who also claims them” (107):

Desire, in Eliot’s early poems, is discarnate: both disembodied and removed from the voice that speaks it, yet intensely realized in altered selves or states of consciousness from whom the speaker withdraws and in whom intensities of sensation and emotion exist apart from the ostensible “I” who speaks. (116)

Eliot’s detachment, as I suggested in chapter 1, is a negative form of aesthetic engagement, which creates distance rather than immediacy, a disconnection between subject and feeling, but which itself creates feeling—a peculiar affect noted by Sianne Ngai in her reading of various texts (of Melville, Hitchcock and others) (82-83). We see this, for example, in the “Sweeney” poems (noted above) in which the aesthetic experience of the reader is, in part, produced by the distance Eliot places between himself and the feelings evoked in the poems.

The multitude of voices that inhabit the early poems, the sensations and emotions that are articulated as symbols or representations of modernity—Eliot’s ‘staged’ emotions—are themselves “a pose of distanced superiority [but] become the embodiment of emotions and feelings detached from but nonetheless claimed by the speaker” (Gish 110). Eliot evokes a dualist discourse in these depictions of the dissociated self, which isolates the self from its double—the one who experiences the world of physical sensations, and the desire aroused by those sensations. Desire is repellent and, by definition, desirous. This creates the tension between what is and what might (or ought to) be, and the competing (therefore separate) claims of the flesh and the spirit. It is also a poetic strategy: a technique which nails precisely Eliot’s spiritual preoccupations, and simultaneously mirrors his pose of detachment—the means by which the poet (or the spirit) transcends desire, the needs of the body and the physical

world. Alys Moody notes the cultivation of aesthetic affect out of indifference—that the aesthetic resides precisely in “the intimacy of their relationship”—in Eliot’s poetry, and in modernism generally:

what is often casually understood as Eliot’s repudiation of emotion in poetry emerges instead as its transfiguration, the quest for a specifically aesthetic way of feeling that has its roots in a state of affective indifference, of transfiguration of emotion into indifference. (No page numbers given)

Eliot’s poetry is emotionally intense, especially when it pretends not to be. His detachment is the means by which the emotion goes deeper than the mere words on the page; that the emotion is more powerful for being reined in: makes itself felt, even if the reader doesn’t quite know why or how. As Eliot noted, a poem may do its work even though the formal meaning may not be immediately available (*The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism* 151). There’s a chill detachment in these lines, for instance, which like a finger, stroke the wound:

You tossed a blanket from the bed,  
 You lay upon your back, and waited;  
 You dozed, and watched the night revealing  
 The thousand sordid images  
 Of which your soul was constituted; (“Preludes” 3. 1-5)

In his second published book of poetry (*Poems 1920*), which include the “Sweeney” poems discussed above, Eliot continues to descend the *via negativa*<sup>66</sup> of the flesh, and with these poems we encounter him at his most misanthropic: “the boatman smiles” (“Burbank With a Baedeker: Bleistein With a Cigar” 24) as he guides us through the slime of usurers, squalor, disease and sexual depravity; all of which is more offensive for being displayed alongside an image of ‘high’ culture—the contrast between the physical and the ideal:

---

<sup>66</sup> See below for a summary of this term.

A lustreless protrusive eye  
 Stares from the protozoic slime  
 At a perspective of Canaletto (16–19).

The romantic longings of *Prufrock* are gone. What remains is the blistered flesh of modernity: physical and moral decay, decrepitude and death. Enter, therefore, “Christ the Tiger” “[i]n depraved May”—*depraved* because it’s the time of growth and flourishing, pagan feasts and sensual delights (“Gerontion” 20, 21). Christ the *tiger*? “Think not that I come to send peace on earth: I come not to send peace, but a sword. For I come to set a man at variance with his father . . .” (Matt. 10.34–35). Jesus, then, came to sever, to cause strife. He came to devour us, with his love or violence. But He came, also, “To be eaten, to be divided, to be drunk”, but among whom: the shadowy figures “[s]hifting the candles” (“Gerontion” 22, 28)? There is something sinister connoted in these lines (21–30), and transitory, bodiless. The boundary between the known physical world and the unknown spiritual world is blurred, shifting; as inscrutable as “white feathers in the snow”, as mystifying and impenetrable as the “cunning passages” and “contrived corridors” of history (71, 34). Eliot is groping his way through the mystic darkness.

Like Webster, Eliot “saw the skull beneath the skin” (“Whispers of Immortality” 2). He was death-obsessed as a young poet, an obsession which would, however, transmute into something non-physical as he ascended the stairs toward the Christian God and spiritual healing. By the time he composed *The Four Quartets*, there was no skull—only the fear of eternal damnation; or, “the rending pain of re-enactment / Of all that you have done, and been” (“Little Gidding” 2.85–86).

### **Different Voices**

*Poems 1920* is, as Donoghue says of “Gerontion” (its opening poem), “a portrait of a society from which grace has been withdrawn and which is dying of its own triviality and ugliness” (80). It longs for spiritual rain (even the Church, for now, remains wrapped in

“miasmal mist”: (“The Hippopotamus” 35–36)—a theme taken up in *The Waste Land*, Eliot’s ‘modernist masterpiece’ of spiritual and societal breakdown. Here, Eliot continues the onslaught against European/American civilisation, with the odd flash of wit and satire, especially evident in lines excised by Ezra Pound from the final published version, which survive as *He Do the Police in Different Voices*. In this latter, Eliot savagely parodies the meaningless rounds of empty lives—the ‘gents’ who turn up at a whore house “too drunk” (31); the witty dialogues of drawing rooms, tea parties: the cheap shows of the upper classes, and the “coarsened hand, and plebeian tread” (235). He is obsessed by the corruption within, disguised by the facade of sophistication and culture: “Odours, confectioned by the cunning French, / Disguise the good old hearty female stench” (268–269). Everything is cheap for Eliot; all show: the “tawdry gown, / A doorstep dunged by every dog in town” (278–279); the “Unreal emotions” (281). The poet is disgusted by the body (and its functions)—in particular (as noted in the previous chapter) the female body, “who slips softly to the needful stool” (240): “the deed” (242)—bodily waste, one of the numerous instances of what Tim Armstrong calls, *The Waste Land*’s “materials of abjection”, which “include bodily parts . . . clothing . . . acts . . . and actors (69). It is, according to Maud Ellman, “one of the most abject texts in English Literature” (181). “Abject”, she informs us, “literally means ‘cast out’, though commonly it means downcast in spirits” (181).

Abjection is most commonly represented in the poem via the female body, undone—“supine on the floor” (*The Waste Land* 295):

‘My feet are at Moorgate, and my heart  
Under my feet. After the event  
He wept. He promised “a new start.”  
I made no comment. What should I resent?’” (296-299)

Ellman quotes the above lines as an instance of female complaisance and abjection: “[t]he victim . . . consents to degradation” (186). But this doesn’t of course mean that Eliot himself consents, or is complacent about the degradation of women. He merely

describes an event. Indeed, it doesn't mean that she herself consents to "the event"—which refers to an assault, possibly sexual, by a man. This assault is the cause of her abjection. Her "What should I resent?" cannot be taken to mean that 'it is no big deal'; it feels, rather, like an aftershock, the utterance of someone who wants to be anywhere but in her body, who wants to disconnect, who wants to deny or repress her feelings. As Elspeth Probyn notes:

In many accounts of rape or torture, the splitting off from the body is one way in which victims say they were able to endure the experience (80)

Her body parts are "weirdly disorganized", as Ellman notes, (186) "my heart / Under my feet" (296-297). This weird disorganisation of body parts is an expression of shock, of discombobulation, of being 'out of sorts', of bodily shame. She is represented as a victim, in Eliot's poem, not a culprit; and as such, Ellman's claim that Eliot's misogyny is "so ferocious" (185) seems excessive, even if we take into account the lines excised by Ezra Pound, which reveal, instead, Eliot's (or his persona's) capacity to feel affronted by the female body in certain contexts. Eliot, in his poetry, does exude, if not hatred towards women, a sense of horror and disgust, but whether that qualifies as a "ferocious" misogyny might be a matter of comparison with other more virulent attitudes.

I note, again, as in the previous chapter, that Eliot extends his revulsion, in certain contexts, to include men. There is, in *The Waste Land/Different Voices*, for example, the deed of "the young man carbuncular" (*The Waste Land* 231; *Different Voices* 381)—"a cheap house agent's clerk" (*Different Voices* 385) who after his sexual assault (or "seduction", as Armstrong calls it: 71) of the typist, urinates and spits (*Different Voices* 408). Meanwhile, across the typist's brain "one half-formed thought may pass: / "Well now that's done, and I am glad it's over" (411–412).<sup>67</sup> She resumes her life—"puts a record on the gramophone" (416), music which modulates, in the next stanza, (of *The Waste Land*), into the "pleasant whining of a mandolin"—a rare positive moment in the poem, even if tinged with nostalgia and sadness (261).

---

<sup>67</sup> These lines are slightly modified in *The Waste Land* 251–252.

We are waiting—the human engine throbs—for what? The sexual experience is empty, and Tiresias—who has “walked among the lowest of the dead”, who has “foresuffered all”—must witness the scene upon the divan, must *experience* it: the spiritual desolation of our lives (246, 243). He is bi-gendered—aggressor and victim—“Knowing . . . the taste of his own whiteness” (“Narcissus” 30), and Eliot, in a sense, is him: the observer, the “Old man with wrinkled female breasts” (219)—“a mere spectator . . . yet the most important personage in the poem . . .” (Eliot, “Notes on the Waste Land”, *The Poems* 74). The poet is deeply implicated, therefore, in the poem’s lament: it is he who suffers the disintegrative effects and affects of modern culture—the lack of religion: a reason to live, beyond a life of tinned food and *not good* sex with carbuncular men—and he seeks relief and consolation by the waters, in the music of a mandolin. He remembers. History is like memory, poignant like the tolling of a church bell.

The trope of regeneration in “Gerontion” is reprised in the opening lines of *The Waste Land*: “depraved May” (“Gerontion” 21) becomes “April”—“the cruellest month” (*The Waste Land* 1; *Different Voices* 55). April, the Northern Spring, is cruel because the dead are stirred once again into life: the stirring of roots is a painful renewal of consciousness and desire, of murdered gods reassembled into life. We are thrust once again into the pain of living. This was to be reprised also in his 1939 play, *The Family Reunion*:

Is the spring not an evil time . . .

.....

. . . the time

For the ache in the moving root

The agony in the dark

The slow flow throbbing the trunk

The pain of the breaking bud.

.....

Spring is an issue of blood  
 A season of sacrifice (Part 1, Scene 2, p. 55)

One senses the multitudinous life forms stirring underground, crawling their way into consciousness, into sunlight, the horror reanimated from the dead waste ground. If the spring is cruel to Eliot, then birth is cruel, and living. The end (aim) of life becomes death, winter, which covers us in “forgetful snow” (*Waste Land* 6); ultimately, the spirit world. We wait for the corpse to sprout (72), which is but a rehash: the living dead crossing London Bridge (62)—dawn and dusk, *ad infinitum*: the twilight world. There is desolation, but there is no solitude: “hooded hordes” (368) swarm “endless plains” (369). “We who were living are now dying” (329): we are delirious for want of ‘rain’, we hallucinate. There are banalities interspersed with the trauma of rape, of the shell shock suffered by returning servicemen, who fail to respond—“Philomel”, because her tongue has been severed (a reference to Ovid) by Tereus, “the barbarous king”—“Tereu”: she tries to name the culprit, but fails to articulate beyond the sound of a nightingale (99, 99, 206). Again: female abjection. There is a failure of communication and connection. The trauma is repressed, and fossilised into “withered stumps of time” (104). We are “Looking into the heart of light, the silence” (41). We wait. The air cracks, but still no rain, and towers (civilisations) fall (373), are overthrown; are hung upside down and there are bats with baby faces (379).<sup>68</sup> Eliot, as Mark Ford notes in 2016, speaks in tongues.<sup>69</sup> The world of the flesh reveals itself as satanic; a world in which we wander “Ringed by the flat horizon only” (*Waste Land* 370). Anthony Cuda has commented on the nightmare qualities of these scenes. There is “the terror of nothingness and annihilation”, the sense that nothing can come from nothing; the failure to regenerate (455):

What are the roots that clutch, what branches grow  
 Out of this stony rubbish? (*Waste Land* 19–20)

---

<sup>68</sup> Some of the imagery here is borrowed from his early ‘uncollected’ poem, “So Through the Evening, Through the Violet Air”.

<sup>69</sup> A comment on lines 427–429. Page numbers not given.

The failure is spiritual: the “heap of broken images, where the sun beats” reflect, and are redolent of, the desiccated state of modern civilization (22); the spiritual anaemia of the sloth who seeks to escape their moral responsibilities—a malady reprised in Eliot’s “The Hollow Men”, the “stuffed men” who led (or lead) meaningless lives (1.2). But there is hope in “*the fire that refines us*” (*Waste Land* 427; my emphasis): the ‘spirit’ is purified after the ravages of living in the flesh, and attains ‘peace’. The ‘body’ is burnt, waits only for the Lord to “pluckest me out” (309).

*The Waste Land* communicates the fragmentary state of modern civilisation, but seeks to transcend it (Fiddes 36). It is also “a skilfully orchestrated jeremiad by a prophet-like creator who . . . uses . . . avant-garde . . . techniques [collage and allusion] to alert his followers to their perilous spiritual state” (Ford; no page numbers given). Tiresias is both the dispassionate ‘personage’ and the “helplessly traumatised visionary . . . [—] contradictory extremes charted by Eliot’s poetry, and necessary to it”<sup>70</sup>:

central to his imagination was the compulsion to pit his yearning for discipline and control against a longing to renounce the will and yield to unknowable, inexplicable forces – ‘The awful daring of a moment’s surrender’ (Ford; no page numbers given).

It is true that much of Eliot’s poetry displays this intermediate position, caught between two extremes, which is frequently expressed by ‘contradictory’ propositions—like “a white light still and moving” (“Burnt Norton” 2.27). His need for discipline and control, however, is *fulfilled* by his eventual renunciation of the individual will; for him, they are compatible, and *not* “contradictory extremes”. Christianity demands this discipline and control—“The inner freedom from the practical desire” (24). Eliot *actively* yields to the “unknowable”. The importance of religion for him was

---

<sup>70</sup> Ford cites Eliot’s own ‘Notes on *The Waste Land*’, and says that the note for line 218 (see Eliot, *Poems* 74) “acts as both a declaration of the ‘impersonality’ of the poem and as a kind of prophylactic insulating Eliot from Tiresias. We are not . . . to assume that the poet is dramatising his own divided state and dilemmas through his all-uniting ‘personage’, although, reading against the grain, the note may also prompt us to think that this is exactly the use he is making of [Tiresias] who foresees and foresuffers all.” No page numbers given.

not religion as transcendence, but religion as woven into concrete existence *via* institutions, historical practices, sacred texts, and those specially trained in the maintenance of the faith. Human society was both material and spiritual at the same time . . . like the concept of Incarnation (Cooper, *Introduction to T.S. Eliot* 31; Cooper's emphasis).

But *The Waste Land* is just a stage in Eliot's spiritual journey, and Christianity is just one of the religious or mythic fragments that Eliot tries to piece together. The allusions to various religions and mythologies reflect the chaos of modernity and, possibly, Eliot's mind.<sup>71</sup> It is a pilgrimage in which the pilgrim doesn't know the way (78). Eliot does not thereby commend self-abandonment, a surrender to futility, but rather, according to Paul Fiddes, offers "hope for a unification of scattered traditions" (42). It is apocalyptic, but in the Greek, literal sense: "unveiling" (44). It is in this respect a religious poem, and a step towards, or back to, Christianity. *The Waste Land*, like *Prufrock*, is the result of spiritual discontentment, which the narrator, mired in a sort of urban underworld, struggles to articulate, and much of the poetry is the result of this struggle. But whereas *Prufrock* feels a long way from Christianity, despite the biblical references in the title poem (it is too *chic*, modern, ironic), *The Waste Land* is much closer; though still a long way from the 'beatific vision', the 'pilgrim' already contemplates his surrender.

### **Teach Us Not to Care**

Eliot returned to Christianity in 1927, but to Anglo-Catholicism, not the Protestant Unitarianism of his upbringing. For him, it was a step forward, not a step back. If it can be described as a *return*, then it is a new Eliot who returns, one who had meddled in western and eastern philosophy, just as the young Augustine did with Platonism and Manichaeism, with half a life worth of toil and pain, and accumulated the kind of experience that shapes the mind and the spirit, and makes us wiser. Eliot described *Ash Wednesday* (the 'poem of his conversion') as "an elucidation of his most powerful

---

<sup>71</sup> Eliot had had a mental breakdown just before he started writing *The Waste Land* (Gordon 95).

emotions in the context of man's pursuit of God."<sup>72</sup> It is "a certain *stage* of the journey, a journey of which . . . all my previous verse represents previous stages."<sup>73</sup>

But before *Ash Wednesday* came "The Hollow Men", a sort of quiet afterword to *The Waste Land*, set in the twilight "valley of dying stars" (4.3). Susan Colón says it "contains perhaps the most devastating portrayal of the 'quiet and meaningless' lives of those who can be remembered 'not as lost / Violent souls, but only / As the hollow men / The stuffed men'" (74).<sup>74</sup> The imagery, and the mood of helplessness and torpor—"the stuffed men", who "grope together / . . . Gathered on this beach of the tumid river" (1. 2, 4.7, 4.9)—recalls Dante's falsifiers (broadly, *fraudsters*, which include counterfeiters—of money and truth, traitors etc.), swollen and deformed with disease and fever which "makes them stink like burnt grease" (*Inferno* 30.99):

And I saw one there in the guise of a lute  
but for a pair of legs. If only his body  
had been cut below the waist! The grave,  
heavy state of dropsy that so disfigures  
the body's members with the humours  
undigested that the face doesn't correspond  
with the swollen abdomen, made his mouth  
hang open like one who thirsts, with one lip  
drooping towards the chin, the other curled. (51–57)<sup>75</sup>

Eliot's hollow men are likewise (to use Dante's term) *falsifiers*: the poem's epigraph is *A penny for the Old Guy*, which also suggests a link with *Inferno* 30, as it invokes the traitor Guy Fawkes. "The Hollow Men" is closely associated, also, with Joseph Conrad's Kurtz in *Heart of Darkness*, and Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* (Southam 99–110), both

---

<sup>72</sup> Letter to William Force Stead, 9 August 1930, and an Eliot quotation by Hugh Sykes Davies in Tate Collection: "My own beliefs are held with a scepticism which I never even hope to be rid of" (163).

<sup>73</sup> Letter to Algar Thorold, 23 May 1930; Eliot's emphasis.

<sup>74</sup> Colón quotes 1.7 and 1.15–18.

<sup>75</sup> My translation.

of which present, according to Eliot, men<sup>76</sup> of show but no substance. Those who lived in the flesh, for earthly glory, are now in Death's other kingdom, stuffed, and when they move, it's like in a dream. They are empty, meaningless. And in the dead world, the twilight world, they remain hollow, "Behaving as the wind behaves", and hopeless, with "The hope only / Of empty men" (2.17, 4.15–16). This is our end: and "*the world ends / Not with a bang but a whimper*" (5.30–31; Eliot's italics). Our vanities are hollow.

"The Hollow Men" (published in 1925) inches its way toward the light of Eliot's conversion; it is yet another stage of his journey: there are signs—"For Thine is the Kingdom"<sup>77</sup>—but nothing definite (5.10 and 24; Eliot's italics). We are groping in the dark for some purpose we don't yet understand. Eventually we see, however, through a dim light, 'the shores of Purgatory'—Eliot's *Ash Wednesday*. The poem is a turning point, an intermediate stage. It is Eliot's *Purgatorio*: it shares with Dante's *Canticle* the journey motif of the pilgrim who mounts "the stairs" toward salvation, caught between the joys and sorrows of the physical world and, through humility, the *unhoped-for* spiritual world (*Ash Wednesday* 3.5). It is the prayer of one who does not expect their prayer to be answered; it abandons hope for faith—but a faith that, unlike Dante's *Comedy*, is unsupported by Reason (or rationalism), and the philosophy of Aristotle and Aquinas: Eliot, the poet, would hurl himself into the void and be caught by God's grace, or not: "*Even among these rocks, / Our peace in His will*" (6.29–30; my emphasis).<sup>78</sup>

. . . within Eliot's own work, the structure of orthodox faith and the language of devotion are broken apart in order to make room for something much stranger and more tenuous, like the sound of someone crying in an empty church (Ackroyd 163).

---

<sup>76</sup> In *Julius Caesar*, Cassius and Brutus.

<sup>77</sup> Eliot borrows this phrase from "The Lord's Prayer."

<sup>78</sup> "Our peace in his will" echoes Dante's "la sua voluntade è nostra pace" (his will is our peace) in *Paradiso* canto 3—a phrase which Eliot quotes with approval in "Poetry and Philosophy." *Selected Prose* 52.

Eliot's poetry lacks the *certainty* of 'devotional' poets—"men who have gone far ahead of me in spiritual development."<sup>79</sup> But it is this lack of certainty which gives Eliot's poetry that "tenuous" quality—in *Ash Wednesday*, the tension that is generated "between matter and spirit, between the sensuous and spiritual bodies" (Cooper, *Introduction* 83): "the tension between dying and birth" (*Ash Wednesday* 6.20). His poetry is profound, in part, because of this, more so, perhaps, than the 'spiritually more-developed' Henry Vaughan, for example, who saw "Eternity the other night."<sup>80</sup> In *Ash Wednesday*

[a] language of order and belief is . . . used to stabilize an insistent sense of loss and emptiness, perhaps suggesting also the nature of Eliot's own [*tenuous*] faith (Ackroyd 180; the interjection is mine).

By *tenuous*, I mean that his faith entails surrendering to the void of uncertainty, not that it wavers; it is a 'leap in the dark' (to God, to the unknown), and it avows a scepticism, which he hoped never to be rid of (163).

The dominant tone of *Ash Wednesday* (as with Dante's *Purgatory*) is *humility*; it is, appropriately, "subdued and meditative, replacing the frantic and despairing exclamations of *The Waste Land*, as Cuda notes, with reflective circularities and all-embracing tensions" (458). Eliot, the poet, no longer strives to attain vain pleasures, even those of the intellect, which are (not wings but) "merely vans to beat the air" (*Ash Wednesday* 1.4–5; 1.35). What Eliot strives for (or doesn't strive for) is freedom from desire: "*Teach us to care and not to care / Teach us to sit still*" (6.27–28; my emphasis). Even hope is desire. The poet submits totally: he rejects "The infirm glory of the positive hour" (1.10). His body is devoured, "dissembled", in pieces (2.11). He would abandon the world for "the Garden" where all loves and torments end (2.33–35). This could be Eden, or Gethsemane. The poet is in the desert, as Jesus was. This is the period of fasting—40 days and nights in the wilderness: spiritual darkness and hunger. In the

---

<sup>79</sup> Letter to the Rt. Rev. George Bell, 20 July 1930.

<sup>80</sup> "The World." Eliot refers to Vaughan in his essay "The Metaphysical Poets"—"the devotional verse of . . . Vaughan . . ." (105), and includes him in a list of 17th century writers who are in "the direct current of English poetry" (113).

physical world, the “word is lost”, “unheard, / the Word without a word” (5.1, 4–5). Our salvation depends, not on ‘good deeds’, but (as Augustine taught) on the Grace of God, on the unnamed “veiled sister” (5.24)—the Virgin Mary is perhaps implied; and there’s a link with the saintly women of Dante’s *Comedy*, including the unconsummated love of his life—the idealised Beatrice—not his wife, a love that “did not exist outside of the imagination” (Gordon 134). Eliot’s ‘Beatrice’, as Lyndall Gordon has shown, was Emily Hale—his own ‘disembodied’ love, a pilgrim’s unadulterated reverence—love made more intense for being unable to be consummated: “my love for you has . . . grown into something *finer and finer*” (Letter to Emily Hale, 3 November 1930; my emphasis). Like Dante, Eliot was married to someone else, and, like Augustine, celibacy did not come easy to him (148).

*Ash Wednesday* is a call to heed the “voice” (5.19) among the noise of earthly cares, of corruption, of spiritual sterility, of spiritual vacancy, which is modern civilisation, modern paganism: the worship of false gods—money, machinery, empty pleasures. The poet spits from his mouth the “withered apple-seed” (5.35)—the world of spiritual decay where nothing grows: what the physical world offers, the spirit can’t digest; just as the three leopards reject the indigestible portions of the poet’s body (2.15–16).<sup>81</sup> The poet waits for a sign, a miracle; but doesn’t hope. He takes refuge in total humility; he renounces “the blessed face” (1.21): from humility, he turns aside from the joy of God’s love, for the ‘Dark Night of the Soul’—a period of intense spiritual suffering that assails the mystic, whereby even the face of God is hidden. For one “who has known the Beatific Vision there can be no greater grief than the withdrawal of [God] from his field of consciousness . . . the extinction of this Light” (Underhill 389).

But how to unwrangle the conundrum of not wanting to desire? As Francesca Cauchi says, citing Nietzsche: “the will to relinquish will (‘Neither from nor towards’) is nonetheless a form of willing and thus an agent of personal desire” (70). The poet desires to not care, but cries to God, in the last line of the poem—a moment of

---

<sup>81</sup> The apple seed suggests the apple from the Garden of Eden. The world is decayed, (the seed is withered) because of Original Sin.

weakness, of despair—“Suffer me not to be separated”, which recalls Christ’s dying words on the Cross (6.34). This is not, according to MacDiarmid, “a plea for release . . . [but] to be subsumed in the Other (envisioned as God) in a mystical moment of intellectual surrender akin to a celestial coupling” (xiv). But this desire “not to be separated”—to be subsumed in the Other—is therefore, also, a desire (regardless of how much the poet wants *not* to desire) to be released from bodily suffering (not just from an agonising death), and into the world of spirit—that Other. The poet wants spiritual union, but that entails, for him, the abandonment of the body.

The whole of *Ash Wednesday* resounds with these contradictions, or tensions: of being and not being; of caring and not caring. To “care and not to care” (*Ash Wednesday* 6.27) is “a dissociation of desire”, which “is echoed in Eliot’s dissociation of soul from body in the stair ascent of part 3”, and it reveals the poet’s belief in the incompatibility of earthly desire with religious desire (Woelfel 125).

The poet wishes not to wish, but these are problems he knows he cannot resolve, and he doesn’t try to. He accepts his desolation (in spite of his “Suffer me not” cry), his state of hopelessness—because that’s all he can do: he cannot *will* his salvation. Only the grace of God can save him. As Colón emphasises:

Souls sunk in spiritual apathy need a path from acedia to gracious transformation by God, and that path, Eliot believes, is the paradoxical *via negativa*: where one goes by not going, where one attains to light by not fleeing darkness, where one is filled by being emptied. (75–76; Colón’s emphasis)

There’s a strange joy in Eliot’s acceptance, not far removed from the agony/ecstasy of “Sebastian” and “Narcissus.” The erotic connotations are still there—the desire to be “subsumed in the Other”, and the hopelessness: the individual will delivered into (spiritual) bondage, at the mercy of an omnipotent Being. But Eliot, the seeker of spiritual wisdom, has ‘advanced’, and the poetry reflects his spiritual maturity: the

restlessness of some of those early poems (including *The Waste Land*) is resolved; the wounds are healed, transformed into the measured detachment of:

Because I do not hope to turn again  
 Because I do not hope  
 Because I do not hope to turn  
 Desiring this man's gift and that man's scope (*Ash Wednesday* 1.1–4)

Eliot has reproduced the chanting rhythm and intonations of liturgy. His supplications are muted, delivered “beyond hope and despair” (3.20), and without the vain gestures and genuflexions of the neophyte. “Lord, I am not worthy / Lord I am not worthy” (3.22–23) is uttered without the fawning connotation that the phrase sometimes has. It feels sincere. But Eliot submits—to borrow Lawrence’s phrase—“as souls are said to submit to the necessary evil of being born into the flesh.”<sup>82</sup> He abandons his physical self, as it were, on the shores of ‘Purgatory’, while his spirit wavers “between the profit and the loss” (6.4); he remembers “The cry of quail and whirling plover” (6.16), as a drowning man might, with infinite regret. It is an intensely personal poem, not a sermon: he does not call the world to order, only himself.

*Ash Wednesday* is a time of waiting, unable to hope or turn away. All our strivings are insignificant, in the end. The poem feels like the renunciation of (physical) life itself; Eliot is reduced to a Voice: his body has been devoured by “three white leopards” (2.1). Not even prayer can guarantee salvation, only the grace of God can: in His will is our peace (6.30). But, for Eliot at least, his submission does not amount to a renunciation of freedom; “humility and freedom are the same thing.”<sup>83</sup> This is true in the context of the religious devotee who wants to be free of their selfish desires, who desires to annihilate their will, to submit, without the presumption of being ‘saved’. It underlies Eliot’s *scepticism*—a defence against the spiritual dangers of righteousness and moral

---

<sup>82</sup> The quote is from “A Bibliography of D. H. Lawrence by Edward D. McDonald” *Phoenix* 1 234—a preface that Lawrence wrote for McDonald’s book. The full quote is: “Since the publication of *The Rainbow*, one submits to the process of publication as to a necessary evil: as souls are said to submit to the necessary evil of being born into the flesh.”

<sup>83</sup> Eliot, Letter to Stephen Spender, 9 May 1935.

certainty, of pride—the worst sin of all. Freedom, for Eliot, for the Christian, lies in “resignation to forces larger . . . than ourselves”, not in free will (Cooper, *Introduction* 68). It “culminates in the greatest freedom of all—life of voluntary renunciation” (Pagels, *Adam* 73).<sup>84</sup> This is a negative kind of freedom—freedom from self-will, from desire, and it seems perverse, even if sincere. Eliot knows that he cannot hurl himself on to the rocks: he must live in the flesh as God commands; in the world of people, politics and institutions. He must live in the world, but he must renounce it, with all its attendant glories: “this man’s gift and that man’s scope” (*Ash Wednesday* 1.4). He is not the self-flagellating penitent, but he must suffer *in this world*.

### Glory, Derision

*Ash Wednesday* can be read, in part at least, as allegory, the subject of which is the state of the human soul as it journeys through the physical world, transposed, however, into the “dreamcrossed twilight between [spiritual] birth and dying [in the flesh]” (6.6). The journey motif continues in the first of the *Ariel Poems*—“Journey of the Magi”, which relates the long, arduous road to the born Christ, a journey which contravenes every voice of common sense. It is faith without hope, as in *Ash Wednesday*, the writing of which overlapped with the *Ariel Poems* (Ricks 728). The temptation, for the Magi, is to return to the summer terraces, “the silken girls bringing sherbet” (10). But they press on: through the world of cursing camel men, through the “very dead of winter” (5). And what consolation? The place was “*satisfactory*”, and the birth was “hard and bitter agony . . . like Death, our death.” (31, 39; my emphasis). When they return to their homeland, it is a place of “*alien people clutching their gods*”—the price paid for spiritual enlightenment (42; my emphasis). “Journey of the Magi” speaks to “Eliot’s own dilemma in a modernity in which religious beliefs had declined . . .” (Cooper, *Introduction* 82). This sense of alienation and (the anticipation of) exile (in one’s own land) continues in “A Song For Simeon”, where the Infant Word is still unspeaking, unspoken (22). The time of suffering is at hand; the time of (Christ’s) “glory and derision” (27). But for the narrator there is not even the consolation of martyrdom, or the ecstasy of prayer; no “ultimate vision” (30). The poet must take to the goat’s path, live in the fox’s house—in poverty, in obscurity.

---

<sup>84</sup> Pagels cites Methodius, the Christian Father martyred in 311.

Pain without glory. Faith, for Eliot, is not a consolation. It is harder than not believing. In “Marina”, the poet wants to sail toward the woodthrush singing through the fog—to a world “more distant than stars and nearer than the eye” (19). It is a world outside of time and place. The world of nature, the body, is transcended; it becomes, in death, “unsubstantial” (14), while this other world (of the spirit) becomes real: “The pulse in the arm, less strong and stronger” (18). As in *Ash Wednesday*, we are in transit, straddled between two worlds: as one world vanishes, the other takes ‘form’, becomes ‘substantial’.

The spiritual desolation evoked in *Ariel Poems* continues in *Choruses From ‘The Rock’*, but modernised to the world of chop houses, golf, and stocks and shares (common or preferred), “lobelias and tennis flannels”; “Knowledge of words, and ignorance of the Word” (3.31, 1.10). It is political in the same way that the Bible Prophets are. Eliot, again, observes the world of striving, of ‘living’, the worship of the functional, all of which detracts from the spiritual life, from wisdom, from God. These poems/sermons alert us to the spiritual desert inside us, “squeezed in the tube-train next to you / . . . in the heart of your brother” (1.72–73). There is no community: each person exists for themselves, isolated like a star, worshipping the false gods of money and modern convenience—“Usury, Lust and Power” (7.43): “the Church is no longer regarded, not even opposed” (7.42). When the Church is no longer even opposed, it is dead, or it feels dead. And if “My Word is unspoken” (3.30) what then?

. . . the wind shall say: ‘Here were decent godless people:  
Their only monument the asphalt road  
And a thousand lost golf balls.’ (3.34–36)

It is materialism (consumerism) that Eliot means to attack, not the body—the physical world itself, nature; the latter is harmed by the former. These *Rock* poems actually clarify quite succinctly (as a sermon would) Eliot’s position in regard to the relationship between the Church (Christ, Christianity), and living (this side of death): “the relations of men to God” (2.12). The pursuit of God’s kingdom (or the practice of Christianity in this

world) is a continual process, a struggle: “The Church must be forever building, for it is forever decaying within and attacked from without” (2.35). That, basically, is the religious purpose of living: a continual process of building, of re-building, the way to God—not as a Pharisaic striving, an ostentatious show of “longdrawn” sorrow or, alternately, the vain display of wealth and prestige, but in earnest humility, privately in “the joyful communion of saints” (9.3, 9.15). If Christianity is a continual process, then it is not static (in this world). In Eliot’s day the saints and martyrs had become an inconvenience to the industrial aspirations of a (lower case) ‘christian’ nation, and so they were “settled . . . in a kind of Whipsnade” (alongside other endangered creatures)—*stabilised* (and so made *static*)—to be admired through a car window, wondered at (2.15–16).<sup>85</sup> A century on, the scene is much the same; except that the contemporary ‘Pharisee’ has the advantage of being seen by millions. The camera follows them into the Temple as they say their prayers.

Eliot’s last poem in *The Rock* plays beautifully upon the word Light, and the relation between actual light and darkness, and the spiritual light of God—how the latter lights up (with beauty, with life) the former: the light, “our little light, that is dappled with shadow” (10.42).

O Light Invisible, we praise Thee!  
 Too bright for mortal vision.  
 O Greater Light, we praise Thee for the less;  
 The eastern light our spires touch at morning,  
 The light that slants upon our western doors at evening,  
 The twilight over stagnant pools at batflight,  
 Moon light and star light, owl and moth light,  
 Glow-worm glowlight on a grassblade.  
 O Light Invisible, we worship Thee!

---

<sup>85</sup> ‘Whipsnade’ is a zoo and safari park in England.

We thank Thee for the lights that we have kindled,  
 The light of altar and of sanctuary;  
 Small lights of those who meditate at midnight  
 And lights directed through the coloured panes of windows  
 And light reflected from the polished stone,  
 The gilded carven wood, the coloured fresco.  
 Our gaze is submarine, our eyes look upward  
 And see the light that fractures through unquiet water.  
 We see the light but see not whence it comes.  
 O Light Invisible, we glorify Thee!  
 .....  
 And we thank Thee that darkness reminds us of light.  
 O Light Invisible, we give Thee thanks for Thy great glory! (10.17–35, 10.45–46)

There is, in these lines, a feeling of walking on water, of cool repose—a verbal clarity reminiscent of a Greek Chorus (or the Chorus in his own *Murder in the Cathedral*), marked by dispassionate observation and utterance, and aided by the plural pronoun. The voice (or voices) has transcended the anxieties of the material world and yielded to a greater glory; has attained true wisdom—the wisdom of one who knows their limitations, who is humble: who knows they know nothing, but is touched nonetheless by the “Light Invisible.” “For Eliot, as for any Christian, the founding event of the Christian story is the Incarnation . . . [and] [t]he chief purpose of human life . . . ‘is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever’ (Donoghue 273).<sup>86</sup>

### The Four Quartets

Eliot’s transcendental vision, however, reaches its peak in *The Four Quartets*, where the life of the flesh is further distilled into a spirit world of ghosts, visions and memory.<sup>87</sup>

<sup>86</sup> Donoghue quotes Eliot’s “Literature, Science and Dogma” *Dial* 82, March 1927, 241.

<sup>87</sup> The four poems that make up the *Quartets* are “Burnt Noton”; “East Coker”; “The Dry Salvages”; and “Little Gidding”, each of which are divided into five sections. They were written between 1935 and 1942, but were published as *The Four Quartets* in 1943 in America and 1944 in Britain.

These poems are premised, as Anthony Domestico notes, on the distinction between God and Man—“the seemingly irreconcilable conflict between nature and grace . . .” (3)

Eliot’s poetry generally, and *Four Quartets* specifically, explores not a world charged with the grandeur of God, but a fallen world that only occasionally and violently is intersected by transcendence” (3).

*The Quartets*, however, is not so much an exploration, but, as Oliboni notes, an intense meditation (188) in which the reader is guided through the ‘landscape’ of Eliot’s religious experiences. It is so intensely “personal and private that it is almost impersonal, the private incommunicable experience of all men . . .” (Gardner 58). Gardner also notices the *Quartets*’ quality of what Keats called ‘negative capability’: “that is, when a man is capable of being in uncertainties, mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason” (Letter to George and Tom Keats, 21, 27 (?) December 1817; the question mark is in the original).<sup>88</sup> This in fact sets it apart from *The Waste Land* and his early poetry—the nervous excitement and the anxious striving of “a thousand small deliberations” (“Gerontion” 61).

In the first quartet, “Burnt Norton”, the poet takes us “Down the passage which we did not take / Towards the door we never opened”—a world of echoes, of what might have been, of “unheard music” (1.12–13, 1.27).<sup>89</sup> We enter this “first [edenic, childhood] world”, where you can hear the laughter of hidden children, but the pool is dry and the leaves are dead (1.21). This is a world inhabited by ghosts, the memory of which is like a wisp of smoke. It is a world of abstraction—what might have been; or what was, or what *will* be. We sense that all of these actualities and possibilities are ‘real’; that they exist, somehow, simultaneously; that what has been is indistinguishable from what might have been—just as the subject cannot be distinguished from the form, as Gardner notes (55).

---

<sup>88</sup> Gardner quotes this at p. 78.

<sup>89</sup> The poem is named after “chateau Burnt Norton” in Gloucestershire (western England), restored after the owner set fire to it and himself in 1741. (Ricks 903).

What might have been and what has been  
 Point to one end, which is always present. (“Burnt Norton” 1.45–46)

The “Invisible Poet” is voicing the voiceless—feelings or sensations that, like dust, cannot be clutched, that slip, that have no corporeal reality (Kenner 181–182). We are walking on air, on ideal sunlight. We touch base—the mud of sapphire and garlic (2.1), but soon ascend towards the stars, where the-what-has-been is “reconciled”, “Neither flesh nor fleshless” (2.15, 2.16). There’s a still fixed point which contains “the dance”, all movement and the potential for movement; everything that is, has been and will be (2.17). It’s the centerpoint of the universe (God) from which all else derives, like ripples, which “cannot . . . [be placed] in time” (2.23). As in *Ash Wednesday*, Eliot speaks of “The inner freedom from the practical desire / The release from action and suffering” (“Burnt Norton” 2.24–25).

In the third section of “Burnt Norton”, the London Tube<sup>90</sup> is like the banks of the river Styx in the third canto of Dante’s *Inferno*, with the twilight crowd waiting to be ferried across. We wait without hope—with “Tumid apathy”, “whirled by the cold wind” like “bits of paper”—“distracted from distraction by distraction” (3.14, 3.15, 3.15, 3.12). We are, as Cooper states, distracted from God by the distraction of routine, and of “experience itself” (*Introduction* 98). And as Mousley notes:

The humans here are beyond the category of redemption, beyond any perceived need on their part (or so it appears) for those expansive metaphysical understandings provided by religion and myth, or intuited by literature. (57)

Eliot, the poet, descends as you would a London Underground escalator, “lower” “Into the world of perpetual solitude, / . . . Internal darkness, deprivation . . .” (3.25, 3.26, 3.28): the Dark Night of the Soul, where one suffers, waits without hope. Again, Eliot makes use of opposites, of paradox, and word play: “Filled with fancies and empty of

---

<sup>90</sup> The third canto’s “locale, Eliot noted . . . is specifically the Gloucester Road Station” (a Tube stop on London’s Underground). Kenner 177.

meaning” (3.13); “This is the one way, and the other / Is the same” (3.33–34): the way up is the way down, and the way down is the way up: “for he that humbles himself is exalted and he that exalts himself is humbled” (St. John of the Cross. *Dark Night of the Soul* 2.xviii 2. Qtd in Ricks, 920).

The language of paradox points us to ways of authoritative thinking that have been marginalized or displaced in an age of science and positivism. Paradox is the figure of thought that makes it possible to see, for example, that the Incarnation is not simply a mystical apparition, but a reality that has the power to redeem us. (Cooper, *Introduction* 97)

What will become of us when the day is buried, when words after speech reach into the silence, the stillness of the Chinese jar (4.1, 5.3–4, 5.6)? Words “Decay with imprecision” (5.16). We are paralyzed in a world of movement, of stillness; we are assailed by “shrieking voices” in the desert—the voices of temptation, of delusions, of chimeras (5.17). “Desire . . . is . . . / Not in itself desirable” (5.25–26). How to rise from this; how to find the “Sudden . . . shaft of sunlight”, the hidden laughter of children in the foliage (5.33)? Eliot waits; hopes without hope; moves and yet is still in the still point of the turning world. We rise like the ashes of Burnt Norton—the house that burnt down—or fall like dust, toward God. For Eliot, it is this physical world which is insubstantial (again: the paradox, the play on words and meaning), the world of people and bits of paper blown about by the wind.

In the second quartet, “East Coker”,<sup>91</sup> Eliot invokes “faeces” in the same breath as new flesh arising from the soil, a new generation. Things pass, fall away, are destroyed, replaced by something less, something degenerate; a lesser generation—what W. B. Yeats called the “declension of the soul.”<sup>92</sup> This is the end, the beginning. The mood is one of thoughtful repose, of meditation “Where you lean against a bank while a van

<sup>91</sup> East Coker is the village in south west England (Somerset) from which Eliot’s ancestors emigrated to America in 1667. “ It serves, accordingly, for the author’s purpose, as a place for a meditation on beginnings and ends” (Eliot. Letter to R. P. de Menasce, 31 May 1940).

<sup>92</sup> “The Tower”. *Collected Poems* 210.

passes” and wait for night (1.17). The poet meditates upon time, upon past generations, “long since under earth / Nourishing the corn” (1.38–39). The third stanza of the first canto ends with “Dung and death”, which is significant: the world of the body reduced to dung (1.46). There is a sense of disgust, in the very sound of *dung and death*, repulsion for the body and its functions—“unequivocal recoil”, says Leavis (*The Living Principle* 198). It is, for Leavis, the ironic conclusion to the association of man and woman, the “necessarye coniunction” (1.29); it highlights “the distaste he [Eliot] tends to assume as proper and (in a higher sense) normal at the thought of sex” (196). But dung is a fertiliser, also. And hence: rebirth, the renewed struggle of life—generation after generation. The third stanza is also a celebration of the organic community—the dancing which kept time with the seasons, a time long buried. Eliot laments the crumbled Houses of the past, in their place the desolation of “an open field, or a factory, or a by-pass” (l.4). The life of the community is displaced by the demands of the Machine, the imposition of the cheap and functional.

Death is coming, the day of judgement; the signs are in the sky. Where is the serenity of old age, and what does the wisdom of old age and experience amount to?

. . . There is, it seems to us,  
 At best, only a limited value  
 In the knowledge derived from experience. (2.31–33)

These words, ironically, *themselves* arise from “knowledge derived from experience”—even if it is the limited knowledge of knowing that you know nothing. The poet is feeling his way in the epistemological dark and any moment may slip, may lose his foothold at “the edge of a grimpen” (2.41). He seeks salvation, must begin at the base, the wood, menaced by temptation, sin. “Humility is the most difficult of all virtues to achieve . . .” (Eliot, “The Stoicism of Seneca.” *Selected Essays*, 130). But how much does this quest for humility cost Eliot? To achieve the perfect humility—a humility free totally of the stain of self-satisfaction, of pride—you must snuff yourself completely, deny yourself, your desires, which are desires for the wrong things. Even the desire for

martyrdom is tainted with pride—along with the satisfaction of seeing “Your persecutors . . . in timeless torment” (*Murder in the Cathedral* 39). The life of the flesh is suppressed, squeezed until all that’s left is spirit. And the only way to achieve that is through death of the body.

“O dark dark dark”<sup>93</sup> (“East Coker” 3.1): after the autumnal serenity, Death! All of us. And what do all our petty doings amount to in the end? Darkness, where we must wait without hope, “For hope would be hope for the wrong thing . . .” (3.24). This is the darkness of God, where behind every face you see the “mental emptiness” (3.20); where “the mind is conscious but conscious of nothing” (3.22). This life, for the poet, is an “imposing facade” (3.17), and Eliot’s poem feels like a negation of this world, and all our activities: we’re “rolled away”, like clouds (3.17). We are deprived, filled with “mental emptiness”, the “darkness of God”, left only with “the growing terror of nothing to think about” (3.20, 3.13, 3.21). In this state the soul waits for the time when “the darkness shall be light, and the stillness the dancing” (3.28). But what sort of dancing is this? What sort of light? We must conquer our desires to reach the unseen garden, to hear the “Whisper of running streams” (3.29). Who will redeem us from this corruption of flesh? In the fourth canto, the “wounded surgeon” is Christ: only through Him is the sickness healed (4.1). But the cure involves great pain. The disease must get worse before we can get better. “The whole earth is our hospital” and we must “quake in frigid purgatorial fires” (4.11, 4.19). The blood and body of Christ is “our only food” (4.22). That, for Eliot, is the ultimate reality: we are not “sound, substantial flesh and blood” (4.24). Again, the flesh is nothing compared with the spirit. The flesh is ‘unsubstantial’; it is a temporary vehicle for the spirit. It will rot. Good Friday is ‘good’ because it is a triumph of the spirit: the spirit overcomes the lumpen flesh. The spirit, Christ, God “prevents us everywhere” (4.5).

Eliot, the narrator/poet, is in the ‘middle way’, like Dante at the start of his *Inferno*, having to start again, for the time has been wasted. His writing is “a raid on the

---

<sup>93</sup> This is a phrase borrowed from Milton’s “Samson Agonistes”: “O dark, dark, dark, amid the blaze of noon” (line 80).

inarticulate / With shabby equipment always deteriorating” (5.8–9). He submits “to the dark cold and the empty desolation” (5.36). He treads that dark way through the silent lanes of hell, or purgatory. And, “being a soul nearer to blessedness, suffers more actively and keenly” (Leitch 42).

In “The Dry Salvages” (the third quartet), the natural rhythms of the life of the community have given way, have been supplanted, and the river god is “unpropitiated / By worshippers of the machine” (1.9–10).<sup>94</sup> Here, Eliot is one with Lawrence: both detested the filthy modern tide that had swamped the deeply religious life of the organic community. Eliot turns away from the machine world, the modern pagan world of bankers, business and profit.<sup>95</sup> He contemplates “The river “within us”, and the awesomeness and massiveness of the sea, which “tosses up our losses”, and “the gear of foreign dead men”, like it was nothing (1.15, 1.22, 1.24): what is “our time” compared to the “tolling bell” “rung by the unhurried / Ground swell, a time / Older than the time of chronometers . . . .” (1.36, 1.35, 1.36–38)? The world of flesh is washed away, stripped to the bones of drowned sailors. Eliot evokes the torment of eternity on earth, of “time . . . withdrawn”, suspended in a timeless moment—of dying, of wreckage drifting in the boundless ocean (3.30). There is only “addition”; the “unattached devotion”; the emotionless emotion (2.13, 2.15, 2.9). Movement with no end, with “no destination” (2.24). We think we are getting somewhere, that history is continuous development, “a means of disowning the past” (2.41). We have the experience but lose the meaning. Eliot, here, casts a shadow upon the self-assurance of modern civilisation, which is spiritually blind—“assured” but with “the backward half-look / Over the shoulder, towards the primitive terror.” (2.54–55). Time future and time past are gathered together, now, and this is the moment “not of action or of inaction” (3.32). We are voyaging bodiless on a boundless sea going nowhere, from one moment to the next, which is the same, but we are different—not the same as when we left port, and not the same when we disembark. But the “time of death is every moment” (3.36). We are neither here nor

---

<sup>94</sup> The Dry Salvages are a line of black rocks off the Massachusetts coast. (Ricks 959).

<sup>95</sup> Eliot, however, worked for Lloyds Bank from 1917 to 1925—“a little cog in the machine of Britain’s commercial empire” (Ackroyd 79). “The routine of the banking day . . . gave a rigour and formality to his life, and such formality was always important to him” (Ackroyd 78).

there: moving yet still; waiting, as on the shore for Charon to transport us across the Acheron.<sup>96</sup>

Is this our destination? Bodies suffer (3.40–41), yet the whole experience is one of disembodiment, wisps of smoke that trail after the ship has gone; and our lives, as we move from Then to Now, are “narrowing rails [that] slide together behind you” (3.18); recede, like the harbour. Voices descant, “though not to the ear, / The murmuring shell of time, and not in any language” (3.24–25). And we “fare forward”, not well (3.45). We need guidance, and in the fourth canto, Eliot appeals to the “Lady” (the Virgin Mary) to intercede for those who sail (through life), voyagers who pass from one moment to the next, aimless (4.1). Only God can save us. The sea, in part, symbolises life, and the voyage through life. Prayer is necessary, even if inconclusive as a means to salvation. Eliot submits to the discipline of faith—the apprehension of the gift of Incarnation, where the timeless intersects with Time—the “impossible union / Of spheres of existence”: the spirit made flesh (5.18–19, 5.33–34). ‘Impossible’, but maybe true: for faith is unsupported by reason. The point of intersection is Jesus<sup>97</sup>—“When Jesus was born, That ‘when’ is now.” (Andrewes “Sermon 14” 232; sic). The timeless moment is the eternal moment: the intersection of time with timelessness, of the physical with the spiritual: Jesus, the Incarnation, where body and spirit are ‘unified’. Two worlds are elevated for a moment (or an eternal moment) and fuse; two images become one, consummated by the Holy Ghost. It’s hallucinatory. The image is there, but isn’t. It is untouchable. The world of time, of the senses, is *visualised* but physically intangible—inapprehensible to all but the most lunatic of mystics, gnostics with ‘knowledge’ beyond this world. This is the understanding of the “saint” (5.19)—or the artist—which is unlike that of the ordinary human or the scientist, the ‘man of reason’ whose ‘knowledge’ is grounded in the world of the senses. It is the mystic union with God: the timeless moment: an instance of eternity, a moment “lost in a shaft of sunlight” (5.25). Eliot’s spiritual world is removed from the physical world. It is a world where the

---

<sup>96</sup> Charon is the ferryman of the Underworld, and the Acheron is one of its rivers. See, for example, Dante’s *Inferno*.

<sup>97</sup> Ricks 985. The editors cite Karl Barth’s *The Epistle to the Romans*.

“wild thyme [is] unseen” (5.26); where” music [is] heard so deeply / That it is not heard at all” (5.27–28). It is felt, even though the body is absent.

In “Little Gidding” (the fourth quartet), Eliot continues the theme of ‘intersection’. We are at the heart of winter where the “heart’s heat” is intense, a “glare that is blindness” (1.6, l.8). But through this “blindness” we see, spiritually; and we feel the “pentecostal fire” (1.10). We understand at last what we had “no speech for, when living” (1.49):

the communication

Of the dead is tongued with fire beyond the language of the living.

Here, the intersection of the timeless moment . . . (1.50–52)

It is knowledge without earthly basis; there “is no earth smell / Or smell of living thing” (1.12–13). It is during this mid winter spring, when the flowers blossom for an “hour”, when the two worlds cross—the intersection of time and eternity—that we reach the heart of God, of spiritual understanding (1.15). We journey, until then, “like a broken king / . . . not knowing what you came for” (1.26–27).<sup>98</sup>

And what you thought you came for

Is only a shell, a husk of meaning

From which the purpose breaks only when it is fulfilled

If at all. (1.30–33)

The physical world, after the event of living, seems unreal. Earthly fire is nothing when compared to the pentecostal fire. Fire functions as a symbol of hell or purgatory (the cleansing fire); of The Holy Spirit—God, the divine reality. All our strivings lead to the “tombstone”, which becomes, in time, “an illegible stone” (1.30, 5.14). Why are you here? Not “to verify, / Instruct yourself, or inform curiosity / Or carry report . . . [but] to kneel” (1.43–45). This is not merely the surrender of the Self, but the (moral) abandonment of the physical world.

---

<sup>98</sup> The “broken king” is Charles I of England, after his defeat to Cromwell’s Roundheads in the Civil War.

This world is dying: “dead leaves . . . rattled . . . like tin”, and “The parched eviscerate soul / gapes at the vanity of toil” (2.30, 2.13–14). Here again is the language of disembodiment, of “ash the burnt roses leave”; of “Dust”; of “flood and drouth” (2.2, 2.3, 2.9). It is the death of the elements. Eliot meets a ghost at the “intersection time”—of “no before and after” (2.52, 2.53)—a past master<sup>99</sup> whose “browned baked features” recall Dante’s encounter with Brunetto Latini in *The Inferno* (2.41).<sup>100</sup> The ghost tells Eliot that our achievements on this earth have no standing in the afterlife; they “belong to last year’s language” (2.65). He discloses the “gifts reserved for age” (2.76). The phrase is ironic. There is no enchantment, no old man’s wisdom, but the bitterness of “shadow fruit”, the “impotence of rage”, and “the laceration / Of laughter at what ceases to amuse” (2.80–81, 2.82, 2.83–84). And last,

. . . the rending pain of re-enactment  
Of all that you have done, and been; the shame  
Of motives late revealed, and the awareness  
Of things ill done and done to others’ harm  
Which once you took for exercise of virtue. (2.85–89)<sup>101</sup>

W. B. Yeats, the primary inspiration for Eliot’s ghost, and as such the voice of the above lines, himself knew there was no consolation in old age, but a mirthless wisdom, or the metaphysical consolation of being gathered into “the artifice of eternity.”<sup>102</sup> There is, says the ghost, nothing that restores, but the “refining fire” (2.92).

---

<sup>99</sup> Eliot uses the phrase “compound ghost” (2.42). “I was thinking primarily of . . . Yeats [but] also . . . Swift . . . and . . . Mallarmé . . .” (Eliot, Letter to Kristian Smidt, 25 September, 1961). Also, Arnaut Daniel, who is encountered in Dante’s *Purgatory* in canto 26. (Eliot, Letter to Charles Williams, 24 December, 1942). Eliot: “I do not wish to take the responsibility of putting Yeats or anybody else into Hell . . . and to impute to him the particular vice [sodomy/homosexuality] which took [Latini] there . . . I wished the effect of the whole to be Purgatorial which is much more appropriate.” (Letter to John Hayward, 27 August, 1942). W. B. Yeats died in January 1939, about three and a half years before Eliot composed “Little Gidding”.

<sup>100</sup> Canto 15. Eliot’s “What! are *you* here?” (2.45; Eliot’s emphasis) mirrors Dante’s line 30: “Siete voi qui, ser Brunetto?”

<sup>101</sup> This is an echo of Yeats’ poem “Vacillation”. See the second stanza of part 5. Ricks also notes it (1025).

<sup>102</sup> “What Then?” To name but one of many examples. The quote is from Yeats’ “Sailing to Byzantium”.

Eliot meditates on the past, on the strivings and strife of past conflict; of action and desire transformed into dust. There was suffering at this place: a king came here, his last refuge before facing the scaffold.<sup>103</sup> And what does it amount to, if “All manner of thing shall be well / By the purification of the motive” (3.48–49)? Either: the fire of hell, or the redeeming fire of the “flame of incandescent terror”—“The one discharge of sin and error” (4.2, 4.4). This is the hard ‘philosophy’ of Dante’s orthodox Christianity, where even ‘good’ people (like Brunetto Latini) walk the burning sands, because of sin; because of error; because they were caught up in the affairs of this world, in their desires, at the expense of their soul.

Eliot takes us back to the beginning (or the end): hidden voices; children playing:

Not known, because not looked for  
But heard, half-heard, in the stillness  
Between two waves of the sea. (5.36–38)

It is here, now and always—the elusive moment present, unheard, unseen. Everything that is, that ever was, that *will* be, exists at the same time, and always—at the intersection of two worlds, where our acts are recalled, with shame, with mortification. This is the purgatorial flame; this is the flame which redeems us, which saves us. Love is the necessary torment. We are dying, dead under “an illegible stone” (5.14); we are being born (again), where “the fire and the rose are one” (5.45). And all our acts lead us here.

### **Distractions**

*The Four Quartets* is a world in which we are exiles, “with responsibilities and obligations” —“*in the world . . . not of it*” (Cooper, *Introduction* 104; Cooper’s

---

<sup>103</sup> Again: Charles I of England, but also Christ—king of the Jews (“Of three men . . . on the scaffold.” 3.27), who was, possibly, crucified with two ‘thieves’. We are in Little Gidding, the village near Cambridge, England, where Charles briefly found refuge after his final defeat by Cromwell; and we are at the Garden of Gethsemane, where Jesus spent his last night.

emphases). But we are cut off from the world's spiritual sources, and therefore, according to Eliot the critic, the world's natural sources:

We may say that religion, as distinguished from modern paganism, implies a life in conformity with nature. It may be observed that the natural life and the supernatural life have a conformity to each other which neither has with the mechanistic life (*Christian Society* 80).

By “modern paganism”, Eliot means, in part, “unregulated industrialism”—society organised on the “principle of private profit”, the destruction of natural resources: ‘progress’, for which “succeeding generations may have to pay dearly” (80). The conformity of natural and supernatural is ‘embodied’, in his poetry, by his ‘descent into the world of flesh’ as a necessary beginning in the journey toward God, just as the Father is embodied in the Son. But does Eliot’s revolt against the “mechanistic life”, and his ‘conformity of religion—Christianity—and nature’, suggest romantic and nihilistic tendencies? According to Cooper, the *Quartets* is “an account of existence that asserted a theo-ontological foundation in the face of a nihilism that had come to seem the final destination of history . . .” (*Ideology of Four Quartets* 140). Francesca Cauchi’s 2017 study, however, challenges this:

[T]he nihilism which the *Quartets* sought in some measure to dispel is re-inscribed in a redemptive idealism that drives the ‘Burnt Norton’ narrator . . . towards a life denying extreme. (63)

This romantic view of Eliot highlights his detachment, as a soul that yearns to transcend bodily limitations. The narrator of “Burnt Norton”, according to Cauchi, succumbs to an ideal vision of beauty, but the realisation that it is but a “flight of fancy” recalls the poet to the stark reality of the physical world, “devoid of meaning” (62, 63). It is this sense of voidness, for Cauchi, that makes it nihilistic, and this “disenchantment with worldly existence”, which in turn precipitates the “flight towards idealism”, the impulse to flee the material world of the senses, motivated by “progressive degradation”, the spiritual

vacuum of modernity (63). She suggests that Eliot's faith was motivated by pessimism, and that his attempt to create meaning betrayed his belief that there *is* no meaning. And Allen Dunn (in 2019) says that, unlike Dante, Eliot fails to inhabit "a world where emotion can be embodied in thought and religious vision can be expressed in worldly terms", and that his poetry fails to escape the confines of secular modernity and his "individualized vision" (376–377). These criticisms echo those of Leavis: "human kind / Cannot bear very much reality" ("Burnt Norton" 1.42–43)

turns out to involve an essential nihilism. For, the reality that Eliot seeks to apprehend being spiritual, he assumes that the spiritual must be thought of as the absolutely 'other'—the antithetically and excludingly non-human (*The Living Principle* 203).

Eliot's attempt to escape the physical world, said Leavis, is "doomed to frustration" (203). "To posit, as Eliot does, human impotence and nullity, is to face oneself with the void, with emptiness, with nothingness" (205).

Eliot's Christianity, in this view, is removed from the arena of human affairs. This sounds like fair comment if we turn to *Ash Wednesday*, or *The Four Quartets*—the "gloomy mumblings" of a man who doesn't feel his faith, but assents to it (Orwell, "Review" *My Country* 241)<sup>104</sup>—or indeed much of his other poetry. Even when Eliot does engage with the 'real world' (as he does in his early poetry), part of him feels removed therefrom—as if what is described belongs to an alien plane of experience.

And when all the world came back  
And the light crept up between the shutters,  
And you heard the sparrows in the gutters,  
You had such a vision of the street  
As the street hardly understands; ("Preludes" 3.7–11)

---

<sup>104</sup> Orwell is referring to the first three Quartets, since the fourth had yet to be published.

Like Cauchi, Rauf (in 2013) notes “strains of romanticism” in Eliot’s poetry (61). Eliot’s objection to romanticism is based on its stress on the individual will—Man as God, and inspiration—a parallel, incidentally, to Augustine’s denial of *free will*, and the assumption that humans are capable, by their own efforts, of saving themselves. This romanticism is contrasted with the classical ideal of toil, artistic discipline; a more rigid and critical emphasis on form and style. It calls for “perspiration and a good deal of intellectual drudgery” (62). This contrast between romanticism and classicism is paralleled in the contrast between body and spirit: the former’s stress on individual will runs counter to, in Eliot’s case, the toil and discipline required toward an approximation of the Christian ideal, a mode perfected, poetically, in the *Quartets*. Even the Blitz, the context for the ‘compound ghost’ scene in “Little Gidding”, is remote—removed from the physical reality of war-time London. There is “the dark dove with the flickering tongue” (2.28), which represents a German warplane, but in terms of an incongruous combination of body parts: part dove (a symbol of peace or salvation in Christianity) and part flickering tongue—a serpent (in Genesis, a symbol of evil, of humanity’s defiance). Instead of real bombs, we are presented with a spiritual aftermath of dust. We are not in the physical world. The “disfigured street” (2.94) is, as Maud Ellman notes, “literally . . . *figureless*—emptied of persona . . . (198; Ellman’s emphasis).

Nevertheless, according to Rauf, Eliot’s contempt for materialism and the spiritual and moral bankruptcy of modern civilisation betrays romantic tendencies, which leads to idealism and pessimism, and a desire to escape (63). Whether it is an escape might depend on the difference (if any) between being *in* this world and *of* this world. “We are . . . exiles, but exiles with responsibilities and obligations” (Cooper, *Introduction* 104). We must fare forward, prepare for death (104)—‘build your ship’, as Lawrence would have it. But does being in this world (not of it) rescue Eliot from the ‘charge’ of ‘nihilism’? Cauchi singles out the third section of “Burnt Norton” as “a form of ascetic detachment [where] the idealist impulse takes a decisive, nihilistic turn” (64). She quotes Nietzsche.<sup>105</sup>

---

<sup>105</sup> *On the Genealogy of Morals* 3, sec. 28.

[T]his abhorrence of the senses, of reason itself, this fear of happiness and beauty, this longing for the beyond, away from all appearance, change, becoming, death, desire, even longing itself—all this means . . . a will to nothingness, an antipathy to life, a revolt against the most fundamental conditions of life . . . (64)

Nietzsche here is one with Lawrence; and it marks the main difference between Eliot and Lawrence, in terms of their 'philosophy of life', their religious attitude. The suspicion is that Eliot's spirituality, his drive toward the Christian God, is informed by his revulsion of the physical world of *here and now*—the temporal world. Cauchi suggests that Eliot's dispassion, his detachment—marked in "Burnt Norton" by "a series of flat, end-stopped lines"—reveals a scepticism towards the attempt to transcend, or redeem, the temporal world, even though it is this attempt that preoccupies the poem (64). Thus Eliot is set "upon his own dark obliterating course towards quietist self-extinction" (67)—like the romantic Keats in his longing for "easeful Death"<sup>106</sup> and his flight toward the "unheard melodies" of the spirit.<sup>107</sup>

In contrast to Cauchi, Hammad, in her 2016 essay, denies that Eliot's spirituality is an escape from the misery of this world; on the contrary, it entails, she says, a descent into the inferno of modernity, a sterile world, void of meaning, and spiritual salvation is achieved through, and after, "a long period of suffering and labour" (1149). Eliot's Christianity, on this view, counters the spiritual vacuity, the nihilist menace. It is the solution, not the result. The journey (for Eliot) is difficult, is necessary; and the experiences, the suffering, are physical and, "primarily", spiritual (1151). Similarly, Susan Colón (in 2011) says that Eliot's post-conversion poetry contains remedies for the spiritual malaise of modernity (69).

Eliot's use of *acedia* [spiritual apathy] shows that the psychological disorders that are characteristic of modernity have, for him, a theological explanation and

---

<sup>106</sup> "Ode to a Nightingale."

<sup>107</sup> "Ode to a Grecian Urn."

consequently a theological remedy; they are symptoms pointing to an underlying spiritual condition (69).

His poetry, according to Colón, is not a retreat, a surrender to nihilism. It's hard: "You must go by a way wherein there is no ecstasy" ("East Coker" 3.37). It entails a consciousness of one's spiritual desolation, where "friendship with God" brings no joy, but at the same time a desire to feel that joy in "God's goodness" (Colón 77). One *accepts* the desolation, which is the opposite of escaping (79). One resists "all temptation to escape the hard conflict by an easier way" (84)—by fleeing, for example, or *wilful* martyrdom (which entails pride), alternatives echoed in the temptations of Thomas Becket in *Murder in the Cathedral* (23-40).

Eliot, from his perspective, and to cite Lawrence's poem<sup>108</sup>, falls into the *hands of God*, not out of them: the nullity, for Eliot, is ultimately—when all is said and done, dung and death—this world. For him, moreover:

culture and religious belief cannot be said to "transcend" economic or political realities; rather, they shape and are shaped by those more general social contexts. (Lockerd, T. S. *Eliot and Christian Tradition* 176)

Eliot denies, then, that religion is a legitimate (or actual) means of escape, with the implication that he doesn't *try* to escape the confines of secular modernity. Religion, for Eliot, was (or should be) a binding force in society, as it was in mediaeval times, creating a sense of community, and the "psychological and emotional reassurances that came with authentic belonging" (Cooper, *Introduction* 26). The party in government (in a democracy) wasn't that important for Eliot. A Christian society, for Eliot, was "not a programme for a party, but a way of life for a people" (Eliot, *Christian Society* 51).

---

<sup>108</sup> "The Hands of God."

His essential point was that political beliefs are vicious when . . . adopted as a substitute for religious belief, and when they pretend to offer what religious faith alone can provide. (Ackroyd 171)

This was notably so, for Eliot, in the case of Soviet Russia and the fascist states, each of which brandished its own set of dogmas and myth; but he also had in mind the cheap ‘chop-house’ thrills, the cultural wasteland of English and American liberalism, which substituted “horns and motors” and the worship of Mammon, for the Incarnation (*The Waste Land* 197). This, it was feared, would lead to an increasingly dominant “omnicompetent state in a totalitarian democracy, attempting to create what Eliot called ‘systems so perfect that no one will need to be good’” (Lockerd, “T.S. Eliot & Christopher Dawson”; Lockerd’s quote is from Eliot’s *The Rock*. 6.23). As Lawrence noted, “we cannot help regretting that ever the deep religious spirit in man tacked itself on to politics” (*Movements in European History* 272).

Politics . . . is not a religious affair. . . . [it is] a mere arranging of the material conditions of life. It is not a religious activity. . . . You can’t save mankind by politics. . . . We must have liberty. . . . [But] still we have not even touched the inward satisfaction which the deep spirit demands (272).

This is Eliot’s view as well. If Eliot, as Ackroyd also notes, “shirked [the] transient battles [of contemporary politics] he also avoided its egregious follies” (172). The obverse (or a symptom) of this, for Eliot, was the spiritual anaemia, the “recurring . . . desire to escape the burdens of life and thought” (Eliot, “The Literature of Fascism”; qtd in Colón 70). It is the attitude of the “slothful person who wants to fly under the radar of moral responsibility, to avoid obligation by refusing her own potentiality for moral action” (74)—of those who are “distracted by [the] distraction” of party politics or cheap amusements (“Burnt Norton” 3.12).

The nihilism and escapism, in this view, resides in society—not in Christianity or Eliot himself. It was the paganism of modern society, according to Eliot, that sought

distractions from the Word of God: those who complained of “too many churches, / And too few chop-houses”; who block their ears and shut their eyes to the world of “Internal darkness”—which is what remains in a world without God once the banalities of modern living, the Sunday excursions to “Hindhead, or Maidenhead”, are stripped off (*The Rock*, 1.21–22; “Burnt Norton” 3.28; *The Rock* 1.29).

[Eliot’s] despondency and despair [of] modern civilization should not be viewed negatively, that is, it should not be taken as the expression of his distrust in the efficacy of religion to resolve . . . contemporary problems. It rather shows his great concern to retrieve the present civilization from complete destruction which is possible only when people turn towards religion. (Rauf 68)

It is, moreover, society that has severed the spirit from the body, not, according to Eliot, Christianity. The body of pleasure-seekers, of self-servers, is spiritless, devoid of God's presence, or blind to it:

The Lord who created must wish us to create  
 And employ our creation again in His service  
 Which is already His service in creating.  
 For Man is joined spirit and body,  
 And therefore must serve as spirit and body.  
 Visible and invisible, two worlds meet in Man;  
 Visible and invisible must meet in His Temple;  
 You must not deny the body. (*The Rock* 9.37–41)

“You must not deny the body” is surprising, considering Christianity’s tendency to demote the body to a plane beneath the Spirit, a thing of secondary significance; and considering Eliot’s largely negative or trivial attitudes displayed towards the body in much of his poetry, with the suggestion of physical and moral debasement:

Grishkin is nice: her Russian eye  
 Is underlined for emphasis;  
 Uncorseted, her friendly bust  
 Gives promise of pneumatic bliss.

.....  
 The sleek Brazilian jaguar  
 Does not in its arboreal gloom  
 Distil so rank a feline smell

As Grishkin in a drawing-room. (“Whispers of Immortality” 16–20, 25–29)

It is the sexual immorality connoted by the above verses that is, for Eliot, the true ‘denial’ of the body—the misusing of it: the “pneumatic bliss” afforded by Grishkin’s “friendly bust” is incompatible with Christian theology.

Whether we think Eliot’s Christianity was escapist, an absconding from the world of flesh and blood, there was, according to Cooper

no more radical break than submission to God in an age . . . devoted to the secular panaceas promised by the mechanized production of wellbeing through . . . commodity consumption . . . (*Introduction 27*)

Eliot’s ideal Christian society would set out to remedy our spiritual lethargy; it would give us a purpose, something worth living for, and not just as a means to attain afterlife salvation. But of course, for Eliot (and any believer) religion is not *primarily* a functional thing, a binding force in society; or even worse, a consolation for the pains of this life, or a means of escape—a quietist extinction of responsibility. Religion, or spirituality, manifests itself, in one form or another, as a state of transcendence by which the individual (body or spirit) attains a level of meaning beyond (or in addition to) the functional world, whether this is found in God, or some other supra-physical thing, like the State, as it is with the major political ideologies across the spectrum. The aim of Christianity is Salvation, not a cohesive and beneficent system of administration,

however desirable the latter is. There are those who would combine the transcendental and the functional, proponents of a sort of liberation theology with the twin pillars of Marx and Jesus: the intermediate position between fideism and rationalism, a Thomist marriage of faith and reason, where each supplies the remedy for the other's deficiency; where Reason must be grounded in love and peace, not material interests (Eagleton 148–149). While this is preferable to combining Jesus with free-market neoliberalism, it is not Eliot's position. He called for a society governed by Christian and anti-materialist principles, but he wanted to preserve traditions, or rather develop them. Tradition, Eliot explained, is not stagnant, "hostile to all change", but "a way of feeling and acting which characterises a group throughout generations" (*After Strange Gods* 18, 29). It is "of the blood, so to speak, rather than of the brain: it is the means by which the vitality of the past enriches the life of the present" (30). 'Blood' has a racial connotation here which is made explicit a few pages earlier:

tradition involves all those habitual actions, habits and custom . . . which represent the blood kinship of 'the same people living in the same place' (18; Eliot's inverted commas).

His poetry can be viewed as part of his spiritual endeavour to transcend the cares of this world by acknowledging a greater purpose for mankind than the life rooted in a finite world. It needn't be reduced to a philosophy of despair, but one that transcends despair, and hope. "Burnt Norton" is nihilistic in the sense that it *describes* a psychological condition—of despair, of lack of meaning, of absurdity—in Cooper's words, an "emptiness at the human core", the sense of an "existence without values and meaning"—a sense that became prevalent after the experience of two world wars (*Ideology* 126, 125). To call Eliot a *nihilist* (or his poem nihilistic) suggests that his way to God is motivated by a belief in the meaninglessness of the physical, natural world. It suggests that Eliot creates meaning for himself to counter a world that in itself has no meaning. But Eliot's position is this: the world has (would have) no meaning *without God*. His 'resignation' is not actuated by 'the horror', but by faith in God. For Eliot, God

is here to begin with (always), not something that is invented as a moral crutch against the void of being and not being.

### Intersection Time

However much Eliot rationalised his principles (religious or otherwise) in his prose, his poetry appeals to the a-rational religious and aesthetic sensibility: it verbalises the ‘ineffable’ truth of his vision, which no amount of theorising (because it is bound by the limitations of theory) can quite articulate; it bypasses the rational side of the brain, and etches its ‘message’ elsewhere, beyond the intellectual reach of the materialist who figures that happiness and utility are mutually giving. *The Quartets* is founded on the premise of the abyssal gap between God and human, or grace and nature; and that the Incarnation is “the event that bridges this gap”, the point at which two worlds meet, which is the revelation of God’s Word (Domestico 3, 10). The point Domestico makes, among others, is that there is a split between Eliot the Anglo-Catholic, classicist critic, who affirms the bond of God and nature; and Eliot the poet, the ‘Protestant romantic’ who affirms the Barthian theological position that the two are distinct, reconciled only by the Incarnation: “while Eliot the critic was a classicist, Eliot the poet was a romantic. A similar disjuncture exists between Eliot the religious critic and Eliot the religious poet” (3). Indeed, the critic seems more aligned with the rationalism of (neo) Thomism, whereas the poet is thoroughly Augustinian.<sup>109</sup> But this, according to Eagleton, was not the ideal marriage of fideism and rationality; it suggests, rather, a schism within Eliot’s mind, for he exemplifies the former *totally* in his poetry, and the latter *totally* in his criticism. Eliot was aware of the “apparent incoherence between my verse and my critical prose” (*After Strange Gods* 28). But: “in one’s prose reflexions one may be legitimately occupied with ideals, whereas in the writing of verse one can only deal with actuality (28).

Eliot’s claim that poetry can only deal with the *actual* is surprising. Even actual concrete things in his poems are pervaded by ideals, by the spirit world— “the intersection of the

---

<sup>109</sup> “Neo-Thomists believed that human reasoning could always lead back to God, whereas Augustinians emphasized the limits of that reasoning and the importance of faith. Eliot would balance the pragmatism of the former with the humility of the latter” (Lockerd, *T. S. Eliot* 172).

timeless with time", in which "almost every instance of this dramatic meeting results in an ecstatic removal from time and the senses" (Domestico 19). Domestico's comment is with reference to the *Quartets*, but it applies also to Eliot's early poetry. The fog (or the cat) that curls once about the house in "Prufrock" is both actual and ideal; concrete and abstract. But Eliot desires, not to escape the world, but to find God, while acknowledging the impossibility of succeeding through his own efforts. This creates a tension between faith and doubt, knowledge and ignorance—tensions that are repeatedly exploited in his 'religious' poetry, as if God 'Himself' resides in these irreconcilable distinctions, as a shaft of light in the darkness. His conception of God is described through these polarities because, for Eliot, there is no other way he can express what is ordinarily inexpressible: the *actual* God, as he experiences Him, is mirrored by his probing equivocations. The reality for Eliot is God, the spirit world; it is, for him, the physical world which is (ultimately) illusory, and therefore unreal.<sup>110</sup>

Religion, or faith, sets itself apart into a metaspace where propositions cannot be tested. But then so does ethics, including those systems that purport to elude the irrational and the supernatural—the 'ethics without God' of humanism, for example—which ultimately fall back on unprovable premises.<sup>111</sup> Poetry sets itself apart too, which makes it a potent medium in which to express the 'truths' of religion. Poetry, as Gardner said, has more in common with worship than theology or philosophy (61). To critique religious or metaphysical aspects of poetry on rational grounds is a bit like shaking a dead geranium (or a live one) for its lack of get-up-and-go. Eliot, in his religious poetry, does not strive for logical consistencies: Leavis notices, for example, the hopelessness of "For us, there is only the trying" combined with "every attempt / Is a wholly new start, and a different kind of failure . . ." ("East Coker" 5.18, 5.3–4). Certainly, it is irrational to keep trying knowing that there is no hope of success; but religion/spirituality is beyond the ken of logical discourse, and so is poetry—at least its musical aspect is: the poem isolated from the content; and Leavis' criticisms, I think, amount to a criticism of (Eliot's) Christianity. Of course, "we can certainly enjoy the

---

<sup>110</sup> "the impossible union / Of spheres of existence is actual" ("The Dry Salvages" 5.33–34).

<sup>111</sup> See, for example, Eliot's criticism of humanism in "Second Thoughts About Humanism" *Selected Essays*, 481–491.

poetry and yet be fully aware of the intellectual and moral aberrations of the author” (Eliot, *After Strange Gods* 33). And yet, as Eliot says of Milton’s *Paradise Lost*: It is impossible to separate the ‘poetry’ . . . from the peculiar doctrines that it enshrines . . . (32). Father Tiverton, agreeing with Lawrence, says:

there is no such thing as pure literary criticism abstracted from all moral and metaphysical judgements . . . [it] must be not only aesthetic but also ‘axiological’ and ‘ontological’. (x; Tiverton’s inverted commas)

Lawrence himself stated that art is “utterly dependent on philosophy”—or a metaphysic, even if it is unconscious and not explicit.<sup>112</sup> The metaphysic isn’t *the* art, but part of it—probably, if it’s any good, an inextricable part of it, with which it forms a whole. But any metaphysic, any political or religious sentiment which is explicated too forcefully, which displaces the art itself, which tells us what to think or feel, corrupts the text as a work of art. Lawrence said the same thing, speaking specifically about the novel: “The metaphysic must always subserve the artistic purpose beyond the artist’s conscious aim. Otherwise the novel becomes a treatise” (“Hardy” *Phoenix* 1 479).

Poetry, like religious belief, also begins in a metaspace—but of feeling, not impersonal ideas—not even an emotion; and likewise it is transmuted into concrete expression, the result of which, however, is different to the exposition of the abstract in prose—a medium much more amenable to the clarification of ideas, where ‘principles’ are given form. *The Four Quartets* (for example), makes no appeal to the rational intellect<sup>113</sup>, even if Eliot, here, is abstruse and intellectual, dealing, as he is, with theological discourse, and even if the intellect itself is stimulated:

And all shall be well and  
All manner of thing shall be well  
When the tongues of flame shall be in-folded

---

<sup>112</sup> “Death of a Porcupine.” Qtd in Tiverton 15.

<sup>113</sup> Intellect’, for Eliot however, *supports* supernatural intuition. Eliot. “Second Thoughts About Humanism” *Selected Essays* 484.

Into the crowned knot of fire  
 And the fire and the rose are one. ("Little Gidding" 5.42–46)

These closing lines of the *Quartets* do not appeal to the intellect. No-one, *intellectually*, is convinced, because of this poem, that all will be well once the soul is released from the pain of life to be with God. If the expression of that 'article of faith' was the *purpose* of the poem (or *the* poem), then the poem wouldn't have been worth writing. By the same token, we don't read *To Kill a Mockingbird* to instruct us on the stupidity and evils of racism, as if the novel was a pamphlet. As a work of art, it can attune us to it, and sharpen our moral sensibilities, but its primary purpose is not didactic. *The Four Quartets* (because it is a poem, a work of art) makes its appeal emotionally—despite the instructional tone; the spirit of the poem descends upon the reader, those who suffer, and imbues them with a peace that surpasses understanding. It represents a release from suffering, and simultaneously an elevation into the blessed realm of the spirit—the culmination and meaning of our lives, the consummation: "the Dantean blossoming of cleansing fire into mystic rose" (Topping 249). Emotionally, it is devastating—whether the intellect assents or not. The quoted lines above would be crass if stripped of their poetic force—if simply stated as a bald proposition: *everything will be fine once we die and go to heaven*. Conversely, if Eliot had embellished the above proposition with theologically dense language, it would be overbearing and pompous, a definite false note in the emotional context of the rest of the poem. Either way, the emotion would deflate, and the poem itself would be lost—and so would its *meaning*, for its meaning is not circumscribed by the words on the page, its '*prose meaning*', what those words ordinarily signify: to borrow words from Oates in relation to Lawrence: the poet "must use ordinary language but . . . to express *an extraordinary event*" (*New Heaven* 57; my emphasis). We might conclude from this that poetry has the potential to convert dubious statements into something that appears to have truth value. Good prose can do this too, but poetry makes us see what is ordinarily invisible, without the verbal manipulation of a skilled rhetorician. Poetry is a form of communication, or a translation—the means by which feelings are commuted into language and form, from which emotions are evoked, and apprehended. But "the poet not only transmits, he

*creates* the revelations that make up his world” (Hough 38; my emphasis). These feelings are different (or of a different sort) than the ones capable of elucidation in prose. Part of the meaning of a poem can be paraphrased, but only a part because, as Eliot expressed it, “the poet is occupied with frontiers of consciousness beyond which words fail, though meanings still exist.” (“The Music of Poetry” *Selected Prose* 55).

The “music of poetry”, nevertheless, doesn’t exist apart from its meaning (53). Otherwise anything could pass for poetry, if it sounded like poetry, even if it was the incantation of nonsense, made-up words from a made-up language. Likewise, the meaning (or content) is not independent of its music; the music informs the meaning, as does the prose-meaning of the words. Poetry cannot be criticised solely on the basis of its religious or political philosophy—as if *that* was the poem. The content of a poem is not *the* poem. As Leavis said, in admonishment of Eliot himself: “moral or religious criticism cannot be a substitute for literary criticism” (*The Common Pursuit* 241). The religious, moral or political content itself can be questioned, once stripped of its ‘poetic’ frame, but Christianity (or any religion), should not be condemned because it isn’t grounded in the rational world—because it *makes no claims* upon the rational world. Neither does poetry, even if it pretends to. This is why Cauchi misses the mark, I feel, when she describes “Burnt Norton” as a flight of fancy that the writer himself doesn’t quite believe—as correct as some of her observations are (62). We may as well criticise the ‘wings of poesy’ as a flight of fancy! “Burnt Norton” is indeed a ‘flight of fancy’, which Eliot doesn’t *quite* believe. Or rather, he *does* believe, but the nature of that belief is buoyed by some spiritual stuff, inexplicable in ordinary terms. It is not of this world. It is the faith of one who knows Christ walked on water. The prime target of Cauchi’s criticism is really Christianity: Christianity is a ‘flight of fancy’, but not, for that reason, false.<sup>114</sup> If it is false, it is so for other reasons—its debasement of the body, of physical nature (even if God did create it), and the heartbeat joy of being alive in the flesh.

According to Cooper, the *Quartets* suggest

---

<sup>114</sup> I’m not using “false” synonymously with what is factually untrue, because there is no way of determining this, but in the sense that it is unsound in practice—in the same way that we might say, for example, that ‘fascism is false’.

new modalities of Being to fill the void left by the unravelling of political commitment . . . [and] provide both a first destination for the ‘strategic withdrawal’ into inwardness and the starting point in the reconstitution of identity on a new footing. (*Ideology* 153)

Perhaps Eliot escapes, rather, what Evelyn Underhill (in 1911) called “The horrors of nihilism”—

by the exercise of faith, by a trust in man’s innate but strictly irrational instinct for that Real “above all reason, beyond all thought” . . . (*Mysticism* 15; Underhill’s quote marks).

Indeed, that is the only way—as Underhill asserts. Nothing else can counter the horror, except oblivion—the apprehension of which *is* the horror. We recognise in Underhill’s words the religious instinct that informed *The Four Quartets*— “The hint half guessed, the gift half understood” (“Dry Salvages” 5.32); “A shadowy companion, half seen, half guessed at” (Underhill 20).<sup>115</sup> Underhill’s “shadowy companion” is “Beauty”:

We know not why “great” poetry should move us to unspeakable emotion, or a stream of notes, arranged in a peculiar sequence, catch us up to heightened levels of vitality . . . . In spite of many lengthy disquisitions on aesthetics, Beauty’s secret is still her own (20; Underhill’s quote marks).

Eliot did not aim for philosophical rigour or a logic of disputation in the *Quartets*—even if there is a ‘logic’ to its structure, and a sense of assurance and authority in some of the utterances—because this cannot be done without negatively affecting the poetry. And beauty in poetry, cannot be accounted for by the logic of disputation, or “a merely materialistic philosophy” (Underhill 20). “Burnt Norton” (or any of the *Quartets*) is

---

<sup>115</sup> Eliot read and took “copious notes from” Underhill’s *Mysticism* between 1912 and 1914 when he was at Harvard (Rzepa 103)—and got to know her personally.

implicated in its ambiguities or anomalies—which are justified, however: the theology is complex, and so too, therefore, is its communication; and in any case, whatever its philosophical or theological weaknesses, it is redeemed by a musical quality. The rhythmic surge in the last stanza of “The Dry Salvages 1”, for example, with its succession of iambic lines and feminine cadences, evoke the rolling, crashing waves of the New England coast, with the occasional swirl of a dactyl or trochee (“Lying awake”, “Trying to”<sup>116</sup>) that suggests instability, a constant restlessness, and a shifting reality.

Eliot’s ‘not-quite-believing’ reflects his scepticism, moreover, which he himself *affirmed* (Ackroyd 163); and it is also a major and powerful part of his aesthetic, in his late as well as his early poetry. Orwell underestimated Eliot’s ‘religious’ poetry, dismissing it as “the least hopeful path a poet could take” (“Review” *My Country* 242). On the contrary, there’s a sort of inevitability about it when we consider the tendency of his earlier poetry toward transcendence, confronted, as he was, with (as Orwell notes) “the ugliness and spiritual emptiness of the machine age” (239). The late poetry, in particular the *Quartets*, feels like the end product of Eliot’s poetical and religious strivings, which began the moment he turned to poetry.<sup>117</sup> His religious response, as Topping (in 2015) has shown, does not wait for his conversion, but is underway from the start. “Prufrock” is the result of a deep spiritual discontent which the narrator struggles to articulate. It is from here that Eliot begins his spiritual ascent. *The Quartets* was a deadend in that he couldn’t go beyond his ultimate expression, in poetry, of Christian dogma, his “rendering of the ‘mystical’ vision” (Oliboni 168). It is perfect in the sense that the poetry and the subject are inseparable: “we cannot summarize the argument, nor can we say ‘what happens’”—“The form of *Four Quartets* transforms living into art, not thought, gives us a sense of beginning and ending, of the theme having been fully worked out, which is rare in the long poem” (Gardner 45–46, 47). Eliot had written all the poetry he needed to. There was nothing more the poet, as a poet, could do, except to produce, in his happy senescence, this sort of thing:

---

<sup>116</sup> “The Dry Salvages” 1.40 and 41.

<sup>117</sup> It is true, however: his King Bolo and Chris Columbo rhymes are not, *as far as I can tell*, an attempt to transcend the spiritual emptiness.

I love a tall girl. When we stand face to face  
 She with nothing on and I with nothing on;  
 (“How the Tall Girl and I Play Together” 1–2)<sup>118</sup>

For Eliot, at least, transcendence did not entail an evasion of responsibility; conversion and commitment to Christianity was not for him an escape from the world of flesh. Indeed, for him, it is through the flesh we are redeemed, and attain salvation. His “faith *relativises everything else*, including his own political preferences” (Tonning 243; Tonning’s emphasis). Everything, politics included, becomes subsumed by the idea of a Christian society, where one walks in ‘the daily terror of eternity’, this latter being not merely preferable for Eliot, but necessary to counter the *ennui* of modern society (244)—“the absolute condition of alienation from God” (Freer 77).

For Eliot, ennui is signified by perverse solipsism but is also an inability to be moved by a preliminary consciousness of evil. To be suffering from ennui is to be spiritually dead inside and unable to receive God’s gift of grace . . . (77)

Eliot’s religious poetry feels like a disembodied leap in the dark, in which ‘meaning’ is alternately revealed and obscured (62). But this corresponds with the tenuous (or tender) nature of Eliot’s faith, where the believer *believes* in spite of the rational-demonic voices “singing in our ears”; and it provides him with an aesthetic (“Journey of the Magi” 19). If we want to criticise Eliot’s ideas or beliefs, we turn to Eliot the ordinary man—or, if he is no longer accessible, Eliot the correspondent, essayist and critic. The poetry is not harmed by his faith; if anything, it is strengthened. They are mutually supportive, and, moreover, apprehensible and analysable as one entity, each one subsumed by the other; the poetry, though it retains its separate identity, *becomes* the religion (and vice versa)—a miraculous fusion, where each affirms the truth of the other, and the spirit is transported by the rhythmic flow of the poem:

---

<sup>118</sup> Eliot did however write three more plays after the *Quartets: The Cocktail Party* (1949); *The Confidential Clerk* (1953); and *The Elder Statesman* (1959).

Then at dawn we came down to a temperate valley,  
 Wet, below the snow line, smelling of vegetation;  
 With a running stream and a water-mill beating the darkness,  
 And three trees on the low sky,  
 And an old white horse galloped away in the meadow.  
 Then we came to a tavern with vine-leaves over the lintel,  
 Six hands at an open door dicing for pieces of silver,  
 And feet kicking the empty wine-skins. (“Journey of the Magi” 20–28)

These slow measured lines are from the opening of the poem’s second stanza, and they convey perfectly (as music without words might) the sense of doubt and spiritual weariness, and the faithful resilience needed to overcome them—the soul’s patient slog in the desert, in the mountains, dogged by the voices of temptation, the drama modified to reflect the mundane realities of travel and accommodation in 7 B.C Palestine (or thereabouts). The initial impulse for the poem, as evident in the opening lines of the first stanza—“A cold coming we had of it, / Just the worst time of year” (1–2)—came from Eliot’s reading of Lancelot Andrewes’ Nativity Sermons:

A cold coming they [the Magi] had of it at this time of the year, just the worst time of year to take a journey, and especially a long journey, in. The ways deep, the weather sharp, the days short . . . (“Sermon 15” 253).

But Eliot accentuates the darkness, the foreboding sense of evil, and the spiritual emptiness—and most significantly, the doubt; the *human* factor. There is nothing evidently glamorous or fulfilling about any of this. There is no Christmas star (as there is in the Gospels and Andrewes’ sermon) to lead the way to a cosy stable with shepherds and a donkey. The experience feels empty, barely satisfactory;<sup>119</sup> and it is followed by the return home, “With an alien people clutching their gods” (42). There is no immediate or apparent consolation. “The Journey of the Magi” (Eliot’s poem) is the road

---

<sup>119</sup> But Barry Spurr argues that “satisfactory” (line 31) also refers to the satisfaction involved in the encounter with Christ—as in “Christ’s ‘satisfaction for sin’, a technical, theological term for the Atonement” (“Anglo-Catholic in Religion”: Aspects of Anglo-Catholicism in Eliot’s Poetry” 11).

undertaken in the faith (but not the certainty) that there is a purpose to it—the journey, life. The fear is that our faith shall waver, that we lose our nerve, or that there *is* no purpose, nothing but shadow. This doubt, coupled with its resilience, is the spirit of the “Magi.” All it needed to come alive was for Eliot to find the right words in the right order, which he did.<sup>120</sup> The form, the quiet rhythmic undercurrent that transports the poem, emerges naturally from the *feeling*, the initial impulse that spurred the poem—*faith shadowed by doubt*. Whether we think the Magi are men assigned by God, or deluded fools, it doesn't matter. I mean, it doesn't affect the emotional impact of the poem. The poem resonates—whether with profound religious significance, or your own echo at the bottom of a well.

### **Body Anxiety**

Eliot's later religious poetry, the subject of which is spiritual salvation, liberation from the physical world, the life of the flesh, can be more fully understood and appreciated, perhaps, if we review his earlier poetry as, in part, expressions of *bodily* anxiety. Pondrom, in her 2005 analysis, credits Eliot as having “recognized the performativity of gender as a source of ontological instability of the self . . . ” (438). *Performativity of gender* refers to a certain fluidity of Being whereby the self frees itself from the social constructedness of gender that seeks to define it. This fluidity, this *performance*, Pondrom says, is evinced in Eliot's *Waste Land*. Three episodes are analysed, one of which is the ‘Hyacinth Girl’ (in “The Burial of the Dead”), where Pondrom observes the uncertainty of gender, and gender roles. The narrator of this scene, presumably male, for he performs (or attempts to perform) the customary male role, falls short in what is expected: male decisiveness is replaced by a sort of paralysis, a vacillation. “[T]he loss of a stable subject is one of the formative elements of the modern, and that instability is most fundamentally realised in the conception that gender is itself a performance” (426). The idea that gender is a performance is supported in *The Waste Land* by the presence of Tiresias, the gender-fluid observer, which moreover corroborates the moral disorder of contemporary civilisation. Eliot's *Waste Land* abounds with “a heap of broken

---

<sup>120</sup> —“after church time and before lunch one Sunday morning, with the assistance of half a bottle of Booth's gin” (Eliot, Letter to Conrad Aiken, 13 September 1927).

images”, obscure, half-digested incidents, failures and dimly apprehended ‘truths’, all of which are cloaked in a bewildering array of personal, historic, literary and mythical allusions (22). The gender ‘reveal’<sup>121</sup> functions only as part of the whole (moral) obscurity of the poem, as a disembodied symbol of contemporary civilisation where nothing connects to nothing. The obfuscation of gender does, as Pondrom says, function as “the erosion of confidence in an essential self” (430). Indeed, the whole poem does this, and it functions, for Eliot, as an aesthetic by which he delivers his vision, but not as an act of deconstruction, a statement of gender fluidity per se. Eliot is concerned with the collapse of civilisation, with spirituality, not with gender identity; and the destabilised self (partly expressed by gender ambiguity) functions as an apt symbol for civilisation and the precarious state of Eliot’s (or the narrator’s) mind. Eliot’s mind feels that it’s disconnected from his body. He observes the scene, but wants to dissociate himself from it. The dominant emotion in the ‘Hyacinth Girl’ is regret—or, more profoundly, failure, re-imagined in the rose garden of “Burnt Norton”—an unidentifiable, an *unsayable*, sense of loss, of grief, perfectly captured by the diction and the truncated line breaks: there’s a breathless lump in the narrator’s throat, precisely where it should be; he, she or they struggle to articulate their ‘story’—“I could not / . . .”; I was neither /

. . .

—Yet when we came back, late, from the Hyacinth garden,  
 Your arms full, and your hair wet, I could not  
 Speak, and my eyes failed, I was neither  
 Living nor dead, and I knew nothing,  
 Looking into the heart of light, the silence.

*Oed' und leer das Meer.* (37–42)<sup>122</sup>

<sup>121</sup> Pondrom notes that a masculine pronoun appears only once, which is almost certainly deliberate given the length of the poem and the ample opportunities to have used it.

<sup>122</sup> “Empty and waste the sea” (Ricks 609).

This is so whatever else may have been in the mind of Eliot as he composed it, and whatever particular feeling (or suspicion) it may evoke in the reader—whether an illicit homosexuality, an intimacy ‘gone wrong’, or “the trauma of violence and its affects” (Utell; no page numbers given). Certainly, the episode can be read in any of these ways. The scene, the (barely articulated) words *do* suggest trauma, but Eliot does not make a political statement regarding gender, sexual violence or anything else. And neither is ‘The Hyacinth Girl’ Emily Hale, even if the latter is implicated in (or responsible for) that part of the poem, in the same way that Eliot’s daily commute via the London Underground becomes the ascent of a spiral staircase in *Ash Wednesday*. The poem transcends her. The ‘Hyacinth Girl’ means *regret, loss, bewilderment*—emotions concretised by the poet into—‘the Hyacinth Girl’; and she or he is not to be confounded with the poem (or the poem within a poem) itself:

Few critics have ever admitted that *Hamlet* the play is the primary problem, and Hamlet the character only secondary. (Eliot, “Hamlet and His Problems” *The Sacred Wood* 95).

It’s interesting to note, however, that part of Eliot’s poetry is made out of the airy material that makes *Hamlet* “an artistic failure”—intractable “stuff that the writer could not drag to light . . . manipulate into art” (98, 100). Except the intractable stuff *is* the poetry in Eliot’s case (and Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*)—it transcends the ordinary ‘meaning’ of the poem, which (“in some kinds of poetry”), according to Eliot, is there to divert the reader’s mind, to keep it quiet, “while the poem does its work upon him” (*The Use of Poetry* 151)—and he *does* manipulate it into art, as with ‘The Hyacinth Girl’, *The Waste Land* as a whole, and much of his early poetry. Indeed, in *Prufrock and Other Observations*, Eliot does an excellent impression of Hamlet the character: “Do I dare?”, “Shall I say”, etc. (“Prufrock” 38, 70). In “Prufrock” and “Portrait”, Eliot’s (or the narrator’s) emotions are “in excess of the facts as they appear”—to quote Eliot in regard to *Hamlet* (“Hamlet and His Problems” *The Sacred Wood* 101; Eliot’s emphasis). But of course ‘emotion’ and ‘facts’ do not always appear on the same page, as it were, and

they often fail to account for one another. Prufrock feels humiliated, though he can't quite say why, and Hamlet feels the same.

Another kind of 'fluidity' is expressed by "the dilemma of an avowedly heterosexual, homophobic writer whose work is obliquely yet significantly marked by homoerotic investments" in which "the conditions of possibility for Eliot's representation of homoeroticism are precisely the conditions for their disavowal" (Lamos 23). Lamos (in 2004) notes, for example, the elegiac mode in Eliot's poetry whereby it is permissible for love to be expressed between a man and another (dead) man—as in Tennyson's *In Memoriam*. The suggestion is that this elegiac mode functions as a way of articulating homosexual feelings, while eluding the narrow definitions of his time (29). Lamos also notes Eliot's fixation with dead men from the literary past and from his personal life—notably Jean Verdenal to whom he dedicates *Prufrock and Other Observations*. This love is rendered pure, unmediated by queer desire, and acceptable by early 20th-century standards. Indeed, "Eliot's strategy for affirming a denied or refused love appears to be one of displacement through the elegiac mode . . ." (28). This, as Lamos notes, is exemplified in the homoerotic impulse of "The Love Song of St. Sebastian" and "The Death of Saint Narcissus". Again, as with Pondrom's observations, Eliot's ambivalent feelings towards the body are exposed—a source of desire and fear: an impulse toward, and away from.

Eliot's poetical homoeroticisms (and their suppression) more broadly function as an objective correlative for the shadowy impulses that flicker beneath the conscious mind. The strong suggestion of homoerotic desire in "The Death of Saint Narcissus", for instance, combined with its suppression, which in the poem is figured by death, the burning arrows that penetrate the male youth, function as the means by which the poet gets beneath the skin; a means by which the reader descends, along with the poet, the dark insidious streets of his disembodied soul—the way down, which leads, paradoxically, to the Spirit and thus God. It may well be that Eliot suppressed an aspect of his sexuality, and transformed it, by means of this suppression, into art. But it isn't important to know, as Lamos admits, his sexuality. The body itself is suppressed—or

repressed; but it emerges nonetheless from the shadow of his (un)conscious mind, as “damp souls . . . / Sprouting despondently” upon the page, grotesque apparitions—“an aimless smile that hovers in the air / And vanishes” (“Morning at the Window” 4, 8–9):

In the uncertain hour before the morning  
 Near the ending of interminable night  
 At the recurrent end of the unending  
 . . . . .  
 Over the asphalt where no other sound was  
 Between three districts whence the smoke arose  
 I met one walking, loitering and hurried . . . (“Little Gidding” 2.25–27, 2.31–33)

### Shadow Fruit

Eliot borrowed phrases from a wide variety of sources, but, as he said of Lancelot Andrewes, “the constructive force, the fire that fuses them, is his own” (*For Lancelot Andrewes* 17). From his buried life, from the recesses of his emotional experiences, there emerged, too, unexpected fragments that stimulated his poetic sense, that resonated, like this poignant evocation of nostalgia, tinged with fear—a sense of foreboding, made more acute once the reader becomes acquainted with the historical Countess Marie Larisch:

And when we were children, staying at the archduke's,  
 My cousin's, he took me out on a sled,  
 And I was frightened. He said, Marie,  
 Marie, hold on tight. And down we went.  
 In the mountains, there you feel free.  
 I read, much of the night, and go south in the winter. (*The Waste Land* 13–18)<sup>123</sup>

---

<sup>123</sup> “[T]aken verbatim from a conversation [Eliot] had with [Marie] niece and confidante of the Austrian Empress Elizabeth” (Ricks 605; Ricks quotes *WLFacs*).

There is evidence also of “poetic strategy”—particularly in *The Four Quartets*, where a musical pattern emerges between the four individual poems, a thematic and emotional correspondence. Various systems and theories aided his expression, but the poetry, the sense of the “fragmented modern self” (Gish 108)—the *experience*—comes from within, and it precedes theory. The poetry comes first, the feeling—the Word without a word; and second (and last) is the expression, the composition of the poem. What Eliot ‘found’ in his poetry was a way of expressing the “fragmented modern self.” He didn’t need to understand anything, as a poet, except poetry itself. As a literary critic he performed a different role, but his main focus was usually the art itself (which included ‘ideas’ expressed in the art), or the artist in relation to their art and in the context of their time. He made us understand something important about the art and the artist, without recourse to theoretical ‘fictions’.

That is the only value of my criticism, that it should lead people to read works that they have never read, or to re-read them with fresh eyes. (“Letter to Helen Gardner, 13 May 1964”)

Eliot’s literary criticism was usually engaging and passionate, and illuminating. His aesthetic of dissociation is the poetic means by which he transcends the limitations of the body and desire. He desires not to desire—a sentiment first articulated, religiously, in *Ash Wednesday*, but powerfully evoked in his early poetry. It’s a way, as Gish says, of detaching oneself from one’s feelings. It’s Eliot’s mask, his cover, but which we quickly see through: Eliot does not *unwittingly* give himself away; if he was anxious to suppress his homosexuality, say, he would have been more careful; he would not have dared say its name. Or imply it. Eliot, more broadly, exhibits a distaste for the needs of the body, period (including sexual needs) whether hetero- or homosexual, male or female, and the desire to transcend those needs. He “is a poet”, as Armstrong notes, “for whom the body is never so comfortably described.” (69).

The body figures as the analogue of modern life—the city streets of “insidious intent” (“Prufrock” 9).

If Eliot's London suburbs stand for anything beyond themselves, then they stand for a decisive dissociation of sensibility in which matter and metaphysics, body and soul, have parted company. (Mousley 60)

Eliot chooses to remain, to wander, like a disembodied spirit, the sordid landscape of London. This is his *via negativa*; the way down that leads, eventually, to something higher, and for this reason his early poetry is, in a wide sense, *religious*. Eliot's entire poetical collection is a spiritual journey that can be usefully compared to the journey of Dante's protagonist in *The Divine Comedy*: "Let us go"—the very first line of his first published poem. Eliot leads us down half deserted streets, but we have to start somewhere.

Whether one thinks Eliot's poetry is escapist, romantic or nihilist, the fact is he doesn't escape the world. He doesn't retire to a monastery. He lived most definitely in the world—was actively involved in it. But is his philosophy nevertheless (to quote Nietzsche again) "a revolt against the most fundamental conditions of life"? Does his religion, his spirituality, undermine the world of nature, despite his claim that "the natural life and the supernatural life have a conformity to each other" (*Christian Society* 80)? Eliot's Christianity, if not an actual escape from the world, is an evasion of the human responsibility of living—in the Nietzschean and Lawrencian sense—in the flesh.

Eliot, the Christian, does not escape the misery and suffering of the world, as Hammad and Colón correctly insist. He feels (morally, religiously) obliged to live in it—but as a penance, a Dantean journey where the pilgrim willingly endures the darkness of God, a time and place of no joy, except the paradoxical joy of suffering—alleviated, albeit, by temporal pleasures: he "amalgamated such disparate experiences as twelfth-century polyphony and contemporary jazz, High Mass and fine dining" (Sharpe 39). But this is the distinction between the man and the poet. Eliot himself made the distinction between "what Dante believes as a poet and what he believed as a man", and this, as far as I understand, refers to Dante's capacity for transcending the personality via his

God-inspired poetry (“Dante” *Selected Essays* 258). It might be akin to (or paralleled with) the difference between ‘belief’ and ‘assent’, with the latter term suggesting something more profound: *faith in spite of reasons not to believe*, something God-made. But whatever the case, Eliot retains the image of the “flamboyantly ascetic” poet, with his “single bed . . . ebony crucifix [and] bare lightbulb hanging from a chain” (Dirida; no page numbers given). This is a visual instance of his denial of body, or its suppression—the escape, as Cauchi, among others, notes, from the sensual world; it is the evasion of our responsibility to be joyful, to live for “the magnificent here and now of life in the flesh”, as Lawrence says (*Apocalypse* 110):

We ought to dance with rapture that we should be alive and in the flesh, and part of the living incarnate cosmos. . . . There is nothing of me that is alone and absolute except my mind, and we shall find that the mind has no existence by itself, it is only the glitter of the sun on the surface of the waters. . . . I can never escape. But I can deny my connections . . . . Then I am wretched. (110)

But again: we have to note that Eliot, the ordinary man, “had taken up dancing again, & [sic] is quite enjoying it (gramophone)” (Crawford, *After the ‘Waste Land’* 126; Crawford quotes Vivien, Eliot’s first wife). Eliot prostrated himself in a church, and a few days later he wrote ‘dirty’ rhymes (193–195), which consisted of, inter alia, bestiality and the chaplain getting bugged on the “alter” (sic) (“The Columbiad” *The Poems of T. S. Eliot. Volume 2*, 271–285). One is shocked (or merely surprised), not by the content, but by the fact that *Eliot* wrote them. In his religious poetry, the body is transcended; in his amusing rhymes, it is burlesqued. The latter is removed from the context of his religious belief, as the body is distinguished from the spirit. In each case, it feels like a denial, an undermining of the body.

Despite Eliot’s clamberings toward the *ideal*, he reveals, as a Christian, distinctly *un-romantic* tendencies: *submission* to God; the revolt against (or ambivalence towards) nature; the moral curtailment of sensual enjoyment—a spiritual ‘freedom’, where the soul is soothed, relieved of the anxieties caused by “these derelictions . . . these

romantic irritations” (Eliot, “O Lord, Have Patience” 5–6). If he is romantic, it is inverted, upside down; it is not the romanticism of Blake and Shelley: for Eliot dares to defy not God, but humanity and contemporary culture, and damn the consequences. The romantic may acknowledge an unbeatable force in the gods or Fate, but will fight it all the same. They will not kneel before God, unless made to, chained like Prometheus. Eliot submits (or wants to), even before his conversion (despite the occasional bravado—in “The Triumph of Bullshit”, for example).

You should take me in without shame  
 Because I should be dead  
 And when the morning came  
 Between your breasts should lie my head. (“The Love Song of St. Sebastian”  
 18–21)

The “first world” of “Burnt Norton” (1.21 and 22) is a “return to the primal scenes of consciousness”,<sup>124</sup> the innocence of childhood, which in turn draws the spirit back to the prelapsarian Garden: Man and Woman before the Fall—as recounted in Genesis, however, a paradise where there is no predation, no sin. It is, effectively, a spirit world, immaculate, pristine; even though physically represented. Eliot’s soul (and Eliot the poet) yearns for the spirit world, the Kingdom of God. His body meanwhile remains *in* the world—lingers there “Till human voices wake us and we drown”, recalled, that is, into the quotidian world of tea and marmalade, and all the other aspects of nature: rose gardens, ephemeral birds, and dung (“Prufrock” 131). What then is this conformity between “the natural life and the supernatural life”—nature with Christianity—that Eliot voiced in his religious criticism (*Christian Society* 80)?

The supernatural is *embodied* by Eliot in his poetry (just as The Father is embodied by The Son), in his descent into the world, which for him meant the urban decadence of St Louis (his birthplace) and London. This ‘descent’ is necessary, for Eliot, a function of (possible) spiritual salvation: nature, the body, is an *instrumental* good, not a good in

---

<sup>124</sup> Cooper, *Ideology* 153.

itself. This life, for Eliot the Christian, is a pilgrimage, a hard road, in which we encounter the squalid places, the money men “charging high prices” (“Journey of the Magi” 15). We have to go through this to ‘witness the birth of Jesus’ (as it were, or literally)—the miracle. This is the difficulty (and the appeal) of faith: it contravenes the voice of reason. It is the bitter journey to salvation, the “bitter . . . shadow fruit”.<sup>125</sup> The way down is the way up, and they converge like the abstract and the sensual in his poetry—like “The yellow fog that rubs its back upon the window-panes” (“Prufrock” 15).

There is a light. When Pericles recognises his daughter, sees that she is alive, it is like waking, renewed, into the beautiful new world of “new ships”, where the woodthrush calls through the fog (“Marina” 32, 3). It is a heavenly light.

---

<sup>125</sup> “Little Gidding” 2.80.

#### 4. Peach: Body and Spirit in the Poetry of D.H. Lawrence

Would you like to throw a stone at me?  
Here, take all that's left of my peach.

— D. H. Lawrence, "Peach"

##### Resurrection in the Body

In Eliot's "Marina", the "new ships" bring "hope" (32)—life after 'death': Marina, the lost daughter, who was thought to be dead, is alive. She is 'resurrected'—to a new life: "a world of time beyond me" (30). The reader might envisage the ship slowly emerging through the fog to the sound of the woodthrush. In Lawrence's "The Ship of Death", the ship, having set sail for "the longest journey to oblivion" also returns, "drifting, beneath the deathly ash grey / of a flood dawn" (5.717). But it is the body that emerges (9.720).

In both Eliot's and Lawrence's poems, the ship symbolises the means by which one attains the renewal of life. The ships are fragile, paltry things that set sail, tossed about on the waves. When Eliot's ship emerges, the reader feels that they have come to a new place: Eliot's poem is based on the 'recognition' scene in *Pericles*—Shakespeare's play, but the lost/presumed-dead daughter also functions as a metaphor for *la vita nuova*—the new (spiritual) life. It becomes Eliot's own "Recognition Scene as a Christian" (Donoghue 180)—an epiphany of light:

let me

Resign my life for this life, my speech for that unspoken,  
The awakened, lips parted, the hope, the new ships. ("Marina" 30–32)

*Pericles* (in Shakespeare's play) recognises his daughter, and it is a sublime moment. In Eliot's poem, the experience is further sublimated, transmogrified into the Christian vision of the new life.

Christianity teaches us that we “*essentially* and *finally* . . . [are] pure spirit, an abstraction, a term of abstract consciousness” (Lawrence, “Education of the People” *Phoenix 1* 615; Lawrence’s emphases). This gives us our identity with the infinite, which is the goal of life, and it’s reached through selfless love: so all that is love is wholly good, and that which is not is evil. This, for Lawrence, is false (615). Lawrence seeks re-entry into *this* life: “the cruel dawn of coming back to life / out of oblivion // . . . A flush of rose, and the whole thing starts again” (“The Ship of Death” 9.720). But you must first prepare:

Have you built your ship of death, O have you?  
O build your ship of death, for you will need it. (2.717)

Death (in this poem) is the gap, the ‘time’ that intercedes between “the old self and the new”—where the “soul [is carried] on the longest journey” (5.718, 7.718). Lawrence’s ship is his “ark of faith / with its store of food and little cooking pans / and change of clothes” (7.719). The ship’s “store of food” is the spirit’s nourishment required for its journey, “the sustenance of prayer and belief . . .” (Gilbert, *Acts* 309–310). The geocentric imagery recalls the burial rites of the ancient Etruscans—who furnished the dead with all sorts of earthly luxuries, including “the little bronze ship of death that should bear [the dead person] over to the other world”—as well as the stories of the Flood (*Etruscan Places* 17). It is Lawrence’s journey through death, where crowded souls “wrapped still / in the white shirt of the mind’s experiences” “moan / in millions, unable to depart, / having no boat to launch”—souls that “beat / against the silvery adamant walls” (“Ship of Death” 961, 962).<sup>126</sup> These visions are *infernal*: the felt pain of remorse, the regret of having failed to live, of having forfeited the good, sensuous life for the shadow, having wasted the dawn—whether sunk in the spiritual darkness of ‘the virtuous life’, or the ‘machine world’, which the damned later recall as

---

<sup>126</sup> There are three versions of (The) “Ship of Death.” This one is the second listed in *Complete Poems* and is titled without the definite article, unlike the other two versions.

agonised memory,  
 past the strange whirlpools of remembered greed,  
 through the dead weed of a life-time's falsity (963)

To prepare for death (to build your ship), says Lawrence, requires “a life-time's courage”, “eating the brave bread of a wholesome knowledge”, which means being true to your nature—not in a hedonistic way, but religiously, in which the ever-trembling moment is revealed in the dark light of body and spirit consummation (963). That is: “obedience to the urge that arises in the soul” (*Kangaroo* 112). It is for Lawrence the only acceptable form of worship. We must live virtuously—not in the sense of *thou shalt not*, but in the Greco/Roman (or ‘Machiavellian’) sense of that word: *Virtù*—nobility, and physical courage.<sup>127</sup> His “Ship of Death” is a pilgrimage through life and death, and back to life—but life in the flesh. What this *return* (into life of the flesh) entails, we don't know, but Lawrence believes it: “we shall rise again in the flesh, you, I, as we are today, resurrected in the bodies” (Letter to Gordon Campbell, 20 December 1914). Christianity, according to Lawrence, ought to

- . . . teach the Resurrection in the flesh
- . . . add the mystery of Joy-in-Resurrection to the Mass
- . . . inculcate the new conception of the Risen Man. (“The Church” 609)

Christianity denies the Risen Man (the physical human) because the body is corrupt and sinful. It takes refuge in the spirit, but without which the body is dead. Lawrence denies the doctrine that exalts the spirit over the flesh: the Judeo-Christian mind, which “hates the mortal and terrestrial divinity of man” (Lawrence, *Apocalypse* 57). “Peace [is] achieved not beyond but within the world, resurrected body and soul reunited to perform once more the deed of life” (Philip 236).<sup>128</sup>

---

<sup>127</sup> “[T]here is only one word in the Latin vocabulary which signifies virtue, and its meaning is *manly valour*: thus the Romans made courage stand for virtue . . .” (Plutarch 16; emphasis in original).

<sup>128</sup> Phillip here refers to Lawrence's poem “The Ship of Death.”

### Knowledge in the Blood

Like the immortal phoenix, Lawrence is renewed, set forth by “the unknown God / . . . on a new morning” (“Shadows” 727)—if the reader can believe it: but Lawrence is in earnest, and his vision is no more fanciful than Eliot’s Christianity. Neither are readily amenable to a rationalist or empiricist bent of mind—one that limits the nature of reality, sensibly, to the world ‘known’ or discoverable only by the mind or senses. But this epistemology is itself vulnerable to ‘mystification’, and untenable or indemonstrable premises. Is there anything more mystifying than the ‘law’ of ‘cause and effect’? From whence this initial push! The only explanation for the existence of a first cause is some kind of unbegotten, ‘Creator-God’, which entails *eternity*—an abstraction from the actual present.<sup>129</sup> The Aztecs believed in an endless succession of “Worlds successively created and destroyed” (*Mornings in Mexico* 10). This latter pleases Lawrence’s fancy, suits his temperament:

I like to think of the whole show going bust, *bang!*—and nothing but bits of chaos flying about. Then out of the dark, new little twinklings reviving from nowhere, nowhere.” (10–11; Lawrence’s emphasis)

When Lawrence spoke of the ‘mystification of science’,<sup>130</sup> it was not ‘anti-science’, but a reminder that there is a point beyond which *didactic* science cannot fathom. “[D]idactic science is as dead . . . as dogmatic religion. Both are wonderless.” But “[s]cience in its true condition of wonder is . . . religious” (“Hymns in a Man’s Life” *Life* 349).

If we were as tiny as fairies, and lived only a summer, how lovely these great trees [grape-hyacinth flowers] of bells would be to us, towers of night and dawn-blue globes . . . we should see a god in them.” (“Flowery Tuscany” *Phoenix* 1 51)

---

<sup>129</sup> “The quivering nimble hour of the present, this is the quick of Time. This is the immanence. The quick of the universe is the *pulsating, carnal self*, mysterious and palpable. So it is always.” Lawrence, “Poetry of the Present.” *Complete Poems* 183; Lawrence’s emphasis.

<sup>130</sup> See for example his poem “Anaxagoras.”

Lawrence loves these flowers, and when he speaks for them, we know them. A dry biological account would stifle the life out of them, would falsify them with the objective magnifying glass: it would produce (or reproduce) the flowers of textbooks.<sup>131</sup> Objective (modern) science concerns itself only with the relationship of cause and effect, which “is perfect as far as it goes”, but limited: “a science of the dead world” (Lawrence, *Fantasia* 6). Even biology doesn’t concern itself with actual life—only mechanistically: functions and apparatus (6). Lawrence rejected the intellectualisation of knowledge—“the cerebralization of feeling” (Saksena, para 1; no page numbers given).<sup>132</sup> This, for him, is connected to the industrialisation of modernity. What is wanted instead, for the individual, is a dynamic response to life and creativity. The finality of modern science, or its attempt at finalisation, is a dead end. It leads to the “nihilistic impulse towards either utilitarian logic or pure, abstract ‘knowing.’” (Para 1)

### **The Conjunction of Opposites**

Lawrence speaks for *this* life: he submits to *fate*, to the “impulse of creation” (“The Reality of Peace” *Phoenix* 1 671). Balance is key to life, and Christianity has (or would) upset this balance by the elimination of the flesh: we are creatures of “light and virtue” but at the same time “a living stream of seething corruption”; we must embrace and understand both to be free (676, 677). It is the conjunction of opposites that keeps the balance of the cosmos, the confluence of two rivers. Take this away, you have chaos: “A disarray of falling stars” (“Both Sides of the Medal” 236). These opposites—of ‘Lion’ and ‘Unicorn’—can only thrive in opposition to each other; if one is vanquished, so is the other (“The Crown” *Phoenix* 2 370). “This is our eternal life, in these two eternities which nullify each other” (370). Without strife, “all things would pass away” (“Preface to ‘Reptiles.’” *Complete Poems* 348). This is Lawrence’s ‘dualism’—a tension of opposites, which is however resolved, “consummated [by the Holy Ghost] into pure unison” (“The Reality of Peace” *Phoenix* 1 680). Life and death feed each other, are necessary. When we understand, “we pass beyond the scope of this duality into perfection, in actual living

---

<sup>131</sup> “He knows the name of flowers but . . . senses differences between them besides the botanica.” (Nin 59).

<sup>132</sup> The page numbers for Saksena’s 2011 essay are referenced as 123–152, but the individual page numbers do not appear on the document.

equipoise of blood and bone and spirit” (681). These opposites are ‘polar opposites’—not irreconcilable, but, as Montgomery observes, an “essential unity, a unity that yet allows each to retain its own distinct identity” (15). Intellect stifles the body; “consciousness focused in the mind so easily checks the flow of life to the phallus, that the Word thwarts the desires of the Flesh . . .” (66). Thus, there’s an imbalance, the product of Western civilisation—from the Socratic schism of art and philosophy, to Christianity (with its Word made Flesh, and its Flesh made Spirit), right up to the machine age of modernity.

If there is a serpent of secret and shameful desire in my soul, let me not beat it out of my consciousness . . . Let me bring it out to the fire to see what it is . . . I must accept it, and not exclude it from my understanding. There is nothing . . . to be ashamed of . . . except only our craven veils we hang up to save our appearances. Pull down the veils and understand everything . . . (“Reality of peace” *Phoenix 1* 677–678)

The serpent re-emerges in a poem “from a fissure in the earth-wall” (“Snake” 349).

For [the snake] seemed to me . . . like a king,  
Like a king in exile, uncrowned in the underworld, //  
. . . one of the lords  
Of life. (351)

The intellect instinctively fears the primordial writhing body emerging from the bowels of the earth. Lawrence’s “Snake” is, to use Gail Kern Paster’s phrase in relation to the snake (adder) metaphor in Shakespeare’s *Julius Caesar*, “affect-laden” (217).

Lawrence’s poem illustrates (again to borrow the words of Paster), “the nonconscious, collective, and contagious aspect of affect” (220), via the narrator’s reasoning and feeling processes—the voice of his education and his instinctive fear, which combine to overcome his respect and admiration for this “king” of “the underworld.” The poem, as Gilbert says, “illuminates the crucifying conflict between the two modes of

consciousness" (*Acts* 174). That is: the intuitive physical knowledge of the body, and the intellect. The latter is "[t]he voice of . . . education" ("Snake" 350); the civilised mind that rejects the snake's "phallic goodness", through fear and distrust (Gilbert, *Acts* 174). It is the voice of "modern morality [which] has its roots in hatred, a deep, evil hate of the instinctive, intuitional, procreative body" (Lawrence, "Introduction to These Paintings" *Life* 383). The procreative body (or sex) has been crucified "for the glorification of the spirit, the mental consciousness" (387). "Why were we crucified into sex?" ("Tortoise Shout" 364):

The cross,  
The wheel on which our silence first is broken,  
Sex, which breaks up our integrity, our single inviolability, our deep silence,  
Tearing a cry from us. (366)

The cry of the tortoise symbolises the re-creation of the physical world; what was torn asunder is made whole again in the act of procreation. It is the cry of abandonment, of Christ/Osiris—for what is lost, to be made whole again, re-born (367). It is the body that is lost, falling away from the spirit, rotting like fruit off a tree. But this rotting is an act of *purification* as well, the body transformed, through death, into the new life of the Risen Lord, who "live[s] the great life of the flesh and the soul together . . ." ("The Risen Lord" *Life* 447). This is not a return to Eden, which for Lawrence was a limitation: a sky-blue prison of the ego, of mental consciousness,<sup>133</sup> a world in which one is abstracted from life, nailed to the immutable and eternal world of the spirit ("A Propos of 'Lady Chatterley's Lover'" *Phoenix* 2 511). This brings "neither bliss nor liberation, but nullity" (511).

### **Look, We Have Come Through**

Lawrence invoked instead, from his first collection of poetry—*Love Poems and Others* (1913)—the 'valley' "[f]leshed like me", "*wider* than Paradise", the iris and wood-pigeon,

---

<sup>133</sup> I have paraphrased Lawrence's words from a different context: see "Introduction to These Paintings." *Life* 395.

and the “snarling red jaws” of the sow, which we see by the light of a lantern (“Renascence” 38; my emphasis). “We have bit no forbidden apple, / Eve and I” (37). Lawrence embraces all of nature: the lamb bleating for the spring, the tiger who “leaps on the trembling deer . . . in complete fulfilment of desire”—‘red in tooth and claw’,<sup>134</sup> its pitiless indifference (“The Crown” *Phoenix* 2 411). In “The Cherry Robbers” (also from *Love Poems*), Lawrence juxtaposes death and fruit, the colour red being their unifying quality. There is nothing sinister in this; the poem is an affirmation of life: the cycle, which includes death and rebirth through the joyous encounter with the girl with her fruit “who laughs at me”, and, “with folded wings”, three dead birds “[s]tained with red dye” (36). It illustrates Margrét Gunnarsdóttir Champion’s observation: “Affect . . . always implies an interactive context and because of the dynamic mix of bodies a sense of emergence, an excess to the situational” (163). The blood red cherries, the red-stained birds, the girl with the scarlet fruit are the blood of life, sex and death. They are affective—transmitters of emotion: the poem breaks through the contours of language and, to borrow Champion’s phrase in relation to Affect theory, “resonate[s] with a primal event that preceded signification and the division between word and phenomenon” (163). The feelings engendered precede language. Affect theory “investigates the unmediated body in everyday contexts and situations . . .” (162). This is what “Cherry Robbers” does, and for Lawrence, “[t]his effort into sheer naked contact, *without an intermediary or mediator*, is the root meaning of religion” —a sensual experience: “deep-down in the senses, inexplicable and inscrutable” (“New Mexico” *Life* 366; Lawrence’s emphasis; 362). The whole experience of the girl with the blood red-cherries and the dead birds is also, in the same way, “inexplicable and inscrutable”—without recourse, that is, to other elements in the poem besides the actual words.

But it is not until his 1917 collection of poems that Lawrence breaks through—in terms of his personal life and the quality of his poetry: in *Look! We Have Come Through*<sup>135</sup> Lawrence celebrates the nowness, the palpating presentness of the moment, bathes it in shadow and light:

---

<sup>134</sup> This famous phrase is from Alfred Tennyson’s *In Memoriam* (poem 56).

<sup>135</sup> This collection of poems was first published in 1917, but most of the poems were written before the war.

By the isar, in the twilight  
 We found the dark wild roses  
 Hanging red as the river; and simmering  
 Frogs were singing . . .

.....

We whispered: "No one knows us. . . ." ("River Roses" 217)

—or living darkness: "[t]he great black night scooped out, / And this fireglow":

Take off your things

Your shoulders, your bruised throat!

Your breasts, your nakedness!

This fiery coat! ("New Year's Eve" 238)

The image is so sharp and intense that it shuts off everything else in the world: there is this fire, the core; the two lovers, and the ringing darkness. This is the mysterious bond between the body of us now, and the dark spirit of the cosmos; the dualities of flame and shadow, bonded by the passion of the two lovers; the body's resurrection: "[t]he flower in the bud / Again, undefiled" ("Valentine's Night" 239).

In "Rabbit Snared in the Night", we feel the rabbit's palpitating life form in our hands. Life is even more mysterious than death. Lawrence obliterates the boundaries between the feelings, the passions that govern us. He obliterates the distinction between man and rabbit; the two beings are held so close that their blood intermingles, the desire in one coursing up the arms of the other:

It must be the want in you  
 that has drawn this terrible draught of white fire  
 up my veins . . . (241)

We are left with a flame-like, palpitating thing, which is neither love nor hate, but both combined: a super-emotion, the white heat that has its source in the unfathomable mystery of being. We breathe the air it breathes. We are implicated in this mysterious life/death exchange by Lawrence's sheer strength of will, his face-to-face presence, the latent energy, the barely contained passion that fumes in a series of taut lines, which rise in a quiet frenzy, a crescendo of modified, mesmerising repetitions, which finds its peace in the final calm of the last stanza. We bear witness to it, and are confronted with the dual realities of the cosmos, that necessary balance, the tension between life and death, light and darkness, and good and evil. Lawrence brings us right to the edge, the intermediate line between being and not being, and opens the door.

Lawrence has broken through—eloped with Frieda von Richthofen, a German aristocrat married to an English professor. Through 'sin' they re-enter 'Paradise' (Germany, and then Italy), a neat reversal of Dante's *contrapasso*,<sup>136</sup> and it is a triumph of the human body over the despotic spirits of heaven and hell. We return home—not to the spirit's home, but to the body's: "Eve dishevel / Your hair for the bliss-drenched revel" ("Paradise Re-Entered" 243). For without the body, the spirit is nothing. The spirit descends into the body, and Lawrence comes through, a new man, into the world "beyond good and evil" (243):

. . . we storm the angel-guarded  
Gates of the long-discarded  
Garden, which God has hoarded  
Against our pain. (243)

Lawrence is like Lucifer reclaiming his 'birthright', or Blake. He commits himself to the flesh, the deed of life—in "Frohnleichnam" (209–210), the joyful body, a "feast of incarnation": the mortal body "glistening with all the moment and all [her] beauty"

---

<sup>136</sup> Briefly: the irony of individual punishments. In Dante's *Divine Comedy*, the sinners are punished by means of the sin which damned them. Here, instead of being expelled from Paradise for adultery, Lawrence and Frieda enter it.

(Gilbert, *Acts* 98). *Look!* (the whole collection) is (inter alia) a rewrite of Genesis, “the fall retold . . . [as a Nietzschean] successful rebellion against a slave morality” (Wright 81). Judging by his writing, Lawrence appears happiest in Germany and Italy before the Great War. His poetry, his letters, and notably *Twilight in Italy*, record (as with *Look!*) his breakthrough with Frieda where “the sunshine runs like birds singing”, and “cypresses are candles to keep the darkness aflame in the full sunshine” (42, 89).

### **Birds, Beasts and Flowers (and Fruit)**

Lawrence’s deep commitment to the flesh, the joyful body, is reaffirmed in “Pomegranate”, the opening poem of Lawrence’s next collection, *Birds, Beasts and Flowers* (1923): “[i]t is no sin to drink as much as a man can take” (“Preface to ‘Fruits.’” *Complete Poems* 277). “I am not wrong” (“Pomegranate” 278). The wrong is to forgo the pleasures of the flesh:

Do you mean to tell me there should be no fissure?  
 No glittering, compact drops of dawn?  
 Do you mean it is wrong, the gold-filmed skin, integument, shown ruptured?  
 (278)

Christianity has crucified man and woman, the flesh of God, and killed the joy of living by encumbering us with the morality of the spirit, and the threat of paradisaic expulsion and eternal damnation. There should be no Crown of thorns but, as in Tuscany, one that is flourishing, worn blithely tilted “[o]ver the left eyebrow” (278). “Pomegranate” is a celebration of life, not only the joy of the “[r]osy, tender, glittering within the fissure”, but the pain of rupture, a broken heart—“so lovely, dawn-kaleidoscopic within the crack” (278, 279).

*Birds*, the whole collection, is a confrontation with the voice of traditional/Christian morality, and Lawrence challenges it aggressively, armed, as it were, with a flower and some fruit. “Who are you, who is anybody to tell me I am wrong?” (278). Lawrence spits his pomegranate seeds at the prudish guardians of ‘decency’, the censors of the body,

the fissure of the female sex, figured in “Peach” by “the ripple down the sphere”—the “incision” (279). How the peach tempts us, “voluptuous”, “hanging with such inordinate weight”, like it’s about to drop (279)! “[If] man had made it . . .” [if the *mind* had intervened] it would have been “round and finished like a billiard ball”—for moral reasons (279; my emphasis and interjection). Nature, as Sagar notes, “abhors a billiard ball, the perfect-unto-itself sealed monad, the closed system” (*Open Self and Open Poem* 291). Sagar quotes Ursula Le Guin’s pottery analogy: It’s the “hand that shapes the mind into clay.”<sup>137</sup> This is what Lawrence does with his art (291).

Notice here the contrast between Lawrence’s celebration of the body and Eliot’s veiled ambivalence towards it, in particular with reference to the body of Woman, and Christianity. Christian morals would deprive us of this joy. Does Eliot’s Prufrock *dare* to eat the peach?—as if it were sinful (“Prufrock” 122).<sup>138</sup> Presumably, it’s not the potential tartness of the peach that makes Prufrock hesitate, but the principle of bodily risk—“the awful daring of a moment’s surrender” (*The Waste Land* (403); and what the fruit symbolises, its sexual connotation, its association therefore with original sin, apprehended (even if unconsciously) by the not-yet-Christian Eliot/Prufrock. It symbolises, also, the fear of what others will say about you: “[t]hey will say . . .” (41 and 44).

The Christian is repelled, as they are by the serpent of Eden, and afraid. When Eve first knew in her mind that she was naked, she sewed the fig leaves to cover her nakedness (“Figs” 282).<sup>139</sup> The fig, symbol of female sex, is repressed, covered with a leaf by the indignant God of the Bible. This is Christianity’s denial of the body, an object of shame which is parodied by Eliot’s lurid depictions of the female body —“the good old hearty female stench”—as a source of shame or disgust (*He do the Police* 269). Lawrence, “a blind Samson”, intuitive, tactile, would shake the “pillars that hold up the dome of high ideal heaven”, the “stiff, metallic-stunned” upholders of “ideal civilisation”—the stultifying

<sup>137</sup> Sagar cites Le Guin’s quote as *Always Coming Home* 175.

<sup>138</sup> Sagar makes a similar observation in *Open Self and Open Poem* 290.

<sup>139</sup> Adam and Eve “knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves. . . .” (Genesis 3.7)

impediments of conventional morality: the bonds that would strangle the life out of us, like a vine wrapped around a tree (“The Revolutionary” 287, 288).

See if I don't bring you down, and all your high opinion  
And all your ponderous roofed-in erection of right and wrong,  
Your particular heavens,  
With a smash. (289)

Lawrence is, as ever, on the side of transformation, not “progress” in terms of industrial development. This, for him, is *not* “progress” (nor is it for Eliot), but *degeneration*, the triumph of the spirit (of rationalism, of the ‘civilised’ world) over nature. He understands, as I’ve said, “the barbarian rage”: “Attila and the Goths *had* to do some kicking”—had to shake the pillars of Rome, just as Rome shook those of Greece (“America, Listen to your own” *Phoenix 1* 89; Lawrence’s emphasis). Until this happens, we have moral stagnation, the pillars of ideal heaven—whether in the form of Christianity, or the “silly little individualism” of the English, who have frustrated the “instinct of community” (“Nottingham and Mining Countryside” *Phoenix 1* 139).<sup>140</sup>

In “Cypresses”, Lawrence evokes the mystery of the pure bodily, mindless, non-civilised human, before the intervention of the rational spirit of humankind. Christianity (and modern civilisation) is afraid of, mistrusts, this dark mystery, these dark, shadowy forces of life; as the Romans (the first enablers of Christianity) distrusted the darkly “flickering men of Etruria, / Whom [they] called vicious” (297). Lawrence laments the loss of “the delicate magic of life”—“buried / The silenced races and all their abominations” (“Cypresses 298). For him

---

<sup>140</sup> Lawrence urges us to be ourselves, emotionally and physically self-sufficient individuals, but the “silly little individualism” refers to those that isolate themselves from others—in the Englishman, the pompous notion that his home is his castle, even if his home is a council flat. Stick Napoleon on a desert island, he is nothing. “This grand isolation, this reducing ourselves to our very elemental selves, is the greatest fraud . . .” (“We Need One Another” *Phoenix 1* 189). We are like individual leaves on the same tree. See for example “Education of the People” *Phoenix 1* 609. See also “The Man Who Loved Islands”, Lawrence’s short story of a man who isolates himself from the community, and ultimately perishes on his tiny island.

There is only one evil, to deny life  
 As Rome denied Etruria  
 And mechanical America Montezuma still. (298)

Rome's eventual victory, in this poem, represents the victory of civilisation (the spirit, the intellect), and the suppression of the body (nature); just as her fall marked its temporary displacement, and the revival of 'barbarism'. Lawrence would restore that "delicate magic", "the sinuous, flame-tall cypresses / That swayed their length of darkness"—"a dead race and a dead speech" (298, 296, 296). The Etruscans, for Lawrence, lived in and for the body, "Naked", unselfconsciously, with "some of Africa's imperturbable sang-froid" (296).

Lawrence re-asserts the primacy of the body. The spirit, God, cannot exist prior to the body. The body engenders itself, like "flesh-scent of this wicked [fig] tree" ("Bare Fig-Trees" 299): one branch gives birth to another, "putting forth each time to heaven" (299). The tree is embodied, shorn of the stinking righteousness of Judeo/Christian spirituality, which is bodiless. The body of the fig tree reaches out to heaven, each branch glorifying in its Self, a body in its own right. In "Bare Almond Trees", the "Black, rusted, iron trunk . . . [is] like sensitive steel in the air" (300).<sup>141</sup> It puts out its feelers, scanning the air for some strange electric god. This is the communing of nature and the mystery. We might think of the spark when the fingers of Man and God almost meet in Michelangelo's *The Creation of Adam*. There is no division between nature and the mystery, but air; nor is there a divide between religion and science. The language of science is miscible with that of wonder. But in Michelangelo's painting, the man is passive, languid: he reclines, he *receives*, from God, the creative spark. Lawrencian Man, on the contrary, assails the heavens, and *becomes* again, struggles into being, rises "Like iron implements twisted, hideous out of the earth", the struggle felt, again, by the use of repetition, the hard-edged syllables, and in the long inhalations of the poem's rhythm (300). The reader can 'hear' the tree growing—the audible strain, as of metal

---

<sup>141</sup> "The almond was the symbol of resurrection", says Lawrence in his introduction to the 'flower' part of *Birds, Beasts and Flowers* ("Flowers" *Complete Poems* 303).

being wrenched, twisted into shape, “climbing the slopes” (300). In “Almond Blossom”, the mystery blooms: the tree emerges, bodily, from “the long dark nights of the evening star”, Christ-like after the “long-nighted Gethsemane” but “[u]npromised, / No bounds being set” (305, 305, 306). In an act of “super-faith” it breaks the iron bonds, storms up to heaven, and announces itself (304).

. . . it is not from the sky . . .  
 Flying not down from heaven, but storming up . . .  
 Along the iron, to the living steel  
 In rose-hot tips, and flakes of rose-pale snow  
 Setting supreme annunciation to the world. (304)

“Almond Blossom” is not just a poem about “the wonder of natural process” (Gilbert, *Acts* 153). It’s a triumph of “the snow-remembering heart” (“Almond Blossom” 305):<sup>142</sup>

a prolonged Passion leading ultimately to the crucifixion of the two selves<sup>143</sup>  
 reconciled in one and the rebirth such reconciliation portends: “The Cross  
 sprouting its superb and fearless flowers!” (*Acts* 153; Gilbert quotes “Almond  
 Blossom” 305)

Like the almond tree and the snake, glory rises from the bowels of earth—a storming-up *to* heaven (not *from*). It is “Pluto”, “Infernal Dis”, the god of Hades, who gives us flowers (“Purple Anemones” 307). Glory begins here, and the body rises up, heavenward, and announces itself to the spirit.

But the spirit cannot be drawn from the body. The apostle Matthew is uplifted in the morning “like a lark at heaven’s gate”, but his “terrestrial manhood” falls back (for he *is* a man):

---

<sup>142</sup> Contrast this with Eliot’s “forgetful snow” in *The Waste Land*.

<sup>143</sup> The two selves, Gilbert explains, are “an intellectual [or brain/nerve] and an intuitional [blood] consciousness” (*Acts* 152). “[T]he tree, as Lawrence sees it . . . is animated by a nerve-brain knowledge of finality against which its blood-self . . . must struggle . . .” (153). The resurrection of the tree/the self/the body marks the reconciliation of the two selves. See also 147–148.

To the dark zenith of Thine antipodes  
Jesus Uplifted.

Bat-winged heart of man,  
Reversed flame  
Shuddering a strange way down the bottomless pit  
To the great depths of its reversèd zenith. ("St Matthew" 322)

Matthew "can no more deny the bat-wings of [his] fathom-flickering spirit of darkness / Than the wings of the Morning and Thee, Thou Glorified" (323). This, being a man, is his way: again, *balance*: 'virtue' and 'corruption'. Both are necessary, mutually dependent: "hell and heaven are the scales of the balance of life" ("When Satan Fell" 710). There can be no fall without a corresponding rise. There is no greatness without that which is *not* great. Matthew remains Man: even when the *Son* of Man ("O remorseless logic") draws him up, his "heart beats, and throws the dark blood from side to side" (320). He remains Man (and Spirit) always, until his heart stops. But when the heart stops, Matthew says, "I might be a soul in bliss . . . / But that is another *matter*" (321; my emphasis). Lawrence himself doesn't believe it. "Listen, Paraclete" (323): I 'know' that the spirit does not survive the death of the body. And Matthew is a man.

Jesus is a 'fish', however. "In the beginning / Jesus was called The Fish . . . / And in the end." ("Fish" 340; the ellipses are Lawrence's). The fish is alien, other, a "grey, monotonous soul" (338). His god is not our god. The fish is loveless. The fish existed "before God was love" (337). If Jesus is the Fish in the beginning and the end, who is He? Or What? He is the one who triumphs over physical love, desire. If Jesus is Love, he is Love in the abstract only. What has he to do with us, therefore? He was Man/flesh, but now mere spirit. We are flesh and spirit together or neither, says Lawrence. Jesus the Man had His passion, but Christianity de-transubstantiates this passion into something aqueous-strange, shimmering above us, as fish do in the depths. The fish is a symbol of Christianity, and if Lawrence describes it as abstract and loveless, he

means for us to understand that Christianity and the Christian God make demands upon us that are alien to our nature. It is a god Lawrence doesn't recognise. "Fish", more broadly, asserts the unknowability of the Other—whether human, or bird, beast or flower. Bouche makes the observation that the poem

unfolds in a tension between the effort to depict the singular experiences of fishes and a recurrent sense of the unattainable otherness constituting the lives of . . . fish, from a human perspective. (Bouche, para 8; no page numbers given)

This method, Bouche calls "*critical anthropomorphism*", whereby the Other is approached "until their radical difference appears" (para 16; my emphasis).<sup>144</sup>

The tension between what is known ('bodily') and what is unknowable, is especially acute in "Fish", but is felt throughout *Birds*—a collection which Chaudhuri nevertheless calls an "exhibition of stuffed birds and beasts, [Lawrence's] collection of textual mannequins, his pantomime of nature" (60). Chaudhuri's use of the cut/paste metaphor in relation to Lawrence's poems imputes to him a mechanistic process where body parts are made to function scissor-like, as if manipulated by the hand of a puppeteer. Lawrence the 'body artist' is thereby undermined. Lawrence, however, reuses 'materials'<sup>145</sup> (images, motifs) from one poem to another, not as a mere bit of recycling, as Chaudhuri asserts; but, to borrow from Eliot, as "a new beginning, a raid on the inarticulate" ("East Coker" 5.8). One poem is the spur for the next, which we see most obviously in Lawrence's *Last Poems*.

[Lawrence] is not trying to project himself into these creatures, nor is he trying, really, to interpret them. They remain alien, brute, essentially unknowable. They

---

<sup>144</sup> The problem with *anthropomorphism*—the "projection of self on other creatures"—for Lawrence is that it "would be evidence of a lack of *respect* for the members of other species. It would constitute an erasure of their singularities" (Bouche, para 5; Bouche's emphasis). It is a denial of the Other.

<sup>145</sup> Chaudhuri's metaphor.

exist in their own absolute realms of being, separate from him . . . (Oates, *New Heaven* 64).

He is utterly absorbed in their otherness: "in a boat on the Zeller lake . . . // I said to my heart, *who are these?* / And my heart couldn't own them. . . ." ("Fish" 337; Lawrence's emphasis and ellipses). Lawrence is also aware of his own otherness from the point of view of the fish: "I, a many-fingered horror of daylight to him, / have made him die" (339).

And yet: *Birds* is no "passive appreciation"; instead it attempts to "penetrate into the being of natural objects, to show what they are in themselves . . ." (Hough 201). Lawrence does not succumb to the "natural piety . . . of faithful dogs", but sees "the strangeness, the real antagonism" in the encounters between humans and beasts (204).

Yet a profounder kind of natural piety is present all the same—profounder because it does not reduce everything to the anthropomorphic, because it recognises otherness and difference. This is Lawrence's theme in "Snake" [for example] (204).

The ass, however, is more relatable than the fish (and snake), and Lawrence invests it, in his poem ("The Ass"), with human attributes:

He fell into the rut of love,  
 Poor ass, like man, always in a rut,  
 The pair of them alike in that (378)

Like the first man and woman, like us, the ass falls from pride to the knowledge of desire and shame, and is sold into slavery: how he suffers! remembering! You can see it in his eyes, in "his ponderous head" ("The Ass" 378). Hence the triumphant ride of Jesus into Jerusalem. We are saddled, burdened, by this alien, Christian God. The ass,

in Lawrence's poem, does not represent the humility of Jesus; the "submissive ass" ridden by Jesus is the triumphant overcoming of desire, the triumph of spirit over flesh (379). It is not Jesus who is humble, but the ass who is—*humiliated*. It is the loss of freedom that the ass, with his doleful eyes, regrets. Love has conquered him, and he is condemned to "Everlasting lament in everlasting desire" (378). He is mocked—like the *man* Jesus bearing His cross—abused, called names, "[t]ied by the nose" (379). And the "knot, inside, deadlocked between two desires": sexual love and freedom (379). It is Jesus the *spirit* which is Other. The ass is clipped, just as the Lion of Saint Mark is, but the latter with wings of the spirit, surmounted by the "Lamb of God", demoted to a guardian of sheep: again—the triumph of the spirit over the body ("St Mark" 324). Sacred (Christian) love denies the necessity of humans to be individual—"proud as a lion, isolated as a star." But if we are forced to love our neighbours, we will hate them ("Love." *Phoenix 1* 155).

These dualities of body and spirit are further explored in "Elephant", but the relationship is more complex (or complicated) in the intricate symbolisms, and the 'exchanges' between the elephants, the "pale little wisp of a Prince of Wales" (and his entourage of "white people") and the natives—the Ceylon "devil-dancers luminous with sweat" (387, 387, 388). The Prince's pale sickliness and his elevated position, raised high on a "small pagoda", sets him apart and makes him conspicuous—but like the *proverbial* elephant. The whole performance, the spectacle of this diffident *boy* being entertained by elephants, fireworks, weird devil music and naked men dancing is incongruous, farcical and loaded with irony—but irony (as usual for Lawrence) free of the modernist habit of exercising "mental dominance over the emotions" (Bell, *Idea of the Aesthetic* 15). The Prince's *elevation* is actual and figurative, which in itself is ironic, given the debilitated state of his physical and spiritual condition. His motto, as the Prince of Wales, is *Ich dien* ("I serve"), but he isn't fit to serve, this "tired remnant of royalty" (389). He's frightened. Moreover, it is he who is served—by natives, bodily superior, vigorous men, among them three chieftains—"dark-faced royalty" (388).

What would they do, those jungle men running with sweat, with the strange dark laugh in their eyes . . .

If they knew that his motto was *Ich dien*?

And that he meant it.

They begin to understand.

The rickshaw boys begin to understand.

And then the devil comes into their faces,

. . . a cold, rebellious, jeering devil. /

.....

The mystery of the dark mountain of blood, reeking in homage, in lust, in rage,

(389–390)

The thought of *what they would do* is intoxicating, like the mad dancers, the devil music and the “vast-blooded” elephants; it is the natives who should be served. What is this pale spirit of a ‘Prince’ and the spectacle of fireworks compared to the pulse of tropical night and these elemental forces of nature? The former are ineffectual imitations. But would Lawrence himself fare better than the future King Edward VIII?

I wish they had given the three feathers<sup>146</sup> to me:

.....

*Serve me, I am meet to be served.*

*Being royal of the gods.* (392; Lawrence’s italics)

There is irony, post facto: considering Lawrence’s own poor physical health. “He was on the verge of pulmonary thrombosis and could not take the overheated climate”, and had to leave the island (Boyle; no page numbers given). Why should Lawrence be served, though? Not because of money: “I’ve got none” (“Fenimore Cooper’s White Novels” *Selected Literary Criticism* 313). Not on the basis of physical superiority: as Lawrence admits, he lacks “beauty and manly strength” (313). Intellectual superiority, then? But the intellect, the mind, the spirit, as represented by the pale Prince, is nothing without

---

<sup>146</sup> Symbol of the Prince of Wales.

the blood of the body. The idea of a tubercular white man from Nottingham commanding a band of flexious young ‘savages’ and those blood-mountain elephants is comical, even if supported by countless precedents. Perhaps Lawrence is being wistful for once, merely expressing the desire for a state of affairs contrary to reality, though I doubt it. His ‘superiority’—“to most of the men I meet” (313)—lies in his lust for life, which is expressed in the bodily force of his poetic voice, carnal like a beast breaking its chains, the Word made flesh; it lies “just in myself”—a “natural superiority” (313). It’s intuitive, then, and vague; and perhaps, as Lawrence admits, conceited (313).

### **Primitive Bodies**

Lawrence seems, in equal measure, to be attracted to, and repulsed by, ‘the horror’ of nature, and humanity in its wild state: the dark, primitive soul, the sinisterism of devil-dancers and the human sacrifices of old Mexico—primitive religions in which body and spirit are unified to the extent that the meaning of one is informed by (or through) the other: where spiritual ‘knowledge’ (or religious experience) is felt through the body. The Europeans, for Lawrence (with admitted exceptions at various times in Lawrence’s travels), lack (or have lost) contact with this ‘dark soul’, a feature of which is unconsciousness—life lived in, and for, the body (C. James 172). This unconsciousness is the bodily instinct of living things, a faculty which has degenerated among the ‘civilised’ races. It is the antithesis, the opposite (and complementary) pole, of the spirit, of the Lamb of God, of the dove “[w]ith an olive sprig in his mouth” (“The American Eagle” 413). Lawrence contemplates the horror and unvanquishable reality of death and suffering. But how does he feel about the “Blood-thirsty” American Eagle that lifts “the red smoky heart” of a rabbit “as the Aztec priests used to lift red hearts of men” (“Eagle in New Mexico” 373, 374)? In this poem, he’s repulsed, and the eagle (blood-thirsty America) is dismissed:

Even the sun in heaven can be curbed and chastened at last  
By the life in the hearts of men.  
And you, great bird, sun-starer, heavy black beak  
Can be put out of office as sacrifice bringer. (374)

Even if the religion or the mythology appeals to him, one senses Lawrence's hesitation in regard to its application in the 1920s. He understands that nothing remains stagnant; it will not (or will no longer) do to perform human sacrifices, even if it does appease some deep grievance. There's ambivalence in Lawrence's attitude nonetheless, as expressed in his poetry—"I, who am half in love with you [America]" ("The Evening Land" 292)—and other work: in *The Plumed Serpent*, for example, where Kate (the novel's protagonist) oscillates between remaining in a cruel and dangerous environment (1920s Mexico) or returning to her pleasant but barren existence in England.

Lawrence was interested in ancient religion and mythology in as much as it expressed humans' deep relationship with the world: the 'primitive mind', a mind, as Schneider notes, not "poisoned by Christianity or by rationalism and capitalism"—"a 'physical religion' . . . essentially amoral and non-retributive" (162). This conforms with Lawrence's spirituality, one which acknowledges polarities of good and evil, light and dark, and so on, the union of which is posited as a way of living, and of engaging with nature (164). He embraced them as part of a unified whole, where one, in part, defines the other. What Lawrence admired in the American/Mexican Indian (as well as in the old Greeks and the Etruscans) was their religious feeling, which communicated itself as corporeal experience. It was alive, distinguished therefore from the anaemic spiritualism of Christianity, and the golden-egg-laying Eagle, "[t]he *dove* of liberty"—symbol of New America, Dollar worship ("The American Eagle" 413–414; my emphasis). Of the two, Lawrence preferred the former:

as Christians [the Mexican Indians] . . . are melancholy . . . without hope . . . suddenly wicked, and don't like to work. But they are also good . . . gentle . . . honest . . . not at all greedy for money, and to me that is marvellous, they care so little for possessions, here in America where the whites care for nothing else. (Letter to Baroness Anna von Richthofen, 31 May 1923).

He is put off by the idea of live human hearts torn out from their cavities, and uplifted: the heart sacrificed to the sun left men heartless—but “undauntedly religious” (“New Mexico” *Life* 361). The point Lawrence makes, over and over, however, is that you can’t force a living thing to be what it is not; if you force the lion to lie with the lamb, you pervert nature. This, according to Lawrence, is Christianity, democracy, socialism, and all the money-driven impulses of Western culture. It is otherwise difficult to pin Lawrence down permanently with a specific belief or opinion: as Erica Jong said, with Lawrence in mind: “the real artist is a born upstart, he will never (willingly) wear a rosette in his buttonhole . . .” (Qtd in Adelman 519).

*Being* was more important to him than *knowing*: “any statement of permanent truth being necessarily in error in relation to a shifting reality . . .” (C. Brown, “Finding God in D.H. Lawrence’s Poetry”; no page numbers given). This indeed accounts for (some of) his ‘self-contradictions’: things change, and he himself developed, did *not* remain static; he *modified* his feelings—sometimes, it is true, within ‘a day’, or (as it were) the same page. It could depend on the weather, or whether he had eaten well that morning—sometimes literally, as in, most notably, *Sea and Sardinia*.<sup>147</sup> But only a person who keeps the same opinions, who is unfailingly intractable can avoid philosophical inconsistencies. As Michael Bell notes:

Lawrence movingly regrets the gap in being when a mountain lion is killed but is himself obliged to kill the porcupine . . . [He encapsulates the] irresolvability, the sense of a dilemma in which there is no fixed formula to apply but a subtle and flexible appreciation of life’s conflicting imperatives. Hence, the “‘trembling balance’” of incompatible requirements . . . (“The Tree of Life” Para 6–7.

Philosophical consistency is something for the philosopher to strive for, not the artist. Lawrence was not a philosopher, but an artist: “his imagination was essentially poetic,

---

<sup>147</sup> “. . . he never minded changing his mind, any more than he minded changing his place” (Gilbert, “Apocalypse” 239).

which enabled him to explore unknown modes of being”—a “‘religion’ in the light of [his] own experiences” (Banerjee 11).

Religion, for Lawrence, has its origin in the soil, the roots of us, now almost lost in the stench of modern utility, “starving and stifling” (Lawrence, “Introduction to Pansies.” *Complete Poems* 418). In “Medlars and Sorb - Apples”, Lawrence reanimates the Orpheus myth, a powerful metaphor for his own mythology, emblazoned with a “flame . . . whiter / In a deeper and deeper darkness” (281). Lawrence endures the experience alone, however—because he, like all of us, *is* alone.<sup>148</sup> It’s a positive thing, “The sono io [*am*] of perfect drunkenness / Intoxication of final loneliness” (281). This is part of Being for Lawrence—the necessary underside of paradise. The descent, like the journey of the Magi, is hard and cold, but it lights the way to a better understanding and appreciation of the misery and joy of personal experiences. There’s an Orphic turn,<sup>149</sup> but there is no dismissal of Eurydice, or more generally, of womankind, no striding the lanes of Hell, no misogynistic revisionism of the Orphic myth. The poem is Lawrence alone, “naked-footed” exploring the ways of his body and soul (281). It asserts (as Janik says of *Last Poems*) “the primary importance of each individual’s relationship with the world of experience” (297).

### Physical Morality and Myth

Nevertheless, Lawrence’s account of the Orpheus myth doesn’t sit comfortably with a lot of readers as it seems to validate a world of male domination and, via sexual conquest (consensual or not), female abjectness. The same is true of Lawrence’s “Leda” poems.<sup>150</sup>

[T]ales like the Leda myth, in which human contact with the divine is couched in the vocabulary of sexual conquest, can serve as telling metaphors for real-life

<sup>148</sup> Anais Nin says (not unsympathetically) that Lawrence went through hell alone because “no one would go along with him” (34).

<sup>149</sup> For the significance of this “Orphic turn”, see for example Robert Graves’ *The Greek Myths 1*, 111–115.

<sup>150</sup> A group of five poems in his *Pansies* collection: “Swan”; “Leda”; “Give Us Gods”; “Won’t it Be Strange—?” and “Spiral Flame.”

female poets' experiences of male domination and for their anxieties of male literary influence. (Sword, "Leda and the Modernists" 306)

In a 2019 collection of poems, Fiona Benson, riffing on the Leda/Swan myth (and its variations), has depicted Zeus in his customary animal guises "AS A PEACOCK A / BULL A STAG A SWAN"—a predatory male, a subjugator of women, a rapist ("Zeus: Semele" 15; Benson's capitals). There is no glamour in the feathered glory of the swan's phallus ravishing his 'bride', when it's not wanted, and when the image (or the idea of it) perpetuates or re-enforces power disparity between the sexes. Benson revolts against the world of male domination, but also nature, which sees the weak terrorised, in the form of a hare, for example, savaged by dogs ("Transformation: Daphne" 31–32). Compare her sense of pity with Lawrence's taunt in "Rabbit Snared in the Night" (240):

It must be you who desire  
this intermingling of the black and monstrous fingers of Moloch  
in the blood-jets of your throat. (242)

Lawrence, in "Give Us Gods", and "Swan" (two of the "Leda" poems) focused *not* on the raped (or ravaged) Leda, "but on the sexual angst of the . . . put-out [cuckolded] men" (Sword, "Leda" 312). In "Leda" itself (the poem of that title), Lawrence calls for the Swan to come, "not with kisses" but with "treading of . . . webbed, wave-working feet / into the marsh-soft belly" (436). He assumes the feminine role in this poem: the narrator is Leda herself, but Lawrence fails, according to Sword, to immerse himself "fully in the imagined role of the female" ("Leda" 306). Lawrence is her, but at the same time *outside of her*—a somewhat less than passive observer, however (unlike Tiresias in Eliot's *Waste Land*). There is a commingling, in Lawrence's poem, as of blood, and analogous with the coupling of Swan and Woman, between the voyeuristic 'fantasy', and the actual experience of being sexually subdued—just as there is in Eliot's "Death of Saint Narcissus", where the narrator is, at one point, the "young girl" who simultaneously experiences "the taste of *his* own whiteness" (28, 30; my emphasis). It may be that Lawrence (and Eliot) wants to feel what *she* feels, or is excited by the spectacle, the

sudden rush, the plunge of webbed feet, or both. Lawrence loves the masculine form, the strong male physique, the man who subdues (by strength or tenderness) the other (man, woman or beast). It is a major part of his eroticism, which we see in his prose<sup>151</sup> and poetry, where masculine and feminine bodies are equally revered. But he doesn't thereby link physical domination with morality. Lawrence invokes the myth, not to assert the notion of male supremacy, but to poeticise the creative seed sown into the womb by the male god, the intersection of phallus with the generative potency of Woman, so that a new age may emerge, a new history: a return to Nature, the destruction of mechanical, money-striving existence; the resurrection of the body into a new race of creative humans.<sup>152</sup> Myth, says Lawrence,

never has a didactic nor moral purpose . . . Myth is an attempt to narrate a whole human experience, of which the purpose is too deep . . . in the blood and soul, for mental explanation or description. . . . The myth [for example] of Chronos . . . describes a profound experience of the human body and soul . . . which . . . will be felt and suffered while man remains man (“Dragon of the Apocalypse”  
*Selected Literary Criticism* 158)

The Leda story is a myth, which is thematically linked to the Pelasgian Creation story,<sup>153</sup> and predates the misogynistic Zeus, and his fellow Olympians—and other stories of “the eastern Mediterranean, in the days when matriarchy was still the natural order . . .” (Lawrence, *Apocalypse* 75). This female-centred myth (or myths) became masculinised in Greece and the Middle East, and manifested itself, in Lawrence's words, as “the decadence of a previous cosmic religion” (*Etruscan Places* 122). Lawrence, then, muses how this prehistoric “wonder-woman” found her way into Revelation, given the Jewish<sup>154</sup> antipathy toward pagan gods, especially female ones (*Apocalypse* 75). As

---

<sup>151</sup>We see this in his play *David*, for example, in the title character's interaction with Goliath (the enemy) and Johnathon (his beloved friend).

<sup>152</sup> These are the principal concerns of *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, his novel in which his political/philosophical views are most fully articulated.

<sup>153</sup> In this myth, Eurynome is the Mother God (the original being) who from chaos created the serpent with whom she willingly copulates. See Graves 27–30.

<sup>154</sup> Although Revelation is in the New Testament, its origins pre-date, according to Lawrence, the Christian era: “The oldest part . . . was a pagan work” (Lawrence, *Apocalypse* 34).

Wright notes, Lawrence's theology is "radically feminist": the Father is really the *Mother* (83). As Lawrence himself said:

the whole chronology is upside-down: the Word created Man, and Man lay down and gave birth to Woman. Whereas we know the Woman lay in travail, and gave birth to Man, who in his hour uttered his word. . . . God the Father, the Inscrutable, the Unknowable, we know in the Flesh, in Woman (Foreword to *Sons and Lovers* 470)

In his "Leda" poems, Lawrence invokes a *male*-centred myth, but his purpose is poetic (and therefore *moral*, a fluid, relative term<sup>155</sup>); he finds in this story a vehicle for his creationism, his aesthetic and religious impulses. Morality, for Lawrence,

is that delicate, for ever trembling and changing *balance* between me and my circumambient universe . . . Religion, with its nailed-down One God, who says *Thou shalt, Thou shan't* . . . philosophy with its fixed ideas; science with its 'laws' . . . want to nail us on to some tree or other. ("Morality and the Novel" *Life* 232; Lawrence's emphases)

—So that when Lawrence says "the essential function of art is *moral*",<sup>156</sup> he means "a passionate, implicit morality, not didactic"—not that it should teach or distinguish Right from Wrong in any fixed sense of those terms: morality as in "the instinctive revulsion of the majority", the "hate of the instinctive, intuitional, procreative body." ("Whitman" *Selected Literary Criticism* 400; "Making Love to Music" *Phoenix* 1 161; "Introduction to these Paintings" *Life* 383). *Moral* refers to something physical, vital.

## Pansies

Lawrence's collection of poems, *Pansies* (1929), are

---

<sup>155</sup> " . . . moral judgments of literary works are made only according to the moral code accepted by each generation, whether it lives according to that code or not" (Eliot, *Selected Prose* 31).

<sup>156</sup> "Not aesthetic, not decorative, not pastime and recreation. But moral" ("Whitman" *Selected Literary Criticism* 400).

tender administrations to the mental and emotional wounds we suffer from . . . Each little piece is a thought; not a bare idea or an opinion or a didactic statement, but a true thought, which comes as much from the heart and the genitals as from the head. A thought, with its own blood of emotion and instinct . . . thoughts that scurry in different directions, yet belong to the same nest . . . (Lawrence, "Introduction to '*Pansies*'" *Complete Poems* 417)

They are *Pensées* (a play on words) like Pascal's—as Lawrence says, "thoughts that are true while they are true and irrelevant when the mood and circumstance changes . . . fleeting as pansies" ("Foreword to *Pansies*" *Complete Poems* 423)—"and we are gone" ("Hark in the Dusk!" 425).

[Lawrence's poems] are not meant to give us the sense of grandeur or permanence . . . the fallacious sense of immortality that is an extension of the poet's ego. Yet they achieve a kind of immortality precisely in this: that they transcend the temporal, the intellectual. They are ways of experiencing the ineffable 'still point' that Eliot could approach only through abstract language. (Oates, *New Heaven* 41)

And, as usual, *Pansies* isn't

merely pretty-pretty. They have in their fragrance an earthiness of the humus and the corruptive earth from which they spring. And pansies, in their streaked faces, have a look of many things besides heartsease . . . I offer a bunch of pansies . . . no immortelles can give us anything in comparison. (Lawrence, "Foreword to *Pansies*." *Complete Poems* 423-424)

The "look of many things besides heartsease" includes the living dead, "with bank accounts and insurance policies" ("Let the Dead Bury Their Dead" 442). We are worn out with it, even the gods with their iron rods. A "swan" flame-like, however, will burn the

house down, and all the furnishings, and all the dead in their armchairs! (“Spiral Flame” 439-440). This is more than just “a little thought”, *une Pensée*. This is a ‘thought’ to nettle the blood. How bitter Lawrence is! He loathes and mocks the chamois glove-wearing bourgeoisie (“Natural Complexion” 433). So Lawrence invokes the symbol of primal sexuality, the mythical Swan, as Yeats had in his poem “Leda and the Swan” (1928).

he is treading our women  
and we men are put out  
as the vast white bird  
furrows our featherless women  
with unknown shocks  
and stamps his black marsh-feet on their white and marshy flesh. (Lawrence,  
“The Swan” 436)

This feels like Iago’s taunt in *Othello*: “[e]ven now, now, very now, an old black ram / is tuppung your white ewe.” (1.1.89–90) And he comes, again, like a blind Samson to shake down the pillars of England, that stale heaven of *niceness*, normality, and moral security. He comes (Lawrence, the ‘swan’) to shatter the peace of bourgeois values, boredom, and fear of ‘the dirty word’:

Words [like ‘arse’] have been dirtied by the mind, by unclean mental associations. The words themselves are clean, so are the things to which they apply. . . . It is the mind which is the Augean stables, not language. (“Introduction to Pansies.” *Collected Poems* 418–419)<sup>157</sup>

Give us Gods, “not gods grey-bearded and dictatorial”, not “motor-power” (“Give Us Gods” 437; 436)—but a god

---

<sup>157</sup> “Tell me what’s wrong / with words or with you / that you don’t mind the thing / yet the name is taboo.” (Lawrence, “Conundrums” 551)

like a wild swan or a goose, whose honk goes through my bladder.  
 And in the dark unscientific I feel the drum-winds of his wings  
 and the drip of his cold, webbed feet, mud-black  
 brush over my face as he goes  
 to seek the women in the dark, our women . . . whom he treads  
 with dreams and thrusts that make them cry in their sleep. (438)

“[S]cientific man” shall be cuckolded (438). This is the hope, anyway.

These are the principal concerns of *Lady Chatterley’s Lover* too, with Mellors as the swan and Connie as Leda. And the cuckolded Clifford Chatterley (actually and symbolically crippled) is ‘scientific man’, that “dead . . . nasty” creature “of putrescent wisdom and sapience that subtly stinks”—who makes the “mills grind on and on, / and keep you in millions at the mills (“Let the Dead Bury the Dead” 440, 441, 441)—the creator of “black-and-white feelings that nobody [feels]”, the “machine-made”, mass-produced transmitters of “nothing” but death and nullity (“When I Went to the Film” 443; “New Houses, New Clothes” 448; “We Are Transmitters” 449).

. . . let us be men  
 not monkeys minding machines  
 or sitting with our tails curled  
 while the machine amuses us, the radio or film or gramophone (“Let Us Be Men”  
 450)

“To make self-preservation and self-protection the first law of existence” (523) misdescribes life. ‘Laws’ or formulas such as this, ignore or forget the actual palpitating reality of life.

When science starts to be interpretive  
 it is more unscientific even than mysticism.

.....

A nightingale singing at the top of his voice  
 is neither hiding himself nor preserving himself nor propagating his species;  
 he is giving himself away in every sense of the word;  
 and obviously, it is the culminating point of his existence.

A tiger is striped and golden for his own glory. ("Self-Protection" 523)

And this is what Lawrence does with his poetic voice: he *gives himself away*. He reveals himself in his work—most evidently in his letters and essays, but also in his poetry and fiction. The reader feels that they are face-to-face with this man of flesh and blood, partly because of his confrontational delivery: "Would you like to throw a stone at me?" ("Peach." 279), and partly because of his moral and physical candour (most famously in *Lady Chatterley's Lover*). The will to live is indeed opposed by the religious instinct—the assumption in the reality of the "supra-sensible" which, as Evelyn Underhill noted, "acts detrimentally to the interests of [the individual's or humankind's] merely physical existence" (18). Underhill speaks as a Christian, but the same 'logic' applies to Lawrence's philosophy of religion. What do we preserve ourselves for—unless for Life: "All I care about in a man / is that unbroken spark in him"; but "civilisation" has put out the flame: when the spark is crushed in a man / he can't help being . . . / a money-slave" ("A Man" 524). Even *touch* is vitiated by the cerebral; the body is "fingered by the mind" ("Chastity" 469). But the mind must know its limits, its "own nullity" ("Climb Down, O Lordly Mind" 473): the blood is religious; the mind is not. Even the mosquito knows; and it is *itself*, at least: "he doesn't put my blood in the bank", unlike the blood-sucking usurers ("The Mosquito Knows" 466).

But it isn't all blood and rage; and the rage, besides, is directed against the forces of anti-life, the forces that enslave us, that tie us to our jobs. Look at the fish—"their little lives are fun to them / in the sea" ("Little Fish" 466)—creatures utterly themselves: "A small bird will drop frozen dead from a bough / without ever having felt sorry for itself" ("Self-Pity" 467). Why: because they lack that cerebral quality of (self) *consciousness*. Look, also, at the seaweed, how it sways "as if swaying were its form of stillness"

(“Sea-Weed” 467)—and the Etruscans, who like cypresses, “swayed their length of darkness”—women and men utterly alive, *in* nature, not apart from it (“Cypresses” 296). Humans have lost contact with nature. Things we have made, “warm still with the life of forgotten men who made them” (“Things Men Have Made” 448), are replaced by the super-efficiency of “Things Made by Iron” (448), and these things crush the life out of us. In “Work”, Lawrence reproduces the organic loveliness of living things with long organic rhythms: the Hindus weaving “are like slender trees putting forth leaves, a long white web of living leaf” (451). This is an apt description of Lawrence’s poetic style, as well as being a delicate description of how we should work and live. This, for Lawrence, is what work should be: part of life, inseparable from the living environment, “dwelling in [its] own bowery house”, and Lawrence captures this perfectly in his poetry (451). “There is no point in work / unless it absorbs you (450): it should be that

When a man goes out into work  
 he is alive like a tree in spring,  
 he is living, not merely working. (450)

“Why have money? . . . “why have industry?” (“Why—?” 451). Lawrence thinks even sex has become inorganic: mechanical love—deliberate, “as when he shaves himself” (“The Noble Englishman” 446). Why “the vicious circle”: “cash”, “more cash”, “vicious competition” (“Wages” 521)? This is “social insanity” (“Nemesis” 514). Society is only part conscious. We remain, as in Lawrence’s day, “cribbed / . . . [in] our putrid unventilated heaven” (515). Thus, “open all the doors of consciousness” (515). Lawrence wants us to break free “out of the glass bottles of our own ego, / . . . the cages of our personality / . . . into the forest again”; if we do this, the “institutions will curl up like burnt paper” (“Escape” 482). We must be free—like the escaped ass envisaged in “A Sane Revolution” (517). The problem is materialism. This is what chains us. The escaped ass must be the jolliest animal of all, broken free from the strictures of sex and Jesus and labour. The human spirit is crushed by these things—not sex, work and religion *per se*; but by their imposition, when they circumscribe our lives, our beings. All these things bind us. When Lawrence says we should be “little aristocracies”, he does

not mean that we should live off the labour of the masses; he wants us to *abolish* labour (517). He means for us to enjoy ourselves; for each of us to be our own autonomous being—physically and spiritually, if not in real political terms, removed from the vicious cycle of consumerism; a community of individuals that find their place in the whole, that live to work and play and worship; with each of us working and being for our own delight—to live for bread and wine, and the harvest, and the abundance of what the land gives us.

Lawrence envisages a sort of anarchism, a (non-materialist) ‘communism’ of interdependent individuals and communities—working, living; communities that evolve, as it were, with the seasons.<sup>158</sup> But nothing fixed. As soon as you nail a political idea or a religion, organise it into a system, there is tyranny: always—change, movement, becoming. Lawrence exhorts us to be our own, self-sufficient aristocracies, ungoverned by what people think (“Aristocracy of the Sun” 526–527). Be of the Sun (the giver of life), organic and free (“Sun-Men” 525; “Sun-Women” 525). But modern humans are afraid of nature—the carnality of nature, which still lives in all of us, beneath our cultural skins, and visible occasionally in some, especially children, who *sense* the connection between us and nature; not at an intellectual level of course, but intuitively, beneath the intellect. *Beneath*: not inferior, but deeper. Lawrence explores this in his novel *The Lost Girl*, and in the poem “When I Went to the Circus” (444–446). In the latter, the circus audience are “uneasy”—“frightened of the bare earth . . . / and the smell of horses” (444). They “seemed to resent the mystery that lies in beasts” (445). They are disturbed, also, by the circus people themselves, the “flickering human bodies / flesh flamey . . . // displaying no personality” (445). They resent their “gay weight of limbs / that flower in mere movement”—their “physical understanding” (446). The audience “have *only* their personalities . . . / imponderable and touchless” (446; my emphasis).

As always with Lawrence, it is the body that is exalted. True “understanding” is physical; the intellect, in comparison, botches anything it sets its clamps on: it offers the

---

<sup>158</sup> There’s a correspondence between Lawrence’s sociopolitics and Emma Goldman’s anarchism, even down to the need for constant adaptation, and the avoidance of fixed methods and programs. The means are more important than the ends. See Goldman 63.

“imaginary cake” of heaven, the spiritual afterlife, instead of “common bread” (“When Wilt Thou Teach the People —?” 442). In “Fire” (505–506), Lawrence calls upon the god of destruction and regeneration: lord of the cosmos, of good and evil. He does not accept that Love is the answer, because he doesn’t trust our motives. We deceive ourselves. The Christian Church deceives us, and itself. It forces us to love and has tortured us because we have refused. “Fire” revels in destruction. It worships the elemental, the primal; our Nature: burn the House down. Build it up, and burn it down again. Let us rejoice in this, our eternal death and renewal. “A sun will rise in me, / I shall slowly resurrect” (“Sun in Me” 513).

Lawrence distances himself, however, from those intellectual libertines who “thrill to perversity, murder, suicide, rape— / . . . / and . . . go on calmly eating good dinners for the next fifty years”; who “scratch [ . . . ] the eczema of their mental itch / with finger-nails of septic criticising” (“Latter-Day Sinners” 531; “What Matters” 533)—those pornographers who would exalt the body at the expense of the spirit, who treat sex like a “cocktail”: sex is cheapened thus, and the body is profaned (“A Propos of Lady Chatterley’s Lover” *Phoenix* 2 491–492, 500). Pornography is “the attempt to insult sex”—the “furtive, sneaking, cunning rubbing of an inflamed spot in the imagination” (“Pornography and Obscenity” *Life* 424, 429). Puritanism, however, would be the worst treatment for it (428). The way to treat the ‘disease’ is to come out into the open (427). It should be natural, as dancing and music, as it was for the Etruscans, not an underhanded game (“Making Love to Music” *Phoenix* 1 161). “[D]oing it on purpose [for the sake of it] is just as unpleasant and hurtful as repression, just as much a sign of secret fear” as the old grey ones who belong to the “eunuch” (19th) century (“The State of Funk” *Phoenix* 2 569; “Pornography and Obscenity” *Life* 435).<sup>159</sup> The body and sex are sacred. Even masturbation is wrong for its lack of reciprocity, and harmful because it leads to “humiliation, and the sense of futility” (430). Sex is on the brain because we ‘cover up’, says Lawrence, or we cheapen it, by treating it flippantly (434–435). The

---

<sup>159</sup> By “doing it on purpose”, Lawrence means “heartless”, or gratuitous, sex (“The State of Funk” *Phoenix* 2 569).

body, thus, becomes the tool of the mind, or its toy (“A Propos of Lady Chatterley's Lover.” *Phoenix 2* 492).

In *Nettles* and *More Pansies*, Lawrence vents his “consumptive” irritations against the ‘moral majority’, the stupidity and hypocrisy of the British public, journalists and the authorities (Aldington, “Introduction to Last Poems and *More Pansies*” 595). Lawrence had his paintings confiscated because they depicted ‘lewd’ images. The man in the street can’t stand the body free of moral impediments, or else they laugh and point at the spot where a fig leaf “should be”, but “was not” (“13,000 People” 578). This is a war, as Lawrence sees it, against the body: the moral censor would shame the body; the lewd masses would cheapen it; and the whole industrial system forces the people with their “[c]orpse-anatomies” “back and forth” to the factories, and their “iron-hooked” faces are drawn by “invisible wires of steel” (“Cry of the Masses” 584; “What Have They Done to You—?” 585; “The People” 586). It is death of the body, ‘Iron in the Soul’. Give us back our bodies, cries Lawrence, if not the people themselves: we are living automatons and we live for machines. Let us divest ourselves of the moral clothing of Christianity, materialism, industrial civilisation, and culture.

When I am clothed I am a moral man,  
and unclothed, the word has no meaning for me.  
.....  
Only when I am stripped stark naked I am alone  
and without morals, and without immorality . . . (“Moral Clothing” 607)

This is the *natural* human, free from moral proscriptions. Lawrence rejects the imposition of ideals upon the individual. In nature, there is no morality. We are revealed, vulnerable, but ourselves.

*Pansies* are “the breath of the moment [but] *one eternal moment* easily contradicting the next eternal moment” (Lawrence, “Foreword to *Pansies*.” *Collected Poems*, 424; my emphasis). The eternal moment, for Lawrence, exists only in the transience of the

bird-on-the-wing, the “peasants . . . cutting the bearded wheat” (“Andraitx – Pomegranate Flowers” 605):

The pomegranates are in flower  
beside the high road, past the deathly dust,  
and even the sea is silent in the sun.

Short gasps of flame in the green of night, way off  
the pomegranates are in flower,  
small sharp red fires in the night of leaves.

And noon is suddenly dark, is lustrous . . . and dark  
Men are unseen . . . (605–606)

This is the dark heart of Nature, the dark “heart of man / . . . that we dare not explore” (“The Dark Heart of Man” 606). But the “red flamelets here and there reveal / a man, a woman . . .” (“Andraitx” 606) swaying in the fields, “like leaves that belong to a tree”: “the organic connection” (“Fallen Leaves” 615). His repetitions and modulations are purposeful, rhythmical like waves; they jog the reader's sensibilities, or create emphasis, or make us see the object from a different light or angle. They are hypnotic. As Nin recognised, they “suggest more than their own determinate, formal significance” (61). Time itself is a repetition; like nature, it is cyclic. Lawrence believed in the mystery of endless death and resurrection: the risen man or woman rises “through the dark Hades at the roots of trees / into the circulating sap, once more . . .” (“Fatality” 617). It is humankind's connection with nature and God. The form, the shape of the gods are in “the man . . . mowing the tall white corn . . . as it curves, as it yields . . .”: “the swaying body of god!” (“Name the Gods” 651). God is in us, in nature; it has no form, no substance. The gods are spiritual, yet physical; they are actualised in us, when we ‘cut the corn’, in moments of unselfconsciousness, when we are ourselves. As Bethan Jones notes,

'The gods' are malleable and unlabelled, unreliant on a 'Word' or name for their being . . . 'Images', in motion rather than fixed and statuesque, convey a sense of the gods as embodied within humans, in their pure moments. (123)

Lawrence names Priapus at the end of "Name the Gods", and other gods in later poems. But they are like flickers, flame-like but doubtful, mysterious. In his last collection of poetry (*Last Poems*) they come to life, as individuals. In "There Are No Gods", we are "soothed, soothed, soothed": the soul is kneaded like a pair of collar bones (652). This is poetry working its magic while the mind rests. The soul's desire "like a pool into which we plunge, or do not plunge"—is awesome (652). The repetition of 'plunge', the alternative of plunging or not plunging seems to exist at the same time—two possibilities, precarious—a Yes and a No: there are gods. Alternatively, or alternately, there are *no* gods—not when you're in your car, or when you're shopping and all you do is "talk, talk, talk" (651). The gods are there, apparent, when the mind is still, and open. When we 'plunge', we actualise it. The gods "once made actual through belief—once the faith plunge is made—become so 'real' as to acquire a corporeality that allows them to touch and be touched" (Jones 122).

Lawrence's gods are physical and spiritual, and non-moral (in the orthodox sense of 'moral'). Love, for Lawrence, does not equal ethical conduct: goodness, holiness. To force love is impossible, because the idea of force cannot correspond with that of love. To love in the abstract, is not to love. Walt Whitman's love of humanity, his democratic spirit, is *abstract*, therefore intangible: *spiritual*, despite his proclivity for leaves of grass, and contact with fellow men ("Retort to Whitman" 653). Jesus' love is huge, and abstract ("Retort to Jesus" 653). The spirit without body is nothing. Lawrence's gods are in us—in "lads and girls", when we're not thinking, when we're not self-conscious—"either in anger or tenderness, or desire or sadness or wonder or mere stillness" ("All Sorts of Gods" 672). For Lawrence, morality entails an "adjustment of the soul's part, not a rule or a prescription"; it "is that delicate, for ever trembling and changing *balance* between me and my circumambient universe . . ." (*Fantasia* 49; "Morality and the Novel" *Life* 232; Lawrence's emphasis). It has nothing to do with the conscience of the 'ordinary

man': the simplistic dichotomies of good and evil, of 'Thou shalt' and 'Thou shalt not'. Morality, for Lawrence, is an expression of what is vital in us, of our connection with Nature, with God/s. It is as much a physical reality as it is a spiritual one.

For a moment, a beautiful god, a Hyacinthus, might reveal itself in the tram conductor, in those pure moments when we are ourselves: "When I was waiting and not thinking, sitting at a table on the hotel terrace . . ." ("For a Moment" 672). God, too, is in the "angry Italian" who all but squeezes the life out of an "irritating little official"—at that moment, "in godliness pure as a Christ" ("Man is More Than Homo Sapiens" 674). God is everywhere and everything—is becoming, and *is*. He or She or It is light, and darkness—positive darkness; and the electrons tremble for 'him' ("God is Born" 682). As Catherine Brown said in 2019, Lawrence's "God is Born" is a creation story, a revision of the Bible's Genesis ("Finding God"; no page numbers given). The latter is the ultimate disaster story. In Lawrence's poem, there is no Fall, however, and there is no creator, for God is endlessly becoming. "Here too is predation, as it is not in Eden: 'the leopard smites the small calf.'"<sup>160</sup> It is a more dynamic Eden, shuddering with life, and, like the peacock—the "Splendour that favours sexual selection"—"could not be more splendid" (C. Brown, "Finding God"; no page numbers given; Lawrence "God is Born" 683).

In "Gladness of Death", Lawrence contemplates "the great adventure of death, where Thomas Cook<sup>161</sup> cannot guide us"—the peace, the dark sunshine where the soul is free at last, as unhampered flowers are (677). This 'knowledge' has nothing to do with "fact" (676). This is a knowing more profound, "within me" (677). Lawrence knew death was near, and he contemplated the peace of the 'afterwards'—after the stab of pain, after the last drop of life-blood, the last spasm.

I shall blossom like a dark pansy and be delighted

.....

---

<sup>160</sup> Brown quotes Lawrence's poem, "God is Born."

<sup>161</sup> 'Thomas Cook' was a travel agency.

I can feel myself unfolding in the dark sunshine of death  
 .....

. . . in the great spaces of death  
 the winds of the afterwards kiss us into blossom of manhood. (677)

There is a sense, as Aldington says, that *Pansies*, *More Pansies* (or what Lawrence called *Dead Nettles*—“nettles without sting”<sup>162</sup>) and *Nettles* are “one long hammer, hammer, hammer of exasperation” (“Introduction to *Last Poems and More Pansies*” 595). Many of the poems are didactic, preachful; occasionally the ‘message’ dominates the poem.

Sometimes they [the poems in *Pansies*] are like the utterances of a little Whitman, but without Walt’s calm *sostenuto* quality; and sometimes they are like a little Blake raving, but without the fiery vision. (595; Aldington’s emphasis)

It is interesting to note that Aldington fails to notice (or neglects to mention) the influence of H.D. (Aldington’s one-time wife) on Lawrence’s poetry. Holly Laird quotes the following lines (published in 1917) to show the resemblance between her and Lawrence’s *Birds, Beasts and Flowers* (published in 1923)—the modified repetitions, the exploration of image and feeling:

Now I am powerless  
 to draw back  
 for the sea is cyclamen-purple,  
 cyclamen-red, colour of the last grapes,  
 colour of the purple of the flowers,  
 cyclamen-coloured and dark. (“The God” 47)

---

<sup>162</sup> C. Brown. No page numbers given.

Many of Lawrence's poems from *Pansies* and *More Pansies* are calm, *sostenuto*, and fiery. His collection *Nettles* is prickly, but brief: a kick at the pricks—the government; censors: the moral police, and the actual police; newspaper editors who “have the welfare of the British Public at heart” (“Editorial Office” 582);<sup>163</sup> and industrialism. Aldington’s claim, supported by a number of other critics since,<sup>164</sup> that these poems mark “a decline from his earlier poems”, is unjustified. Gilbert calls them rough-hewn . . . *unbeautiful* poems” (*Acts* 245; my emphasis). It is meant as a compliment. *Unbeautiful* has the scent of that “stark, bare, rocky directness” Lawrence referred to (a gothic-Protestant counter to the polished ‘architecture’ of Greece and Rome): poetry without deflection, without lie—poetry of an “unlovely” age (Letter to Catherine Carswell, 11 January 1916). Eliot quotes this with approval, and comments:

This speaks to me of that at which I have long aimed, in writing poetry; to write poetry which should be essentially poetry, with nothing poetic about it, poetry standing naked in its bare bones, or poetry so transparent that we should not see the poetry. (“English Poets as Letter Writers.” (*Complete Prose*, Volume 4, 847-848)

### Ship of Death

Lawrence’s contemplation and deeper ‘exploration’ of death and resurrection, of God and the mystery of life, reaches its apotheosis in his *Last Poems*, unpublished, like his *Pansies* and *Nettles*, until after his death.

*Last Poems* model themselves on prayer and sermon. They are in a real sense *religious* poetry, incantatory, meditative, worshipful verse belonging to a tradition in which we should also place many of the poems of Donne and . . . George Herbert, Whitman’s “Whispers of Heavenly Death” and . . . Eliot’s “Ash Wednesday” (Gilbert, *Acts* 267; Gilbert’s emphasis).

---

<sup>163</sup> Lawrence’s irony here is, unlike Eliot’s, crude, and as such anticipates the rebellious poets of the 1930s—Auden, MacNiece, Spender, et al.

<sup>164</sup> Pinion: “crude verse” (116); Squires: “his creative juices begin to run dry”; they are “sour”, “flat” (352); Gregory: the means by which he “emptied his veins of . . . bile . . .”; “a species of journalism”; “dull to read” (143).

*Last Poems* reprises the motif of the sole voyager, confronting their “final loneliness”, their ‘oblivion’, before ascending once more into the world of touch (“Medlars” 281). It is, as Janick has observed,

an extended sequence of poems, where each poem is an extension of or a commentary upon the others around it, creating a larger unit that reflects the thought and feeling that a man undergoes over a period of time. (307)

The collection begins with four poems about rebirth, the return of the Greeks, their ships emerging from the “morning end of the sea” (“The Greeks are Coming” 687). And it ends with “Phoenix”—a pagan symbol (Lawrence’s symbol) of resurrection, the bird rising from its ashes.<sup>165</sup> According to Kirkham (in 1972) the return of the ancient Greeks, figured in the opening four poems, does *not* refer to actual renewal of physical life, but is merely an evocation of a “particular consciousness of life, as [the Greeks] felt it, to our memories and imaginations . . .” (109). The Argonauts “‘are not dead’ in that they live again in the *mind* of the poet . . .”, and “[f]lesh is made to ‘glisten’ by the action of the loving *imagination*” (109, 110; my emphases). But for Lawrence, the imagination cannot be *loving*; only the body can love. When Lawrence speaks of ‘actual return’ and ‘living flesh’, he means it literally. The ancient sea of the Greeks was there just as physically as the modern day, as Janik asserts, with its bathers and liners (298). They are returned; they actually live—if not ‘now’, then in some ‘other time’ which finds its feet again in the eternally present moment. Lawrence’s ‘Greek’ is a *living* symbol—not merely a bodiless idea flatly represented, but an actualisation of an inner reality, which is manifested by movement, by feeling. His art and his religion are not just a yearning for what is dead to live again, but an expression of his faith that they do live again.

*Last Poems*, as Lawrence says of free verse generally, is “seething poetry of the incarnate Now” (“Poetry of the Present.” *Complete Poems* 183). The Greeks are

---

<sup>165</sup> But Wright notes that Lawrence adopted the phoenix symbol after having read Katherine Jenner’s *Christian Symbolism*, which was published in 1910 (Wright 86). Jenner: the phoenix was first appropriated in the first century A. D, and became “a recognized emblem of the Resurrection of Christ.” 150)

coming—now! Each moment is an eternity, because each moment (now) is all that exists.

The before and after are the stuff of consciousness. The instant moment is for ever keen with a razor-edge of oblivion, like the knife of sacrifice. (*Mornings in Mexico* 33)

There is, for Lawrence, nothing but the present. But also, there is constant flux—life, death, *actual* return.

An “ocean liner”, “like a small beetle” departs, “is leaving a long thread of dark smoke / like a bad smell” (“The Greeks Are Coming” 687). Far off, meanwhile, “a flash and a furl . . . // out of the morning end of the sea”: these are the Greeks of antiquity, pre-Hellenic, “men with . . . pointed beards . . .”—the bodies of slim warriors, “rippling vermillion”, long before “Plato told the great lie of ideals” (687; “For the Heroes Are Dipped in Scarlet” 689, 688). New life is emerging out of the dawn: the Greeks are returning, in their ships, vivid and actual. “They are not dead”, and Lawrence sees what Odysseus sees, “as he [Odysseus] steers past those foamy islands” (“The Argonauts” 687)—those glistening bodies in the moonlight, the crouched figures on the shore “speaking the music of lost languages” (“Middle of the World” 688). What does the P&O ferry matter (688)? Even the coffee can wait, and the *pain grillé* (“The Argonauts” 687).

These are not spiritual visions, the wispy dreams of an intellect, a Buddha, or a Plato—a Mind who has *Understood*, whose imagination precedes corporeal reality. The Platonist notion that mind, or form, precedes the actual living body is impossible. An artist, a creator, knows that his or her work didn’t exist in the mind before it existed in physical form: “he could never have *thought* it before it happened. / A strange ache possessed him . . . / [and] it came to pass” (“The Work of Creation” 690; Lawrence’s emphasis). Not even God can imagine something into existence, which as yet does not exist (“Red Geranium and Godly Mignonette” 690). God is “a great urge” and “His urge takes shape in the flesh, and lo! / it is creation!” (690). The act of cosmic creation, for Lawrence, is

an aesthetic act: it is “the urge that leads to creation, not the *thought* of the flower” (Bricout 100; my emphasis). Reality exists in spirit and flesh (combined) only. Jesus, the pure spirit, is nonsense; the loveliness of Jesus is in the man who eats soup and bread (“Demiurge” 689). “Everything that has beauty has a body”, including God (“Bodiless God” 691). God is the bodiless urge “towards incarnation”, “the great urge that has not yet found a body // And becomes at last a clove carnation . . . [or] Helen”—or any living thing (“The Man of Tyre” 693; “The Body of God” 691). “All deities reside in the human breast.”<sup>166</sup>

There is no god apart from flesh:

There is no god

apart from poppies and the flying fish,

men singing songs, and women brushing their hair in the sun.

The lovely things are god that has come to pass, like Jesus came.

(“The Body of God” 691)

There is no god apart from “breasts dim and mysterious . . . / and the dim blotch of black maidenhair . . .” (“The Man of Tyre” 693). Lawrence’s gods are sensuous, animated like dolphins leaping from the sea (“They say the Sea is Loveless” 693). In the sea, “God is also love, but without words”, and rolls, massive, with the whales, and copulates (“Whales Weep Not” 694).<sup>167</sup> The whales, the dolphins are the gods, “and dense with happy blood” (695). The sea roars with godly animal life, and the gods, the sea, all of nature are worthy of our reverence. All living creatures have their power, their glory. The “power and glory” is in “the nightingale at twilight”, and in the fox “yapping . . . / which is death to the goose” (“Lord’s Prayer” 704). In these poems, Lawrence’s lines roll like the sea, and break, regather and push and swirl: Man becomes the sea (“Mana of the Sea” 705); they suggest the endless flux of living and dying—and living. Lawrence’s living God is a physical and spiritual presence, “a deep calm in the heart”; it

---

<sup>166</sup> From William Blake’s *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*.

<sup>167</sup> Note the shift from his earlier poem “Fish” (discussed above), where the fish is loveless, alien.

is the cat, or the master of the house, “sleeping on the hearth and yawning before the fire” (“Pax” 700).

Lawrence’s gods extend to the moon and stars, the whole cosmos. In “Invocation to the Moon”, the moon is the goddess to whom the poet returns after death, for his “lost limbs” and to be set again on his “moon-remembering feet” (695). Contrast this with the cold lifeless rock of scientific knowledge that murders the imagination and true religion. Lawrence’s astronomist is bloodless, factitious. Beauty for Lawrence is apparent, dependent on the light of the sun, and on us seeing it. Apart from this apparency, there is nothing but a functional world of bland ‘fact’. That which is apparent is actual, for Lawrence. A scientific principle or ‘law’ does not, cannot, supplant the sensual reality of our world, “in which the soul delights” (“Anaxagoras” 708). Humans, through “ungodly knowledge of themselves”, fall from the hands of God, and without God there is only the unfathomable “godless plunge of the abyss” (“The Hands of God” 699; “Abysmal Immortality”, 700). This ‘fall’, according to Lawrence, is the fate of the mechanical industrialists, the seekers of bloodless ‘scientific’ knowledge, the destroyers of the body, caught in “the endless writhe [of] . . . self-knowledge” (“Abysmal Immortality” 700).

Save me from that, O God!

Let me never know myself apart from the living God! (“The Hands of God” 699)

This endless abyss, this knowledge of themselves—this constant entanglement in which humans seek to rise above themselves—is humanity’s struggle to overcome nature. It is a form of pride, an attempt to glorify our achievements at the expense of the real glory which is the living environment, including humanity itself. It is this *knowledge*, according to Lawrence, which condemns us. It is this self-knowledge, “in denial” of everything we are—“kisses and strife”, “a creature of beautiful peace, like a river / and a creature of conflict, like a cataract”—that damns us to a grey neutrality, a hell, “sinless and stainless”, wondering “the hub of the obscene ego” (“Death Is Not Evil, Evil is Mechanical” 714). Modernity’s triumph is that of the mind over the body. The body is dismembered by the ‘machine age’, and Christianity swaddles it with the *spirit*. For the

latter, the body is corruptible, a moral limitation; for the former, it is, at best, an *instrumental* good. These, for Lawrence, are the twin evils against which the body has struggled to assert itself. Both industrialism (modernity) and Christianity want to save us, or recompense us for our fears, our limitations; mollify us with soft words or promises of rewards, in this life or the next. The body, meanwhile, is set upon the wheel of the eight-hour day, serves the machine, or the spirit. The only evil is that which is done to the body, “and we see it only in man / and in his machines” (“What Then Is Evil” 712).

When Lawrence speaks of “knowledge of themselves”, then, he means intellectual knowledge—knowledge turned in upon itself, where the knower is face-to-face with their own bodiless ego: “the self aware of itself” (“Introduction to Pictures” *Phoenix* 1 766). The body becomes a mere instrument, not a good in itself; but a slave which bears the weight of the spirit, and elevates it like a prince: *Ich dien*. It is this *mind*, irreligious knowledge, according to Lawrence, which damns us, which slips us through the hands of God into an immortality where we exist “mechanically”, but do not *live*.

The body is not a mere receptacle for the spirit or mind; everything you know, the body knows (“Why the Novel Matters” *Life* 252–253). And knowledge is the understanding that arises from experience, knowing ourselves as living creatures of light—and dark: Lawrence leads us down

the blue-smoking darkness, Pluto’s dark-blue daze,  
black lamps from the halls of Dis, burning dark blue

[where Persephone is a bride and]

a gloom . . . enfolded in the deeper dark  
of the arms of Pluto as he ravishes her once again  
and pierces her once more with his passion of the utter dark

among the splendour of black-blue torches, shedding fathomless darkness on the nuptials.

Give me a flower on a tall stem, and three dark flames,  
for I will go to the wedding, and be wedding-guest  
at the marriage of the living dark. (“Bavarian Gentians” 697; “Bavarian Gentians”, 960)<sup>168</sup>

As Sandra Gilbert explains:

Persephone stands at the crossroads of two truths—the truth of life and the truth of death, the truth of the spirit and the truth of the flesh—and through her Lawrence is able to show that the two truths are, as in “Medlars” . . . ultimately one. There, in the incomprehensible marriage with [the living] darkness, life begins again. (*Acts* 297)

And, as Lawrence himself noted in *Twilight in Italy*—written years before his poem:

[W]here in mankind is the ecstasy of light and dark together, the supreme transcendence of the afterglow, day hovering in the embrace of the coming night like two angels embracing in the heavens, like Eurydice in the arms of Orpheus, or Persephone embraced by Pluto? . . . [T]he two in consummation are perfect, beyond the range of loneliness or solitude[.] (39)

“Bavarian Gentians” is a different account of the ‘Leda’ myth, mentioned above. The ravished Persephone is one half of “the godly soul of the seed or bulb (a god ‘nude as [a] blanched nutkerna[.]’) . . .” (Gilbert, “Apocalypse Now” 246).<sup>169</sup> It is the Creation story informed by Lawrence’s vision of cyclic regeneration, and the same sort of objections to the “Leda” poems and “Medlars” apply here: the sexual (and general)

---

<sup>168</sup> I have cited two versions of this poem.

<sup>169</sup> Gilbert quotes “Medlars”; the square brackets are Gilbert’s.

subjugation of Woman is grounded in a Creation Myth, which would render it valid or natural. Lawrence, again, is not concerned with asserting male domination. Persephone is a version of Leda, the same person seen through a different door, in another light. She is another vision of the apocalyptic, regenerative act: the bride is unveiled—a primal scene, but an end scene also. (245–246).<sup>170</sup> The ‘wedding’, referred to in the poem, is the celebration of the spirit’s reunion with the body, and the marriage is performed in the bulb of the flower—the heart of its new life (246). It is also a celebration of the physical conjunction of man and woman, opposites held together by a ‘third thing’ (Lawrence’s ‘Holy Ghost’)—a coupling in which, however, individuality is retained.

This dark, plutonic flame is not evil—“not even the double Phallus of the devil himself / with his key to the two dark doors / is evil” (“Doors” 710). The Underworld, Hell, in Lawrence’s metaphysics, is the reversed flame, the “*blaze* of darkness” (“Bavarian Gentians” 697; my emphasis). Evil is “another thing”; it denies the body—the “column of blood / a rose tree bronzey with thorns” (“Doors” 711; “Death Is Not Evil” 714).

Nietzsche’s “myth of eternal recurrence had become an essential part of Lawrence’s conception of god-nature in its creative and destructive power” (Schneider 161). But Lawrence’s ‘return’ is not the duplication of the recurring ‘nightmare’ that Nietzsche posited, that we experience everything again (exactly as it happened), eternally, the re-perpetuation of all the atrocities of history.<sup>171</sup> That would be like being tied to a spinning wheel: too fixed, too mechanical. Lawrence envisaged the return for the ‘virtuous’ only. It is his ‘salvation’, his faith in the resurrection of the body. Those who squandered life are damned—the “sordid people” who think, for example, that nudity or sex (or their portrayal in art and literature) is dirty (“Give me a Sponge” 580). Most people, Lawrence suggests, are transitory, perish at death, as individuals, and it doesn’t matter whether they live or die (“The Crown” *Phoenix* 2 384). This sentiment is

---

<sup>170</sup> “Apocalyptic” in the literal Greek sense, meaning “unveiling.”

<sup>171</sup> See Nietzsche, *The Gay Science* 341, 273–274.

expressed in his poem “Mountain Lion”, in which a Mexican hunter has senselessly killed *un “león”* (401):

And I think in this empty world there was room for me and a mountain lion.  
And I think in the world beyond, how easily we might spare a million or two of  
humans  
And never miss them.  
Yet what a gap in the world, the missing white frost-face of that slim yellow  
mountain lion! (402)

Lawrence’s ‘return’ is, or is analogous to, renewal in nature, dead roots stirring in the spring after “the long-nighted Gethsemane. / . . . the Cross sprouting its superb and fearless flowers!” (“Almond Blossom” 305). The tree in winter is like a body in its tomb. On a functional level, Lawrence reanimates our remote ancestors as an exemplary way to live, and as a way forward, adapted to the present, but always in a state of flux, of becoming. He advocates a religion, a way of life, which acknowledges *polarities* (good and evil, light and dark, etc.) and embraces them as part of a unified whole, where one, in part, defines the other. He does not idealise his ‘state of nature’ as a utopia—at least not in its traditional conception as a peaceful and equitable state of affairs, an Eden. That also would be too fixed, too mechanical. Lawrence embraced the horrors of nature, the cruelty, and justified it (Miller 130).<sup>172</sup> He plumbed the depths of his being, the dark god, not to cure like Freud, but to hold it aloft, and gaze upon it, as if it were some strange wonderful creature, a serpent unearthed from the depths of his soul. It is an act of surrender: “obedience to one’s instincts no matter where they lead” (131).

Eliot’s ‘surrender’ is different; it is a *negative* ‘act’, a relinquishing of Self—of self-will, of desire: a renunciation of the ego-distinct-from-God. But Lawrence, too, dismissed the self-centred ego, the egotistical will, as the mind turned in upon itself, “man’s fall out of the community of nature into ‘himself alone’” (Kirkham 103). The ego turning in upon itself— the self-willed ego caught on the wheel—is contrary to “obedience to one’s

---

<sup>172</sup> See also, for example, his essay, “Death of a Porcupine”.

instincts”, for it entails the abandonment of one’s instincts for the mechanised life. Lawrence surrenders to his instincts, abandons himself to his fate, but in order to assert his power over it (Miller 130–131). This surrender equates to surrendering to god, a non-didactic god, however. It is a god of Nature, a god of ‘myself’—of being, and becoming.

It is only through the integration of the artist and the prophet/philosopher that we can fully appreciate Lawrence; they are “twin products of the same consciousness” (Montgomery 3). This is not to confound the man with his art, but to assert that Lawrence’s art sprang directly from life, as he experienced it; and from life, too, his ideas (or politics, in the widest sense) emerge. Lawrence’s poetry and fiction “actualises the monist, materialist, physicalist truth of life”—the inter-relatedness of nature, of everything; its physicality, and the untenable position of dualism (the body/mind split) (Phelps 86). All of these things are complexly interlocked in Lawrence: take away the mystic, the fulminator, the ‘prophet’, we are left only with his flaming poetry, “organically felt and sensuously communicated” (Glicksberg 289)—in effect, a vase of (faux) flowers. His ‘politics’ are ingrained in his poems. His creative work (including some of his poetry) is often didactic, expository, but equally his prophetic pronouncements “communicate to the feelings as well as to the intellect” (Montgomery 3). The tendency to distinguish these two aspects of Lawrence (artist and prophet/philosopher) is informed by the same logic by which the modern mind makes the distinction between reason (the intellect) and feeling (4)—the body and spirit. Montgomery quotes Lawrence:

The truly great discoveries of science and real works of art are made by the whole consciousness of man working together in unison and oneness: instinct, intuition, mind, intellect all fused into one complete consciousness. (5)<sup>173</sup>

Lawrence wanted to recapture an intimate sense of awareness, a sense of interrelatedness between humans and their environment. This spiritual awareness, present in pre-classical societies, “a repressed and forgotten mode of fulfilled being”,

---

<sup>173</sup> Quoted from Lawrence’s “Introduction to These Paintings” *Life* 403.

has been eroded by progress, civilisation—instinct and intuition supplanted by Reason as means of knowledge acquisition, and thought (Gutierrez 179). Lawrence wanted, in his poetry, in all his work, “to evoke sacred experiences in the reader . . . [—] subjective experiences of divinity in or beyond the world” (Burack 2).

There’s no way, for Lawrence, to experience these ‘sacred wonders’ without a body. “Everything that has beauty has a body, and is a body; / everything that has being has being in the flesh . . . ” (“Bodiless God” 691):

So in the cane-brake he clasped his hands in delight  
that could only be god-given, and murmured:  
Lo! God is one god! But here in the twilight  
godly and lovely comes Aphrodite out of the sea  
towards me! (“The Man of Tyre” 693)

Those who denied the body are the souls who beat against the “adamant walls”—who cannot return to life, as the narrator does at the end of one version of “The Ship of Death” (716–720).

And yet out of eternity a thread  
separates itself on the blackness,  
a horizontal thread  
that fumes a little with pallor upon the dark.  
.....  
[—] the cruel dawn of coming back to life  
out of oblivion. (9.719–720)

The literal image, “the horizontal thread”, is dawn emerging after the ‘endless’ night. Death, oblivion, is the intermediate ‘time’ between “the old self and the new” (5.718)—intermediate, and yet eternal. Logically, this is a contradiction, “a

phenomenological paradox: the impossible experience . . . ” (Gilbert, *Acts* 298). To attempt to unravel this miracle in terms of

an intellectual definition of what can only be known intuitively, through symbol and metaphor, would be an arrogant effort [according to Lawrence] to comprehend the “incomprehensible.” (311)

This anyway is Lawrence’s faith, and he built his ‘ship’, in part, by writing his *Last Poems* as he himself drew nearer “to the mystery of death” (312). He steeled himself for death, embraced it, the pain of oblivion; was “willing to be made nothing . . . / Dipped into oblivion”, “burnt down / to hot and flocculent ash”—to be renewed “like a new-opened flower / . . . dipped again in God, and new-created.” (“Phoenix” 728; “Shadows” 726).

“Shadows”, his last poem, is heartbreakingly desolate:

And if, in the changing phases of man’s life  
I fall in sickness and in misery  
my wrists seem broken and my heart seems dead  
and strength has gone, and my life  
is only the leavings of a life:  
.....  
then I must know that still  
I am in the hands [of] the unknown God,  
he is breaking me down to his own oblivion  
to send me forth on a new morning, a new man. (727)<sup>174</sup>

As Harold Bloom noted, “It is a final hymn to an unknown, stranger God: grave, perfectly paced, ultimately hopeful of spiritual rebirth” (*Till I End My Song* 236). Lawrence, as he wrote this poem, was dying, about to undertake the longest journey through oblivion,

---

<sup>174</sup> The square brackets [of] are an editorial fix of an accidental omission in Lawrence’s note book.

into the hands of God, after which “*Maybe* life is still our portion” (“Difficult Death” 721; my emphasis). He releases his grip—through frailness, literally; but, also, as an ultimate gesture of faith.

## Reaction

In his day, his art was condemned (critically and legally) as something vulgar and censurable—famously *Lady Chatterley’s Lover*, but also *The Rainbow*, which portrayed the inner lives of the characters with “the clarity of poetry” (West. Qtd in Hamalian, 70–71). Since then, Lawrence’s art has been dismissed or mocked<sup>175</sup> as a form of mysticism (nonsense)—even his eroticism feels, to some, silly or embarrassing;<sup>176</sup> or intimidating, an instance of sexism, of sexual bullying, as in Kate Millett’s analysis.<sup>177</sup> An unpublished article by Lawrence<sup>178</sup> discovered in 2013, however, suggests an alternative view. The article was a riposte to a misogynistic article by a certain Mr. Rider, entitled “The Ugliness of Women”.<sup>179</sup> For Rider, even the most beautiful woman was repellent: “in every woman born there is a seed of terrible, unmentionable evil: evil such as man—a simple creature for all his passions and lusts – could never dream of . . . (Qtd in *The Guardian*)<sup>180</sup> Lawrence reply included the following:

the hideousness he [Rider] sees is the reflection of himself, and of the automatic meat-lust with which he approaches another individual. . . . Even the most 'beautiful' woman is still a human creature. If he approached her as such,

---

<sup>175</sup> Braunias: “Lawrence, the liberator; Lawrence, the phallic god—‘So big!’ gasps Connie. ‘So proud! And so lordly!’” (Braunias’s quotes are from *Lady Chatterley’s Lover* (no page numbers given).

<sup>176</sup> Speaking of *Lady Chatterley’s Lover*, Milan Kundera notes: “lyrical sexuality is far more ludicrous than the lyrical sentimentality of the last [19th] century.” The retort from Dale Peck: “where Lawrence wrote *phallus*, Kundera sees only *dick*”; and “great passion seems laughable to those unable to feel it” (ctd in Adelman 514, 522, 521; emphases in the original).

<sup>177</sup> Millett views *Lady Chatterley’s Lover* as an instance of Lawrence’s “sadistic [sexual] intimidation” (239). Carol Dix has a different perspective: “It is not submission [on the woman’s part] . . . it is sheer pleasure and ultimate fulfilment” (51). And see Norman Mailer’s *Prisoner of Sex* for a powerful rebuttal of Millett’s criticism (of Lawrence, Henry Miller and himself), and exposition of her intellectual dishonesty, her tampering with the evidence against Lawrence, with the use of ellipses, for example, to distort the text.

<sup>178</sup> The article was sent to *The Adelphi* but rejected by its editor—Middleton Murry.

<sup>179</sup> This article was published—in *The Adelphi*, by Murry.

<sup>180</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2013/apr/11/dh-lawrence-manuscript-attitude-women>. See also <https://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/unknown-sexist-rebuttal-by-dh-lawrence-discovered>

as a being instead of as a piece of lurid meat, he would have no horrors afterwards. (Qtd in *The Guardian*.)

Occasionally, Lawrence is personally undermined—either as a way of attacking his ‘philosophy’, or as a means of showing that Lawrence the man does not measure-up to his ‘idealism’. David Ellis, for example, relates Lawrence’s horror of female pubic hair as a young (still virgin) student teacher. Ellis, via a Freudian analysis, argues that Lawrence felt repulsion for the female body in general.<sup>181</sup> This view challenges Lawrence the sexually liberated man (and perhaps by extension, the artist), the man who venerated the body, and if true, links him, unexpectedly, to Eliot. The intention is to humanise Lawrence as you would a god; it is possibly motivated by the same impulse that leads one to denounce the young Augustine (or Tolstoy) for sexual incontinence. Middleton Murry had been the first, or among the first (in 1931) to note the discrepancy between Lawrence’s ideal sexuality, and the actual sexual failure of the man who cleaved to his woman like a child to its mother (*Son of Woman* 71).

Frances Wilson’s 2019 biography re-affirms the narrative of the sexually ineffectual man, the man at odds with his art. The reality of his frail body, his tubercular temper and irritability contrast sharply with the visceral, body-centred artist. Lawrence’s art is barely noted, and Wilson’s book is loaded with cumbrous superfluities, lingering too long on the frustrations and convoluted impedimenta of Mabel Dodge and Tony Luhan in their paradisaal retreat in New Mexico. Luhan, the Native Indian, is the laconic hero who gets on with the business of fixing cars while Lawrence burns in fits of irritation. Thus we understand the meaning of Wilson’s title *Burning Man*: Lawrence burns in the ‘Inferno’ of England and he burns in the ‘Purgatory’ of Italy. He even burns in the ‘Paradise’ of old and New Mexico. But Lawrence had had enough of ‘Paradise’: he went back to Europe.

---

<sup>181</sup> Ellis’ contention is based on an incident recorded in George Neville’s *Memoir of D.H. Lawrence: The Betrayal*. The incident has been related by numerous authors, including Feinstein (35); and his lack of sexual potency is also well-documented.

It may be conceded that Lawrence liberated us from the prudery of the 'moral majority' but that his use, as a liberator, has passed. As Sandra Gilbert has noted:

[Lawrence] is the priest of spontaneity in an era of parody, the sage of sacred sex in Playboy country. He is the acolyte of intuition, of blood wisdom . . . the impassioned enemy of mechanised rationality . . . in a thought-tormented, computerised, hypertext, theory-driven culture. (Gilbert, "Apocalypse Now" 237)

### **Blood, Glory**

"The sage of sacred sex", as a label, is infinitely mockable, at any time; and, by extension, so is Lawrence. So is his 'spirituality', his 'philosophy'—and it is also dangerous: *who was he to tell us we were wrong!* "[Who] is [Lawrence] to decide on the million or two of humans who have no gods in them, and are therefore dispensable?" (Sagar, *Poet* 87) The reference is to "Mountain Lion"—a "beautiful poem" (87).<sup>182</sup> Lawrence's belligerence, coupled with his spirituality/politics, can lead to some dire consequences. Some of these consequences are graphically explored by Lawrence himself in *The Plumed Serpent*, a novel that confronts Christianity and the snug lumpish certainties of Western humanism—the twin crumbling pillars of tradition and 'progress'—with the physically resurrected, reawakened gods of Mexico.

His 'modern primitivism' has been described as destructive and nihilistic, and a correlation has been assumed between Lawrence's 'politics of blood' and totalitarianism (Kessler 467, 471, 484).<sup>183</sup> But as Bell points out "[r]ather than dismissing mythic belief and practices as 'primitive' [Lawrence was] engaged by its apparent expression of communal unity and cosmic belonging" ("An Analytic Note" 66). Kessler, however, makes the leap between Lawrence's 'anti-intellectualism' and the notion of blood purity—the purity of a race. Thus Lawrence is implicated in a mechanical death-wish

---

<sup>182</sup> The line Sagar alludes to is: "in *the world beyond*, how easily we might spare a million or two of humans" (402; my emphasis).

<sup>183</sup> Kessler says "No wonder Lawrence's later books were popular in Nazi Germany: his blood theory led him directly into totalitarian ideology" (484).

politics that flourished after his death.<sup>184</sup> Kessler's argument is logically impermissible, a *non sequitur*—as Norman Mailer notes:

Blood has more to tell us than the machine, he [Hitler] was forever telling us as he built the machine. Ever since, it has been intellectually dubious to make any but the most cultivated appeals for a return to the primitive, since Nazi propaganda was always ready to speak in the profoundest tones of instinct and vision and soul . . . (182–183)

The point Mailer makes is that Nazism cannot “set up barriers on all the intellectual roads which could yet prove interesting”; and likewise it cannot claim Lawrence as one of its precursors—just because one [Mailer himself] is not “at war with every remark [of Hitler]” (182, 181). Blood, for Lawrence, meant pre-conscious instinct, intuition, the natural, a-rational urges that govern ‘the self within the self’—according to Kessler “the essence of which is an eternal and unalterable opposition to intelligence, or mentality, or rationality” (483). But for Lawrence, ‘intuition’ and ‘intelligence’ are not mutually exclusive.<sup>185</sup> He does not denigrate the ‘intellect’, but insists, as Oates states,

upon the limits of any activity of “pure” reason to retain the sacred, unknowable part of the self that Kant called the Transcendental Ego, the Ego above the personal, which is purely mental and sterile. (*New Heaven* 54; Oates’ quote marks).

‘Blood’, in Lawrence, is not usually a descriptive term for *race*. When it is, it is usually in reference to liberation (as in *The Plumed Serpent*) from a white, Christian oppressor

---

<sup>184</sup> Bertram Russell thought so too: Lawrence anticipated “the . . . philosophy of fascism before the politicians thought of it”, and his “belief in blood-consciousness . . . led straight to Auschwitz” (qtd in Feinstein 123). This has, in the words of Roger Griffin, “minimal empirical content” (360). Griffin actually refers to a similar assertion by Paul Virilio that Filippo Marinetti’s statement, ‘*War is the world’s only hygiene*’, ‘led to the shower block of Auschwitz-Birkenau’ (359). “It misrepresents in the language of tabloid journalism the complex causal nexus that relates the strands of modernism concerned with aesthetic and social hygiene to the regime that attempted to enact the Nazi’s eugenic and genocidal projects of Europe’s ‘purification’” (359). Lawrence is not responsible for the debasement of his ‘philosophy’.

<sup>185</sup> See “Introduction to these Paintings” *Life* 403—quoted above.

and the bonds of slavery which the latter brings with their mechanical and industrialised system, which is death to the creative impulses of our being.

And yet: “Humanity needs pruning” (“Humanity Needs Pruning” 677): must some die, so that those more capable of living can—“like those sun-seeking climbing plants of Java”—grow, wind upward and pierce the canopy to the light of happiness (Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil* 193)? Who is to die, and who is to do the ‘pruning’? Helen Sword, like Kessler, wonders at the political implications of Lawrence’s ‘aesthetics of violence’:

[I]t does seem likely that his enthrallment to cults of submission and power might well have led him, had he lived past 1930, into unfortunate accord with the blood-based mysticism that would come to animate so much fascist mythmaking. (“Leda” 312)

Sword’s declaration is dubious for the same reason that Kessler’s is. Some of Lawrence’s ill-natured rants, nevertheless, take the form of “proto-fascistic solutions” (211). Milne quotes Lawrence’s 1908 essay “Return to Bestwood”:

Hopeless life should be put to sleep, the idiots and the hopeless sick and the true criminal. And the birth-rate should be controlled. (211)

Milne is alluding to parallels with Nazi Germany. The irony is: if the “idiots” had been put to sleep we wouldn’t have had the hysterical millions who ranted against Jewish blood. Lawrence would never have consented to that; he found it hard enough to kill a porcupine.<sup>186</sup> In *Fantasia* (1922), Lawrence was “already beginning to see the real drift of things” in regard to German nationalism (Tiverton 69). The tone here is mordant:

---

<sup>186</sup> “. . . and with rather trembling hands got [the gun] loaded” (“Death of a Porcupine” *Phoenix* 2 464)

. . . *the Fatherland have diagnosed that it is good for you . . . that the friction of eating stimulates the cells of the jaw-bone and develops the *superman strength of will which makes us gods* (Fantasia 133; Lawrence's emphases).*

Lawrence's 'politics' reflect a yearning towards greatness (not in some jingoistic-induced mob sense, but spiritually), and it is at the same time an expression of angst—the individual alienated, removed from their religious/mythic origins, alone against the world: the individual versus Man (previously 'God')—the capital M abstract, a 'discovery' of The Enlightenment, which produced the French Revolution, which in turn spawned bourgeois liberalism, socialism and fascism.<sup>187</sup> Lawrence's 'proto-fascism' is not the kind of thing that engenders the mass support of 'marching men', who would but crush the individual's aspirations beneath its heel until everything was levelled. Individuals alone, says Lawrence, can save humanity, and they must take root in the soil of the living flesh. So concludes *Kangaroo*, his novel which most explicitly rejects fascism, to the extent that even Bolshevism is preferred (302–304). "Fascism" is only "another kind of bullying" (Lawrence, *Movements in European History* 317).

Lawrence had socialistic and communistic 'impulses' as well (Milne 210–211),<sup>188</sup> but he explicitly denounced any political philosophy, which leads to tyranny ("Blessed are the Powerful" *Phoenix* 2 436)—or any fixed system. Those who perpetrated the atrocities in 1930s and 40s Europe were *not* the 'higher humans', the "real leaders" Lawrence imagined—as Hensher supposes (no page numbers). The real leaders are not those instruments of bullying like Napoleon, or the "trick majesty of Kaisers" (*Kangaroo* 303)—

But the true majesty of the single soul which has all its own weaknesses, but its strength in spite of them . . . The single soul that stands naked between the dark God and the dark-blooded masses of men. (303)

---

<sup>187</sup> "Because the revolutionary priests or school masters served *man*, they cut off the heads of *men*". Stirner 74; Stirner's emphases.

<sup>188</sup> Milne quotes a 1921 letter from Lawrence: "If I knew how to, I'd really join myself to the revolutionary socialists now . . ." Also, see Lawrence's *Movements in European History*: "Myself, personally, I believe that a good form of socialism, if it could be brought about, would be the best form of government." (315)

Whatever Lawrence's physical and psychological qualities, his poetry (all his art) is as natural as breathing, and with each breath, a flower is stirred into life. It is "the act of devotion in the sculptor that forces the god to occupy the stone" (Rexroth 168). The types of criticisms and remarks (as outlined above) are perhaps, as Wright suggests, a symptom of the decline of religious intensity (250). They conjure the image of a crowd throwing rocks at a statue, some deified thing—usually as a satiric gesture, or, less commonly today, as an act of indignation. This, as Catherine Brown noted in 2021, is a form of iconoclasm, because it is directed at "deified versions" of Lawrence ("Icon" 435).

Such attacks tend to fall into two categories—those which accuse Lawrence of resembling Christ or Pan, and those which accuse him of failing to resemble them, thus respectively condemning him by negative association with, and critiquing his alleged pretensions in relation to, these gods. (435)<sup>189</sup>

Lawrence wanted the elevation of that which is 'noble', which for him (like Nietzsche), is related to the natural and creative dispositions of a few individuals, a minority, found "in every class, in every country, in every race // . . . that still see the gleam of life", who live with physical religious intensity ("Minorities in Danger" 666). As Emma Goldman noted: great ideas come from minorities, but these ideas (for example, the "principle of brotherhood expounded by the agitator of Nazareth [Jesus]") become horrible once seized by the majority (74). Would Lawrence cut the hands of a drowning man who clings to a lifeboat so that its occupants may live? It might depend on who the man was: Lawrence might even depose those already on the boat, so that the drowning man may live. The question itself is not a *moral* conundrum for Lawrence, and he's not concerned with it as a hypothesis. For him, life is not the struggle for self-preservation ("Hardy" *Phoenix 1* 404). "The final aim of every living thing . . . is the full achievement of itself"—unselfconsciously, just as the poppy achieves its redness (403). If we lose ourselves in the pointless struggles of money and class, from fear of death, from the instinct of self-preservation, we waste our life. People are driven to this of course by the

---

<sup>189</sup> Brown's essay notes that "[n]umerous features of Lawrence suggested contemporary understandings of each or both gods [Christ and Pan]" (427).

industrialised system, the drive for production, consumerism. We are thus led to believe that (or act as if) the purpose of living is to acquire always more: money, knowledge or whatever it is. Instead, let “[a man] work . . . three or four hours a day . . . Then let him have twenty hours for being himself, for producing himself” (429). It is the forces that deny us life that Lawrence would eradicate, and all its offshoots: “the fresh, clean Englishman”, for instance, “tramping his thirty miles a day / after partridges, or a little rubber ball . . .” (“How Beastly the Bourgeois Is” 430):

Nicely groomed, like a mushroom

.....

sucking his life out of the dead leaves of greater life than his own. //

.....

what a pity they can't all be kicked over

like sickening toadstools, and left to melt back, swiftly

into the soil of England. (431)

These ‘nice Englishmen’ represent bodiless lifeless ‘life’, anti-Nature: mow them down, Lawrence says. The young left-wing (at the time) John Betjeman reproduced the sentiment in his poem “Slough”. It’s as well for Lawrence’s reputation that this, at least, was not actualised—and for Betjeman, the then future poet-laureate.

Lawrence rants against the industrialists because they are the deniers of life, the ones who condemn the masses to forced labour, to the withering away of the body, caught in the perpetual cycle of work/eat, work/eat. We are slaves, then and now. The industrial age has stolen “your body from you and left you an animated carcass / to work with, and nothing else” (“What have they done to you?” 630). The work isn’t merely *soul* destroying. We have lost our instincts, intuitions, passions. Lawrence wanted the overthrow of modern industrialism, which reduces us to cogs in a machine, servants of the ruling classes—the rulers of the machine world, which is run by robots for less intelligent robots, all of whom (leaders and followers, rich and poor) are inferiors. They are inferior because they are less than alive; they are mechanical, animated corpses,

who turn everything they touch into iron. Those who would rebel against this state are the superiors who are to “thrust down / into service” these multitudinous beings, who are “misnamed your fellow-men” (“The Cross” 637). It is a distinction between “the base and the beautiful” (637). It is a revolt against the powers that have undermined the life of the body and the natural world—that have shaken “the lark’s nest till the eggs have broken” (“The Triumph of the Machine” 623).

Lawrence longed for the move away from oneness, centralisation; away from the industrial age, into “a vivid recoil into separateness”, where “men touch one another” (“Future States” 611). “All this war, this talk of nationality, to me is false.” (Lawrence, Letter to Catherine Carswell, 9 July 1916.)

What is a nation for, but to secure the maximum liberty to every individual? What do you think a nation *is*? —a big business concern? . . . How horrible! (Lawrence, Letter to Thomas Dunlop, 12 July 1916)

But “separateness” is to be thought of as leaves on a tree, not self-centred disconnection (“Free Will” 617). This leads to a state where there is no “interest in war”; it is “Oneness [that] makes war, and the obsession of oneness” (“Future War” 612). Lawrence wanted the decentralisation of society, and rejected the idea that technology is, in itself, a means to advancement and happiness. This call for decentralisation, and the disavowal of technology as a means to advancement and happiness, again, runs against the mainstream of fascist ideology, as well as capitalist and Marxist. But, as I have also emphasised in this thesis, Lawrence did not thereby advocate a return to ‘simpler times’, but rather a re-configuration, not as a static made-for-all-time state of innocence, but a dynamic, naturally evolving world where humans live harmoniously (not always peacefully) with their fellow living things, and fulfil their humanness. Machines are good in that they save labour. The problem is the use to which they are put: “a muck-rake for raking together heaps of money”; “a means to more slavery” (“Hardy” *Phoenix* 1 426, 427). “[W]hat [Lawrence] inveighs against is the misuse of the mind that makes it an enemy of life [—] the distinctive mark of our scientifico-industrial

civilization” (Leavis, *Thought, Words and Creativity*, 26). By 1976 we had advanced to a world of “statistical truths, and computers that can write poems” (26).

### How to Live

We can live life in contact with nature only if we divest ourselves of moral clothing, where we are ourselves—revealed, vulnerable—but true, beyond all surface talk.<sup>190</sup> This we can do as cells, “functioning diversely in a vast organism composed of family, clan, village, nation” (“*Bottom Dogs*, by Edward Dahlberg” *Phoenix 1* 269). Or we might give up on the possibility of such a community and leave the “walled city” of society altogether (“Hardy” *Phoenix 1* 429). Lawrence did this, or attempted to. He took to the road perhaps more intensely than any of the Beats, and the free-loving ideologues of the 60s counterculture. He was, as Rebecca West realised, a wandering ‘saint’ who went on journeys with spiritual rather than geographic destinations (Hamalian 66).<sup>191</sup> “Lawrence travelled . . . to get a certain Apocalyptic vision of mankind that he [repeatedly] registered . . . always rising to a pitch of ecstatic agony” (West; qtd in Hamalian 66). The open road, for Lawrence, is the home of the soul. Not heaven. Not love. Not sacrifice. Not through any of these “does the soul accomplish herself”, but through the open road, the journey itself, meeting all the wayfarers along the road, with sympathy, not love—“A morality of actual living, not of salvation” (Lawrence, “Whitman” *Selected Literary Criticism* 401–402, 402). If Lawrence “had [no] firm idea of his spiritual object” (C. James 167), it is because the *idea* does not exist: Lawrence’s object was experience: life (and art) for life’s sake:

. . . one must not die without having known a real good life, and a fulfilment, a happiness that is born of a new world, from a new centre. . . . if we cannot discover a terrestrial America, there are new continents of the soul for us . . .  
Only one must get away from this foul old world, one must have the strength to

<sup>190</sup> See his poem, “Moral Clothing” (607–608).

<sup>191</sup> As early as 1913 (when most of his travels were still ahead of him), Lawrence complained of being “sick, sick, sick of shifting. I want to sit tight somewhere and work. I am by nature not a bit of an adventurer . . .” (Letter to Constance Garnett, 11 July 1913). And this was just the thought of moving within Kent in England!

depart, and to go where there is no road, into the unrealised. (Letter to Catherine Carswell, 25 February 1916)

This is his “Apocalyptic vision.” “Soul”, “no road” and (as in West's quote) “spiritual . . . destinations” do not refer to the intangible ‘world’; they connote, rather, the spirit abiding in tandem with the physical creative human. He and Frieda are like Adam and Eve “‘searching’ for a route back to ‘paradise’, a theme which runs all the way through Lawrence’s writing” (Wright 7; my inverted commas). “Searching”, however, is a spiritual/inward ‘activity’; it is not a deliberate effort to find some particular magical thing, as if life were a quest. The immediate point of life (for Lawrence, at least) is to be in it, not to get to the other side.

Lawrence realised the dilemma of establishing an ‘ideal’ (but fluid) community. His desire for a government of superior individuals, a sort of geniocracy, seems unrealisable; it would factionalise, and degenerate into tyranny. This, he understood. We can try. But if practical politics fails, and if the establishment of small, self-sufficient communities turns out to be a disappointment?

How shall a man live? . . . Let every man answer for himself. We only know, we want the freedom to live, the freedom of leisure and means . . . Come away from the crowd . . . and live. Your business is to produce your own real life, no matter what the nations do. (“Hardy” *Phoenix* 1 428–429).

Lawrence really did believe that humanity needs ‘pruning’, for the health of the “vast great tree”, so that it may live and flourish, but

not as in the late war . . .  
with . . . evil destruction  
but pruning, severely, intelligently and ruthlessly . . . (“Humanity Needs Pruning” 677)

Any idea or *anyone*, that is contrary to nature, that hinders human growth, should (or will inevitably be) removed, as a rotten branch is, for the life of the tree, life itself. Lawrence here, again, is in line with the anarchism of Emma Goldman. She too, in 1917 (or earlier), had used the 'nature' analogy—clearing the soil so it can bear healthy fruit, destroying parasitic growths that feed on society (50). The revolt is against a society that stifles our physical and creative impulses, and so produces slaves and weaklings—this too was, as Goldman noted, behind Nietzsche's *Übermensch*, and Max Stirner's individualism (44).

The tree analogy had been propagated in Lawrence's epilogue to *Movements in European History*, specifically in response to the Great War, which had recently ended (308–311).

In every race, the growing tip is the living idea, which must never cease to change and develop. Once the living idea, the forward reaching consciousness of any race dies . . . the vast branch of that race. . . withers . . . and at length falls and disappears. As the great Egyptians and Babylonians have fallen and disappeared. (309)

The same applies for "the whole tree of Man. . . . If this dies, the whole tree perishes. Or else, from some side socket, a new leading bud appears" (309). Humanity, Lawrence implies, has "lost its 'organic connection' with the cosmos" (Jones, 79; Jones's inverted commas). This means that we have lost our natural blood/physical impulses. We have severed the bond between ourselves and the natural world, worshipped false gods, and fallen into a state of abject servitude. We live for Progress, equality of opportunity and free competition—a war against all—which has entailed the overgrowth of some individuals and nations at the expense of their neighbours, in the same way that some trees in a forest overbear others and deprive them of light. Some "forge ahead, and get a stranglehold upon the natural resources", and "[s]ooner or later war is bound to come" (*Movements in European History* 311).

Every man must be free to compete with every other man, and there must be equality of opportunity. Since the War these words make us feel sick, they have proved such a swindle. (310)

Lawrence would reinstate ‘the god of Nature’, the one repressed by the great equaliser, Law, the redeemer: the Olympian Saviour who deposed the primitive deities that terrified Hobbes. It isn’t a perpetual state of war that Lawrence envisions, but a way to live commensurate with who we are, a natural aristocracy that celebrates our individuality and our differences: our humanity. Lawrence’s sociopolitics, his ideas on education, for example, are subsumed into his religion of body and nature. He believed in a flourishing community of individuals, a freedom that is natural, creative and life-affirming. The individual is greater than the State; the latter is made for the former’s convenience (“Hardy” *Phoenix 1* 428). Lawrence sides with the few who do not yield to being “swept away” in “some horrible flood” of collective emotions (Smith 9). It is the individuals that matter; authority (the government, culture, public opinion, social mores etc.) is the antagonist: the One which would scupper the individual’s grasp towards fulfilment—the Apple.

### **Unifying Flame: Religion in the Body**

As a religious and pagan writer, Lawrence sought “to evoke sacred experiences in the reader . . . [—] *subjective* experiences of divinity in or beyond the world” (Burack 2; my emphasis). This subjectivity does not mean that the experience is open to interpretation, but that there exists a direct and reciprocal relationship, a link, between the experience and the subject who experiences, and it is that *link*, that *unifying flame*—the ‘Holy Ghost’—which communicates the religious experience. The experience itself (like God) cannot exist prior or independently of the one who experiences. A unity is achieved, but without undermining the difference between the self and the other. It’s a sort of mystical ‘Protestantism’. The individual is elevated, but at the same time their individuality dissolves in the face of the whole cosmos. These numinous feelings are everywhere apparent in Lawrence’s work. He wanted to demolish (Christian or secular) modern

Western consciousness, which elevated the mind over the body's "spontaneous energies and responses" (Burack 4).

[Lawrence's] pantheistic and animistic intuitions, impelled him to try to awaken in his readers a deeply felt experience of the life-energy animating the universe. For him, the felt recognition of the aliveness of the cosmos and of one's fundamental connection to it constitutes the essence of sacred experience. (3)

The spirit is elevated, the body glorified. Lawrence offers liberation: a religion without dogma and custom, which kills the living spirit; and knowledge informed by bodily instinct, by feeling. It is a religion experienced in the body, invoked by his poetic rhythms, carnally felt lines pulsing with bodily voice. But Lawrence's 'flesh and blood' is not merely that which can be felt; nor is it identified with mind, soul or spirit. "His 'flesh' is neither exclusively mental nor non-mental. It is the unconscious, which is God, and the vital, organic expression of the individual (Montgomery 70). It is body and spirit all at once, in the same way that the Father is the Son, and the Holy Ghost is their union, their consummation. It is a concept that evades logic, or ordinary description, just as it does in the Christian Trinity: three Persons in One. But Christianity denies our individuality—to be "proud as a lion, isolated as a star"—and has, with its fixed morality, nailed us "to some tree or other" ("Morality and the Novel" *Life* 232). It is, for Lawrence, *anti-life*.

God is the consummating "spark of oneness, the gleam of the Holy Ghost" ("The Crown" *Phoenix* 2 410). It (God) is the consummation of the 'two eternities'—the original and ultimate—by which we achieve *immortality*. It is not a question of time, but of "consummate being", and it entails the ultimate of suffering and enjoyment (410).

[I]t is a question of submitting to the divine grace, in suffering and self-obliteration, and it is a question of conquering by divine grace, as the tiger

leaps on the trembling deer, in utter satisfaction of the Self, in complete fulfilment of desire. (411)

This is the means by which Lawrence achieves his return from the obliteration of death, to the shores of the living, where

the frail soul steps out, into her house again  
filling the heart with peace. ("The Ship of Death" 10.720)

This is the resurrection of the body—or "at least . . . the continuing cycle of existence" (Wright 249). Lawrence affirms it: if Jesus rose from the dead, "He rose to become at one with life, to live the great life of the flesh and the soul together . . ." ("The Risen Lord" *Life* 447).

### 5. *The Dry Salvages* and *The Ship of Death*

You who come to port, and you whose bodies  
Will suffer the trial and judgement of the sea,  
Or whatever event, this is your real destination.

—T. S. Eliot, “The Dry Salvages”

The flood subsides, and the body, like a worn sea-shell  
emerges strange and lovely.

—D. H. Lawrence, “The Ship of Death”

In this chapter, I combine some of the themes of the previous two chapters in order to note more closely the similarities and differences between Eliot and Lawrence, focusing on their respective religious and moral visions, as embodied in such concepts as *eternity*, *oblivion*, and *salvation* and *damnation*—divine or cosmic reward and punishment. For this analysis, it is useful to begin with Eliot’s “The Dry Salvages”, and Lawrence’s “Ship of Death”, as each of these poems encapsulates their respective body/spirit ethos and, moreover, envision ‘eternity’ or ‘oblivion’ as a journey at sea, a transitional and, paradoxically, eternal state whereby the soul makes its journey between this life and the new life. At the start of the previous chapter I noted the same sort of parallels between “Marina” (Eliot’s poem) and “Ship of Death” in order to make the distinction between their respective visions of (new) life, the one animated by Christ, the other by the ‘inner god/s’. This chapter employs a similar tactic, but delves deeper into an understanding of their poetry as the embodiment of their spiritual visions: Eliot’s “Marina” makes way for his “Dry Salvages”, for the latter is more explicitly and profoundly representative of his Christian faith, and the terror that, for him, accompanies the belief in God and the ever-present threat of damnation.

In “The Dry Salvages”, Eliot employs a metaphysic like Lawrence’s “Ship of Death”, which is enriched by equivocal layers of meaning, an ambivalence that pushes the poem beyond the reach of a settled definition, buoyed by its symbolic and actual waves.

The waves upon which the individual soul voyages, fixed in the ever-trembling moment represent—to cite Lawrence’s definition of “symbol”—a “complex . . . emotional experience”.<sup>192</sup> The voyager is not the same person as the one who embarked, or the one “who will arrive at any terminus” (“The Dry Salvages” 3.17). We are voyaging, in Eliot’s poem, bodiless on a boundless sea, caught between the intersection of Time and No Time, where “the gift half understood, is *Incarnation*”—“[i]n the mystical sense[,] the subject of the poem . . . through which time is united to eternity” (5.32; Gardner 176; my emphasis). Two worlds fuse:

Here the impossible union  
Of spheres of existence is actual,  
Here the past and future  
Are conquered, and reconciled . . . (“The Dry Salvages” 5.33–36)

Note: Eliot calls “the impossible union” “actual”, which recalls his statement, discussed in chapter 3 of this thesis, that poetry deals with the actual, while only prose (or prosaic) reflections can legitimately concern themselves with the ideal. This connects his poetry to his spirituality, and there is the added implication that what is of this world (the prosaic) is insubstantial, or not (quite) real. Eliot invokes the dualism-slash-monism of Christianity’s Holy Trinity (the Father and Son as one Person, consummated by the Holy Ghost), and of Lawrence (though not purposely)—his body and soul unified, also by the Holy Ghost—that “spark of oneness”, noted at the end of the previous chapter, with the essential difference that, for Lawrence, this world is the only reality; but which however includes gods (the supernatural), the physical being inseparable from the spiritual (“The Crown” *Phoenix* 2 410).

In 1947, Louis Martz noticed the correspondence between Eliot’s “Burnt Norton”, and Lawrence’s short story “The Shadow in the Rose Garden”—a story which Eliot discusses and praises in his essay *After Strange Gods*. Both pieces reveal “the

---

<sup>192</sup> “Introduction to ‘The Dragon of the Apocalypse’” *Selected Literary Criticism* 158.

shattered moment of illumination” (Martz 132)—an experience in time and out of time;<sup>193</sup> an experience, in Lawrence’s story, consummated; in Eliot’s, desired and, as if it had been a mirage, vanished (133). There is also a striking resemblance between the tone and themes of *The Four Quartets* (including “Burnt Norton”) and some of Lawrence’s *Last Poems*, most notably his “Ship of Death” poems. Eliot’s ship in “The Dry Salvages”, although apparently bound by the physical world, is elevated to the spiritual plain—a ‘time’ beyond time. The passenger, after the “fruit, periodicals and business letters”—the marmalade and tea of Prufrock’s world—slumbers into the “rhythm of a hundred hours”, “between the hither and farther shore / While time is withdrawn” (3.10, 3.13, 3.29–30). Eliot’s voyager is stranded between two worlds. The sea functions, partly, as a simple metaphor for life—“you whose *bodies* / Will suffer the trial and judgement of the sea” (3.40–41; my emphasis). But also, at a deeper level, the sea symbolises eternity and the afterlife—“your real destination” (3.42). The metaphor of the tossing sea, as Gardner observes, functions, too, as a denial of both the cyclic view of history and the doctrine of progress. Instead we have “a meaningless perpetual flux, a repetition without pattern . . .” (171)—disorder, horror. It is the soul, shadowed by the body, which voyages this ‘eternal sea’, which endures

. . . the whine in the rigging,  
 The menace and caress of wave that breaks on water,  
 . . . . .  
 And the ground swell, that is and was from the beginning,  
 Clangs  
 The bell. (“The Dry Salvages”, 1.28–29, 46–48)

This bell is, on a physical level, a bell rung on a ship, or more profoundly, the wake-up call, “the last annunciation” (2.18): the Angelus bell that draws you to the church of life; a bell rung all the more loudly, more urgently, for the one word line “Clangs.” The bell (like “sea”), however, has a parallel function: *time’s up*, as in Doctor Faustus’ midnight

---

<sup>193</sup> “To be conscious is not to be in time / But only in time can the moment in the rose-garden . . . / Be remembered; involved with past and future.” (“Burnt Norton”, 2.38–39, 2.42). Martz quotes this.

reckoning in Marlowe's play (signalled by a clock). The bell is ominous, isolated on the last line of the first canto, following the calamitous "Clangs." Time's up, but it reverberates long after it has been struck<sup>194</sup>:

Where is there an end of it, the soundless wailing,  
The silent withering of autumn flowers  
. . . ? (2.1–2, 2.6)

"There *is* no end of it"—"the drift of the sea and the drifting wreckage" (2.31, 2.34; my emphasis). The "drifting wreckage" is (or includes) the 'soul voyager', alone, adrift on the boundless sea, which is precisely the situation of Lawrence's voyager in "Ship of Death": the soul stranded between two eternities. For both poets the journey is endless, and yet there is a *destination*—life. For Eliot this is the spiritual life and the miracle of Incarnation, the oneness of the Trinity: the impossible union actualised, like a virgin birth, a "Sudden . . . shaft of sunlight" ("Burnt Norton" 5.33). Christ casts His net into the turmoil of random horrors, and saves us. This, Eliot believes, and thus acquires a sort of dark joy, the acceptance of personal suffering and the rhythms of daily toil, of

. . . the time of chronometers . . .  
. . . time counted by anxious worried women  
Lying awake, calculating the future,  
Trying to unweave, unwind, unravel ("The Dry Salvages" 1.38–41).

In his poem "Bells", Lawrence summons an alternative to the "obscene" unsubtle "metal . . . on metal" Christian bell, something more sensuous, physically *closer to God*, because (for Lawrence, the 'heretic', the 'infidel') it is more human (622, 623):

---

<sup>194</sup> See Gardner's exposition (p.p 12–15) of the rhythm and diction of this part of the poem—how they correspond precisely with its meaning.

The soft thudding of drums  
of fingers or fists or soft-skinned sticks upon the stretched membrane of sound  
sends summons in the old hollows of the sun.

And the accumulated splashing of a gong  
where tissue plunges into bronze with wide wild circles of sound  
and leaves off . . .

.....

And the sound of a blast through the sea-curved core of a shell  
when a black priest blows on a conch,  
and the dawn-cry from a minaret . . .

.....

. . . Listen! Listen! Come near! (623)

The clang of a bell leaves a metallic taste in the mouth, which is dissipated, waved away by the sound ripples of a gong; and the throb of drum skins invokes the most basic, primordial sensation, which connects us to the origin of everything, the heartbeat of god, of religion.

Lawrence's ship (of death) is 'Etruscan'; it is the means by which the voyager returns to life in the flesh—which is salvation—or not at all. Eliot, on the contrary, retains that 'Plymouth Rock' mentality, despite his conversion to Anglo-Catholicism: one of those Mayflower souls seems to possess him.<sup>195</sup> And this difference informs their respective visions of salvation and damnation, and the means by which these are achieved.

Eliot's notions of salvation and damnation are informed by Christian dogma. There is God's Kingdom, which we (maybe) reach through a life of virtue, of kneeling, of humility; and there is hell, such as that made explicit in Dante's *Inferno*, where souls are

---

<sup>195</sup> Eliot's ancestor who first arrived in America was "Andrew Eliot of East Coker, in Somerset [England], a Calvinist." He left England however, in "the late seventeenth century" (Ackroyd 15)—not with the Mayflower, the original pilgrim ship, which arrived in what is now Massachusetts, New England, in 1620.

punished for crimes against God—the torment devised by Love (“Little Gidding” 4.8). Eliot descends lower “Into the world of perpetual solitude”, “Internal darkness” and “deprivation”, where up and down are the same, and movement is the “abstention from movement” (“Burnt Norton” 3.25–35). He suffers, and he’s glad about it, but because his suffering is the means to overcome the obstacles to salvation—*desire* (for the wrong thing), *pride*. Suffering (*the road down*) is the way to God. Even hope, as expounded in “*Ash Wednesday*, is to be dispensed with, for it implies desire.

Damnation, for Lawrence, entails being caught in the endless “hub of the ego / . . . fixed, yet in motion” (“Death Is Not Evil, Evil is Mechanical” 713).<sup>196</sup> This is what befalls one who slips from the hands of God:

. . . sinking still, in depth after depth of disintegrative consciousness  
sinking in the endless undoing, the awful katabolism into the abyss! (“The Hands of God” 699)

We are reminded of Eliot’s drowned Phoenician sailor—“O you who turn the *wheel* . . .”—in the pre-Christian *Waste Land*, whose death is not followed by rebirth because of his preoccupation with the thought of “profit and loss” (320, 314; my emphasis). This is an instance of Eliot’s contempt for materialism (Rauf 63) (which he maintained after his conversion to Christianity), and it resembles Lawrence’s vision—the fate of those who are “absolved from kissing and strife”,<sup>197</sup> who are dead but have “no boat to launch” (“Death Is Not Evil, Evil is Mechanical” 713; “Ship of Death” 962). Those, that is, who dedicate their lives to the machine, the Wheel—a Lawrencian symbol of humankind’s desecration of Nature—the denial of “the great necessities of being”, all of it: the lamb joyous in the Spring, and the lamb sprung by its prey (“What Then is Evil?” 712). True evil “has no home, / not even the home of demoniacal hell”—“the home of souls lost in darkness”, the necessary counterpart of ‘heaven’, “the home of souls lost in light” (“Evil is Homeless” 711). Both are necessary, ‘good’. As Lawrence expresses it, the light of

---

<sup>196</sup> Notice the play with opposites, as with Eliot.

<sup>197</sup>—a fate not unlike the usual conception of Christian *heaven*!

Saint Francis only shines so bright because of the darkness around him (“The Reality of Peace” *Phoenix* 1 690). Lawrence “recognized an essential paradox of human existence: that binaries of good and evil are false . . . and that contradictions . . . are central to the human condition” (Squires 164).

Lawrence, like Eliot, takes the ‘road south’, and he too affirms that suffering is the way to the resurrection<sup>198</sup> (but in the flesh) and it is accompanied by a sort of dark ecstasy. His conception of spiritual suffering is not unlike the desolate visions depicted by Eliot. Lawrence describes the ‘endless’ gust of fear and loneliness that the soul must endure on its ‘ship of death’, the voyage into oblivion. But “wonderful are the hellish experiences” (“Medlars and Sorb - Apples” 280):

Orphic, delicate

Dionysos of the Underworld.

A kiss, and a spasm of farewell, a moment’s orgasm of rupture,

Then . . .

.....

A new gasp of further isolation,

A new intoxication of loneliness, among decaying frost-cold leaves. (280–281)

There are two ways of living for Lawrence. One is natural, all-embracing: to live for the fleeting delight of pansies, and “the scarlet and purple flowers at the doors of hell”, the Self alone with itself and nature; but *not* “self-conscious and self-willed”—that other way of living, the machine-like human, driven on and on; grinding eventually to a halt, like Chatterley in his wheelchair (“Evil is Homeless” 711; “Two Ways of Living and Dying” 675). The former way of living, for Lawrence, is the way to salvation, which is to be in (or return to) “the magnificent here and now of life in the flesh” (Lawrence, *Apocalypse* 110). And the latter is the way to damnation, the result of a life led contrary to nature. We are not here—as Eliot would have it—“to kneel” (“Little Gidding” 1.45) which is the

---

<sup>198</sup> In “Ship of Death”, “Shadows” and “Phoenix”, for example.

obliteration of desire, of joy, of living. Lawrence's reward is the world of the flesh, which 'even now' he reaps, where "the winds of the afterwards kiss us into blossom of manhood" ("Gladness of Death" 677).

Eliot's soul voyager in "The Dry Salvages" does not return to the shore of the living-in-the-flesh. The sea, as I have noted, is the life of the living, as well as the Intersection Time, an intermediate 'time' and 'place', which is no time and no place—in the words of Cooper, one of "those intense moments of revelation in which time stops . . ."—a time ungoverned by History (*Ideology* 170). And the soul traverses this 'sea' "In a drifting boat with a slow leakage" to arrive at a *new life*, divested of the body, which was left "on a distant shore" ("The Dry Salvages" 2.16; "Little Gidding" 2.72). There is a sense in which Eliot's voyager is a physical person, for the sea symbolises the travails of life, but it is the body-unaware, distracted by worldly distractions, which amount to nothing. The voyager, more pertinently, is the disembodied soul who rises like a somnambulist in the dark, as the body nods on the waves, or the carriage of a train; s/he begins physically, as all the Quartet voices do, but drifts into a bodiless state, alone with themselves, and it is in this state that they endure the "sea howl", and 'arrive' ("The Dry Salvages" 1.27).

They arrive, but how, and in what form? For both Eliot and Lawrence, the body and spirit are consummated by the Holy Ghost; but for Eliot, as I noted in chapter 3, the meaning and consequence of that consummation is Christ, whose body, however, is crucified so that His spirit may ascend to Heaven, re-unified with the Father. In orthodox Christian theology, in Eliot's theology, the spirit breaks free from the body and the physical world, a process completed at death (in this life) and in his fourth Quartet, "Little Gidding", where "what you thought you came for / Is only a shell, a husk of meaning" (1.30-1.31). Death in the body, of desire, is the purpose of life; it leads to a new life:

The inner freedom from the practical desire,  
 The release from action and suffering, release from the inner  
 And the outer compulsion . . . (“Burnt Norton” 2.24–26)

This is antithetical to Lawrence, for whom desire, “no matter *what* the desire”, is holy (Letter to Eunice Tietjens, 27 July 1917; Lawrence’s emphasis). Here he echoes Blake’s *Marriage of Heaven and Hell*: “He who desires but acts not, breeds pestilence” (151). Desire that is commonly designated ‘immoral’ is a sign, at least, of passion, as it elevates us from the grey neutrality of, what is for Lawrence, true evil: the mechanical life—the desire for which is not really desire, but a perversion (of nature)<sup>199</sup>—the forces of modernity that make us wage slaves, that keep us fixed to the wheel: the caryatids, upholders of ideal heaven, of false morality, “Pillars of white bronze standing rigid, lest the skies fall” (“The Revolutionary” 287). In short: everything that denies Nature, in ourselves and the environment. Lawrence

is the supreme poet of Eros. No recriminations, no reproaches, no guilt, no ‘morality’. For what’s ‘morality’ but a leash around the neck? A noose? What’s ‘morality’ but what other people want you to do, for their own, selfish, unstated purposes? (Oates, *Beasts* 30)<sup>200</sup>

Not quite “*no morality*”! No *Christian* morality. Lawrence was a deeply moral man, but his morality was of the kind that sought to loosen the leash about the neck. ‘Dogma’, he states, is “the *translation of the religious impulse into an intellectual term*” (“Education of the People” *Phoenix* 1 608; my emphasis)—a fixed religion, for example, or a political philosophy, both of which lead to *the will to power*, tyranny and arbitrary will, which is detestable (“Blessed are the Powerful” *Phoenix* 2 436). Lawrence’s ‘morality’ is conjoined with nature, impulsive (or intuitive), and it fluctuates—with the seasons, as it

---

<sup>199</sup> Eliot says that evil is better than doing nothing, for at least it is a release from cultural and moral stagnancy (“Baudelaire” *Selected Prose* 183). And Lawrence says something similar: “Better be a Russian and shoot oneself out of sheer terror of Peter the Great’s displeasure, than to live like a well-to-do American. . . . Live in blank sterility” (“Blessed Are the Powerful” *Phoenix* 2 442).

<sup>200</sup> These are not necessarily the opinions of Joyce Carol Oates: the statement is voiced by her teacher in 1975, Mr. Harrow.

were. It is fluid. That which is immoral is anti-life: that which violates nature, whether it is rape or murder, or slavery—to a job, or an ethic—the imposition of ideals that stifle life, body and spirit. What is moral for Lawrence is that which permits life (in the flesh), that which is life-giving, and life-affirming.

Lawrence is awed that the people of old Etruria, Rome and Greece once walked the earth—or that they walk it still, in the ‘eternal present’. He feels still “the gentle trotting of the litter-bearers”, their bare feet padding on the floor, swift and steady; the glistening bodies in the moonlight; the crouched figures on the shore; the bearded men, laughing (“In the Cities” 703; “Middle of the World” 688; “For the Heroes are Dipped in Scarlet” 689). These figures, for Lawrence, are the exemplars of all that is natural and vital and, therefore, *moral*. Jesus once walked here too. *That’s* the marvel—not that his spirit rose to heaven. God, for Lawrence, is the urge to Be, which is realised only in the body. The same is true with the beasts and flowers, and everything that lives. This is Lawrence’s religion; and worship, for him, entails living like every day is the first day, with the whole of nature humming, throbbing with movement, life: it is “the joy of the gleam from the eyes of the gods” (“Worship” 649). We are religious, moral, to the extent that we live in harmony with our environment, and fulfil our nature. Lawrence’s ‘morality’ is not didactic, “but something passionate, that changes the blood [not the mind]”, and it is also, in this respect, the “essential function of art” (Lawrence, “Whitman” *Selected Literary Criticism*, 400–401). Everything that would stifle the natural urge is immoral.

Eliot, in contrast, is a spirit wandering like a blind man dodging the virtual furniture. He is the yellow fog that rubs its muzzle (like a cat) on the window pane (“Prufrock” 16). Lawrence’s cat is the sun, a lion that licks its paws (“The Argonauts” 687). It (the sun/lion) is alive, and so is the subject of the poem—the Argonauts. As I claimed in chapter 4, when Lawrence says or suggests that someone or something still lives (after death), he means that they live in the flesh—that they are actually returned, in the body. Eliot sees only the bones beneath the flesh, and beneath that, the dust. But: *Can these bones live?* (Ezek. 37.3; my emphasis). In Ezekiel, the flesh is restored to the bones of the dead, but the bodies remain lifeless until the “breath” or “Spirit” (the two, in this

context, are interchangeable<sup>201</sup>) enters them (37.8–10). The reanimated dead symbolise the House of Israel, who, although their flesh is restored, remain spiritually (and therefore *actually*) lifeless until the ‘breath’ of the Lord enters them. If they are to ‘live’ (in the spirit, in the House of God), they must obey God. For Eliot too, the life beyond this life is real, but spiritual. His bones do not physically live:

Shall these bones live?

.....

There is no life in them. . . .

.....

And God said

Prophesy to the wind, to the wind *only* . . . (*Ash Wednesday* 2.5, 19, 21–22;  
my emphasis)

The “wind” (or *spirit*) *only* shall live in “the Garden / Where all loves end”, where the torment of the physical world is terminated—the torment “Of love unsatisfied / [and] The greater torment / Of love *satisfied*” (2.33–34 and 36–38; my emphasis). Eliot’s freedom is a freedom *from*, not a freedom *to*. Whether Christianity itself is necessarily (by nature) inimical to the body or not, Eliot, from his earliest sojourns, sidles along a vapourish world of bodily horrors. In his later poetry, the fog lifts and the horror dissipates, but his representations of the physical world, too, are elevated onto a plane that straddles two worlds—most memorably his encounter with the ghost in “Little Gidding” (2.25–96), which is more surprising than horrifying, and less disturbing than the grin and the twisted eye of a woman (a prostitute is insinuated) in his early poem “Rhapsody on a Windy Night” (16–22). This latter (from *Prufrock*), invokes, as much of his early poetry does, a misanthropic distrust of humanity (women and men), a neurosis which manifests itself in a sort of body hatred or fear—from the self-flagellation of “St. Sebastian” (4) to the grotesque depiction of a woman laughing, her teeth “with a talent

---

<sup>201</sup> I note that words like “breath”, “spirit” and “animate” are etymologically related in Latin. “Spiritus” is “Breath” (you see this in *respiration*), and so (linguistically at least) without spirit, the body is inanimate.

for squad-drill” in “Hysteria” (p. 26<sup>202</sup>)—or more religiously, in *Ash Wednesday*, bodily (or *spiritual*) dismemberment (“I who am here dissembled”: 2.11).<sup>203</sup> He is hunched by the weight of his guilt and humility, wandering the streets of the metropolis like a man in a good suit doing penance—not in the hope of salvation, or any kind of truth-finding comfort, but out of an existential (later, *religious* as well) necessity, in the same way that Saint Francis, more viscerally, shod himself of his substantial possessions (he was of noble birth), and took to the open road, the true home, according to Lawrence, of the soul (“Whitman” *Selected Literary Criticism* 401–402). By the time we get to *The Four Quartets*, the body feels absent; it is the completion of his poetic and, in this life, spiritual journey. The fear has subsided, but the desolation and the anguish remain. He continues to suffer, but to borrow a phrase from *Ash Wednesday*, rejoices in “having to construct something / Upon which to rejoice” (1.24–25).

Eliot seems to be caught in the whirlpool of his own logic at times, or he is the static hub, the still centre of the world/wheel that spins. Perhaps he is both simultaneously: at once, the wandering satellite, and the detached observer—like Tiresias in *The Waste Land*, “a mere spectator and not indeed a ‘character’, [and] yet the most important personage . . . (Eliot, “Notes on *The Waste Land*” *The Poems* 74); a stunned paradox, one who desires not to desire, for “Desire itself is movement / Not in itself desirable” (“Burnt Norton” 5.25–26). He is the man “who hesitates . . . in the light of the door” (“Rhapsody on a Windy Night” 17).<sup>204</sup> He is the man who follows a light instinctively, with a nose for “steaks in passageways” and “female smells in shuttered rooms” (“Preludes” l.2; “Rhapsody on a Windy Night” 66). And this despite the rigorous intellectualism of his essays. In his poetry he is both more tenuous and closer to the ‘truth’—his Self, that essence that lies beneath his personality, where the poet is released “from his own rational will” (Stead 127).

---

<sup>202</sup> This poem, in the *Prufrock* collection, is not given line numbers, as it is written in the form of prose.

<sup>203</sup> To “dissemble” means *to deceive*, but the mind’s eye reads *disassembled*.

<sup>204</sup> Although the person who hesitates in the poem is a woman, the reader senses Eliot’s own hesitation—spiritual, if not physical.

As I have emphasised in this thesis, faith (the belief in something that is not amenable to proof) resides precisely in the absence of Reason, or despite or because of it. It flourishes despite and because of linguistic or actual contradictions. Why should an intellectual giant like Eliot fall for it? Or be drawn to it? He *falls* for it, not in the sense that he has been duped, that Christianity is false—but like Mary Magdalene at the feet of Christ, or the neophyte of “St. Sebastian” (1–21). Eliot (the narrator, the poet) falls into the hands of God, and it is, to quote Lawrence’s poem again, “a fearful thing” (“The Hands of God” 699). This Eliot does deliberately, while maintaining the cool exterior of his intellect, and the no-frills, bowlerhatted demeanour of his not-electric personality. It isn’t such an anomaly once we peel back the “bloody cloth”<sup>205</sup> (or the tailored suit) and find the man, the poet who suffers beneath the personality: Eliot the rigid conversationalist,<sup>206</sup> the un-flamboyant man who looks more like a bank clerk than an artist—“With his features of clerical cut” (Eliot, “Five Finger Exercises” 5.2). His poetry, as I noted in my introduction, *feels* mental, but it isn’t passionless, “only from the head, with a hollow and wasted virtuosity” (Eliot, “Yeats.” *Complete Prose, Volume 6*, 83). Eliot ‘falls for it’, then, into the hands of God, because without God/religion/spirituality, life is arbitrary. It is madness, absurd, to exist in a world that is, *au fond*, empty—a world that is void of values. This trust in God saves him from the nihilist nightmare. It was this irreligious/existential menace, accelerated by 19th and early 20th century industrialism, which spurred the modernists to create their art, an art which challenged the mechanised and spiritless existence.

And Lawrence falls for it too, spurred by the same hostility toward the modern world, but also by his love of nature, *the physical hands of God*.

It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of God.<sup>207</sup>

But it is a much more fearful thing to fall out of them. (“The Hands of God” 699)

---

<sup>205</sup> Eliot, “The Death of Saint Narcissus” 6.

<sup>206</sup> See Ackroyd 90.

<sup>207</sup> This opening line of the poem is a direct quote from Hebrews 10.31.

To fall *from* the hands of God, as I emphasised in the last chapter, is, for Lawrence, to live for the self-absorbed ego, the mechanistic life that is contrary to our nature—a life in tune with the earth and the seasons—a time long ago, vividly evoked in Eliot’s “East Coker”:

The time of the seasons and the constellations  
 The time of milking and the time of harvest  
 The time of the coupling of man and woman  
 And that of beasts. (1.42–45)

These are the natural processes that have been undermined by modern industrialism, the market forces that drive modern humanity to chase its tail in the endless cycle of supply and demand—“a life [*not*] in conformity with nature”, or religion (Eliot, *Christian Society* 80; the emphasis and interjection is mine). And this is Lawrence’s view. Both poets identify industrialism and its consequences (including the decline of the ‘natural life’ and ‘religion’) as a major cause of society’s ills. Both, moreover, prescribe societal transformations, a politics, a spirituality and an aesthetic aligned with our nature. We need beauty, which the profit motive has debased because it is not efficacious. Even Eliot, who had half a mind in the spirit world, urged the need for institutions aligned with nature, but informed by Christianity.

It is odd, however, to hear Eliot speak of a life in conformity with human nature, for he often invoked the body (the physical representation of nature) in negative terms. Certainly, his notion of human nature differs, in some respects, from Lawrence’s—or rather, the significance he imputes to it is different. In the “East Coker” passage cited above, Eliot sees and hears the figures of those long-dead laughing, dancing—as Lawrence does (in “Middle of the World”, for example). The “East Coker” passage, however, ends abruptly on “Dung and Death”, and all is “silence” as “another day” dawns (1.46, 48, 47). Eliot means to tell us that these figures of long ago are still there, but because “all time is eternally present”, and “history is a pattern / of timeless moments”, and it is here and “now” (“Burnt Norton” 1.4; “Little Gidding” 5.21–24). Time

is redeemed, the body purged, when “the fire and the rose are one” (“Little Gidding” 5.45)<sup>208</sup>: when the body is consumed or subsumed by the flame of eternal life (mediated by the Mother of God), which is the end; life is redeemed from the endless cycle where the end is the beginning (5.1–3)—whether bodies survive (perhaps “as regurgitation of undigested bits”) in their earthly form or not (Bynum 36).<sup>209</sup> The feeling, however, is that bodies do not survive, are alien to the spirit, and that the spirit itself, because it is non-physical, is impervious to decay, and thus endures. That is the orthodox Christian position which Eliot assumes.

Lawrence’s “Ship of Death” also ends with “rose”, but: “A flush of rose, *and the whole thing starts again*” (9.720; my emphasis). The “flush of rose” is the renewal of life, where “the *body . . . / emerges*” after “the longest journey” (10.720, 7.718; my emphasis). Christianity promises the release from physical life, as did the Orphic religion,<sup>210</sup> into the spiritual. This “division of soul and body [for Lawrence] was a pernicious falsehood” (Kalnins 15). Lawrence envisages an actual return to life in the flesh. The “cakes, and wine” with which the “little ark” is furnished are ritualistic, and symbolise the fusion of body and spirit, which is the “clue to regeneration” (“The Ship of Death” 5.718; Kalnins 15). The cakes and wine are an offering, a blessing for those who depart, who must launch their ship, endure oblivion before they can return to life.

These last *Death* poems<sup>211</sup> (716–728) are, in a sense, “an act of spiritual preparation” for death, the poet steeling himself against the fearful unknown, setting “his house in order, to prepare his soul for the ‘longest journey’, the death-voyage” (Kirkham 97, 98). But they are more than this. They are the summation of Lawrence’s faith, his veneration

---

<sup>208</sup> There is a link here to Dante’s white rose in *Paradise*, at the start of Canto 31: the white rose “represents Divine love” (Musa 369).

<sup>209</sup> Bynum here is alluding to the thought of the early Christian Father, Tertullian, which Eliot echoes in *Ash Wednesday*: “the indigestible portions / Which the leopards reject” (2.15–16). The body is rejected—by Tertullian, by Eliot (the poet), and the whole of orthodox Christianity.

<sup>210</sup> “The Orphic religion which arose in Greece between the sixth and third centuries B.C. saw the soul as a fallen god, and sought to release it from the ‘wheel of birth’, from further reincarnation in a physical form, and thus enable it to become once more a god living in eternal bliss” (Kalnins 15).

<sup>211</sup> This group of poems (“The Ship of Death”—“Phoenix”) are the last (or among the last) poems that Lawrence wrote, and nearly all of them employ the ship voyage metaphor of the soul traversing oblivion into new bodily life.

for the community of nature, life in and for the body, and the belief in the resurrection of the flesh. “The Ship of Death”, as Janik states, “is not an appeal to the rational consciousness; it is an account of a religious experience” (306–307).<sup>212</sup> The soul–voyager reaches the other side by means of religious passion, a lust for life, but which, naturally, exists prior to death. That is how you build your ship. “To him that hath life shall be given life: on condition . . . that he lives (“Blessed are the Powerful” *Phoenix 2* 437). To *live* is not a “running after women . . . or becoming a member of Parliament”, but the expression of a vital, physical-slash-spiritual force within us (437–438, 436–443)—to be faithful to one’s instincts, obedient to the natural urges, Lawrence’s Holy Ghost, the god in us.

Those who lack this are, in Lawrence’s schema, excluded—the ‘unhappy dead’, those who lacked emotional and physical fulfilment in this life: they are moored on the banks in a sort of hellish ante-chamber (or limbo), unappeased, angry and malignant, unable to launch their ship, just as the ‘rich man’ cannot enter the kingdom of heaven.<sup>213</sup> They are beyond redemption, like Eliot’s hollow men, the disaffected “time-ridden faces”, “whirled by the cold wind” (“Burnt Norton” 3.11, 3 15). It is, for Lawrence, just as it is in Christianity, a *moral* exclusion, even though “moral”, as I have stressed, entails something different. Lawrencian damnation, then, is a natural consequence of *not living*—of releasing the “ego from the constraints of the physical world” (Janik 304); which leads to “the complete disintegration of the personality, the worship of the mind as a thing in itself, as end and aim” (Miller 137).

Religion for Lawrence was a way of living, not a set of fixed beliefs, and poetry itself was “a way of recording the *passing* physical truths that present themselves to an alert consciousness” (Janik 298; my emphasis). The form of his late poetry (especially in *Last Poems*) mirrors these ‘truths’:

---

<sup>212</sup> The same is true of Eliot’s religious poetry.

<sup>213</sup> See Lawrence poem “Beware the Unhappy Dead!” 722–723.

his mythic and dying poems are composed in patterns of gracefully flowing syntactical repetition and variation generated by a keen sense of the ebb and flow of thought and feeling . . . (Laird 207).

Lawrence, as always, explores the “balance and interpenetration between the spiritual and the physical” (Janik 302). The two are enmeshed. They copulate like Eurynome and the serpent of the Pelasgian creation story.

Eliot, as a Christian, tied religion and religious experience to morality, where the flesh is the means by which we sin and are damned. Lawrence wanted to work out a route back to physical life, a theology and a metaphysic by which we return. His invocations to the dead are (forms of) prayer, but not acts of despair, or supplications to an absolute God, as they are in Eliot’s poetry, and in Christianity where one is painfully conscious of the need for redemption—the atonement of individual and collective sin, and the vindication of physical suffering. For Lawrence, however, as Miller notes: “[w]e must atone for the sin of alienation. We must get rid of our feeling of guilt and become again *religious*” (151; Miller’s stress). Eliot’s ship in “The Dry Salvages” is the journey that links the physical life with the spiritual, everlasting life—with eternity. Lawrence’s “Ship of Death”, on the other hand, is life and death—and life, in the flesh: the eternal moment which nonetheless continuously undergoes the sea-tossed fluctuations of living. Both poets are guided, like Noah, by their ark of faith, their inner light—what Lawrence called the Holy Ghost, “the mysterious source of the self, the creative instinct, the individual guide and conscience . . .” (Miller 221). For the artist, at least, there is no other light.

## 6. Resolution, Consummation

And the fire and the rose are one.

—T. S. Eliot “Little Gidding”

A flush of rose, and the whole thing starts again.

—D. H. Lawrence “The Ship of Death”

Lawrence’s “poetry so transparent that we should not see the poetry”<sup>214</sup> could apply, with equal justification, to Eliot’s *Four Quartets*. Eliot achieved this ‘transparence’ partly by the very blandness of expression, the monotony and repetitions, which frames the *unbeautiful* imagery, scraps of paper caught by a wind and, beneath that, the horror of contradictory representations, the “voiceless wailing” (“The Dry Salvages” 2.31). It is *unbeautiful* not because it is *not* “beautiful”, but because it is not delimited by given ideals of poetic beauty—the musical conventionality of “the murmur of innumerable bees or the moan of doves in immemorial elms” (Eliot, “The Music of Poetry” *Selected Prose* 56)—the “intolerably poetic” (“Eighteenth-Century-Poetry” *Selected Prose* 158). Eliot’s poetry exploits this tension between the drab realities of urban life, and its poetical representation, which transmutes it into a higher sphere, de-maculated. He hears the sparrows in the gutters, but “his vision of the street” transcends its physical actuality. It becomes objectified, or spiritualised—“The notion of some infinitely gentle / Infinitely suffering thing” (“Preludes” 3.10, 4.12–13). Eliot whittles away at the ordinariness of experience until that experience is invested with a razor-fine significance *beneath* itself. In “Burnt Norton” a house burns down, but that’s not the end of it. The tension between representation and meaning is not of course exclusive to the modernist poet, but it was especially pronounced in Eliot from the beginning. In his early poetry, Eliot relies on ambivalence and equivocation to create meaning; in his later poetry (from *Ash Wednesday*, if not sooner) this becomes more pronounced, and aided by paradox and wordplay. It was partly by these means that he was able to unveil his spiritual vision, which would otherwise remain elusive. Words, in their ordinary state, are

---

<sup>214</sup> Eliot, “English Poets as Letter Writers.” *Complete Prose*, Volume 4, 847-848.

unequal to the task of translating Eliot's religious feeling, and so he invests them with powers beyond their customary role, by juxtaposing them unexpectedly, sometimes with themselves, their own mirror image. He is the poet, to use his own words, "amalgamating disparate experience" ("The Metaphysical Poets" *Selected Prose* 110). This is the tension—between what is and what is (spiritually) illusory, time and no time, body and spirit, etc.

But the tension for Eliot, for the Christian, must yield in the end—"at last, in harbour", as it does in "Little Gidding", his last major poem (Leavis, *Thought, Words and Creativity* 53). Light overcomes darkness, good overcomes evil, and the lion must lie with the lamb. Eliot seeks resolution, and all his poetic strivings (from *Ash Wednesday* at least) are geared toward this. That is the religious drive of his poetry. And the ultimate resolution is *Spirit*, God the Father: life in the flesh is resolved by death in the flesh, and 'all will be well'. It's a wager: the Christian stakes their life in the faith of the ultimate reward. Lawrence, on the other hand, stakes his soul: eternal damnation awaits him, if the cards don't fall his way, probably in the circle of the heretics, if what Dante says is true.<sup>215</sup> For Lawrence's heresy is that he justifies the whole of nature, the dual reality of existence: darkness complements light, pride complements humility, the brindled tiger complements the trembling deer, and so on. It isn't merely an aesthetic of contrast; each opposite is a *necessary* counterpart. Remove the opposition and there is nothing ("The Crown" *Phoenix 2* 373). This is true for people and goats<sup>216</sup>, as much as it is for natural phenomena and moral abstracts:

Lawrence seems to have intuitively known that it is not the presence of a restraining or alien "enemy" that destroys man; it is the removal of this enemy. When the "Other" is obliterated the individual is also obliterated. (Oates, *New Heaven* 67)

---

<sup>215</sup>—And if what Eliot says is true: "Lawrence is for my purposes, an almost perfect example of the heretic" (*After Strange Gods* 38).

<sup>216</sup> This is a reference to Lawrence's poem "He-Goat", which, as Oates observes, is a poem about the withering effects of the "mindless submission to one's own selfish will" once the opposition has been removed (*New Heaven* 65).

Perfection is achieved when the opposition is consummated, like the interlocked horns of two male goats: darkness in light, light in darkness (“The Crown” *Phoenix 2* 371–372)—the tension of opposites, without which there is negation, a sort of “routine, rancid” domestication (Oates, *New Heaven* 66). We are free, says Lawrence, when we understand, when we accept (but are not enslaved by) our desires—our angels and devils—when we understand, fully: in body, mind and spirit: when these are “consummated into pure unison” (“The Reality of Peace” *Phoenix 1* 680). Christianity would create a uniform and static cosmos of light, “the crowned knot of fire”, which is one with “the rose”, irrevocably schismed from the underworld of darkness (“Little Gidding” 5.45, 5.46). But this is impossible, says Lawrence; and to attempt it leads to tyranny, imposition: if we are forced to love our neighbour, we end up hating them—“these two-legged things that walk and talk and eat and cachinnate” (“Love Thy Neighbour” 644). We are creatures of “light and virtue”, but also “a living stream of seething corruption”, and we must balance the two if we are to be free . . . .” (“The Reality of Peace” *Phoenix 1* 676). If the balance is upset, you have a tyranny of darkness or light: a Great War; or a white heaven of declawed, dentured lions—or in earthly terms, the approximation of this via Christianity’s denigration of the flesh, the coupling of religion and sanctified morality, secularised by the stale peace of English niceness, machine prosperity and, ultimately, *laissez-aller*, boredom and decadence. Either way, it’s an abomination of nature.

This boredom and decadence was what the modernists, including Eliot, revolted against. Eliot, as I have made clear in this thesis, was also repelled by materialism, its baseness—as a modernist, and a Christian. The modernist rejected the ill-discipline of *laissez-faire* capitalism and the stagnancy of culture; the Christian rejected this also, the de-spiritualisation (specifically, deChristianisation) of society and the dominance of a secularism that valued cheap amusements over worship and devotion to God, a symptom of ennui, that deadend state of the soul which is incapable of even realising it’s own damnation, and which is approximately paralleled by Lawrence’s idea of evil—a sort of grey neutrality of souls incapable of resurrection, of ‘launching their ship’. The modern world and the aims of Christianity for Eliot were incompatible: “a great deal of

the machinery of modern life is merely a sanction for un-Christian aims", such as the exploitation of natural resources and labour to the detriment of the "primary producer" (*Christian Society* 61). For Eliot, the sterile, cultural wasteland of modernity was the result of the dissipation of traditional and, later, Christian values. It is part of the spiritual darkness that is to be overcome. This is true for Lawrence also; it is the cause and symptom of the destabilisation of the natural world. The term "darkness" isn't quite apt for Lawrence, though: the ills of society are beneath, or ungoverned by, categories of Light and Darkness; they are a negation of both, of the dual realities of the cosmos. The industrial order for both Eliot and Lawrence is incompatible with the 'good' life, as much as their respective visions are incompatible with each other.

In Eliot's "The Hollow Men", the harrowed souls are cast out like (to quote Lawrence's poem) "outcast dogs on the margins of life" ("Ship of Death" 962). They are the people who wasted their lives on trivial things, who lived for earthly glory, stuffed by their own emptiness. They now "reside in the twilight of indifference" (Freer 86)—a Dantean *contrapasso!*—grotesque shadows: "Shape without form, shade without colour, / Paralysed force, gesture without motion" ("The Hollow Men" 3.1, 11–12). They remain hollow, "Behaving as the wind behaves" (2.17), and hopeless, with the "hope only / Of empty men" (4.15–16).

Remember us—if at all—not as lost  
Violent souls, but only  
As the hollow men  
The stuffed men. (1.15–18)

The imagery and phrasing is Dantean. "Remember me" echoes the sentiment of the infernal shades who ask that the pilgrim remember them to some person who is still alive. The 'hollow men' are those who live/d without religion—not Christianity as such, despite allusions to Dante's *Comedy*—without belief. "The Hollow Men" (like *The Waste Land*) is a prelude to Eliot's more-defined Christian vision; it has one foot grounded in the world of contemporary culture with its representation of apathy, the lack of moral

substance and the vanity of human endeavours: the “cactus land” of “stone images”—evocations that straddle our ‘dead’ world, and the hell of “death’s other kingdom”: death in life, life in death (3.2, 3.3, 3.8)—those who cannot live, those who cannot die.

Lawrence’s “Ship of Death” likewise connects two realities, and is also, like Eliot’s poem, a lament for “the poor gaunt dead who cannot die” (962). Eliot’s hollow men and Lawrence’s “outcast dogs” are both the result of a life misspent, although this entails something different for each, even if there is an overlap. Life misspent for Eliot is resolved by damnation—or a nothing-like limbo where souls incapable even of damnation dwell—a tyranny of everlasting spiritual darkness, a life without God punished by *a life without God*. This, for Lawrence too, is the consequence of life without god—the irreligious life of material pursuits, but which entails for him, as noted in the previous chapter, the betrayal of the flesh, rather than the spirit. For Eliot, it is a life lived for the vanity of the ‘triumphal march’, a parade of ‘greatness’ with the trivial asides of sausages and crumpets,<sup>217</sup> tawdry distractions of all sorts, and the inadequacies of the public response, even to truly great events like Christ’s entrance into Jerusalem. All this leads to dust—the irony!

Now come the virgins bearing urns, urns containing  
 Dust  
 Dust  
 Dust of dust . . . (“Triumphal March” 36–39)

That is: “All flesh is Grass” (“Difficulties of a Statesman” 2).<sup>218</sup> The grass withereth . . . but the word of our God shall stand for ever (Isa. 40.8)—meaning: rebirth in the *spirit*. Lawrence says that “grass” returns, that flowers are reborn—spring once more from the underworld, from Death: that flesh endures.

---

<sup>217</sup> “. . . *crumpets*.) / Don’t throw away that sausage, / it’ll come in handy” (“Triumphal March” 45–47; Eliot’s emphasis).

<sup>218</sup> Eliot borrows this phrase from Isa. 40.6.

Lawrence is the “Reversed flame” to Eliot’s “in-folded” flame—his “crowned knot of fire” (“St Matthew” 322; “Little Gidding” 5.44, 5.45). Both attempt to reach ‘God’, but by different routes. Eliot sought to lead a life in conformity with Christian morals, *his* God, and it entailed the primacy of Spirit. The needs of the body cannot be denied, but the purpose of living is God, and the Kingdom of God is spiritual. The suspicion is that Eliot’s spiritual journey was an evasion of responsibility, a resignation of earthly cares, a dismissal of the body; that Christian ethics determined the body as negligible, of no primary importance. But there is (and Lawrence would, with qualifications, agree) more life in the martyr at the climax of their torture than in the whole life of an ‘ordinary’ person, a ‘hollow man’, distracted by the comforts of easy entertainment. Dying, for the martyr, is an imitation of Christ, and it becomes, in Christian terms, a way of affirming (everlasting) life; the tortured body is the most intense expression of life in the body (and spirit). “Martyrs, as opposed to suicides . . . place their death at the service of others” (Eagleton 26):

The word “martyr” means “witness”; and what he or she bears witness to is a principle without which it may not be worth living in the first place. In this sense, the martyr’s death testifies to the value of life, not to its unimportance. (26)

By submitting to bodily travails, the martyr and ascetic are brought closer to the body, and the body thus becomes holy. The ordinary person bypasses their body, for the most part is unaware of it, unless they’re hungry, or have toothache. The open road is the home of the soul, for the aesthete and the ascetic alike—the lover of nature, the lover of God: he or she who carries their body like a cross, and the one who lives in it (and for it) like it was a house. The martyrs had to be giving up something when they sacrificed their bodies, otherwise it wasn’t a sacrifice. The body, like the spirit, is divine, even if corruptible.

The soul of Man must quicken to creation.

.....

LORD, shall we not bring these gifts to Your service?  
 Shall we not bring to Your service all our powers  
 For life, for dignity, grace and order.  
 And intellectual pleasures of the senses?  
 The LORD who created must wish us to create  
 And employ our creation again in His service  
 Which is already His service in creating.  
 For Man is joined spirit and body,  
 And therefore must serve as spirit and body.  
 Visible and invisible, two worlds meet in Man;  
 Visible and invisible must meet in His Temple;  
 You must not deny the body.  
 Now you shall see the Temple completed:  
 After much striving, after many obstacles:  
 For the work of creation is never without travail;  
 The formed stone, the visible crucifix,  
 The dressed altar, the lifting light . . . (Eliot, *The Rock* 9.16, 9.25–41)

This sounds almost like Lawrence—"Man must quicken to creation." Eliot affirms the "visible crucifix", the body, the body of Christ, and he affirms "Man" as "joined spirit and body." But this is "Man" as he is now, in this world, who is no angel. The significance of the visible crucifix is that Christ suffered bodily, that he was Man, an essential tenet of Christology, as I noted in chapter 2 of this thesis—a necessary event, the act that redeems us, that saves us. The body is not to be misused, at the service (primarily) of cheap distractions, or 'immoral' purposes. This isn't far removed from Lawrence's own declarations concerning the sanctity of the body, although what is immoral for him does not always conform with Christian ethics. The body in Christianity and Eliot's poetry is, moreover, instrumental, even if crucially so, and of this world only. Lawrence calls Christianity "the greatest thing the world has seen", but his objection to it is based upon its renunciation of worldly desires, which is where it goes wrong (Letter to Catherine Carswell, 16 July 1916).

. . . this organisation of humanity must be smashed. But . . . It is ridiculous to be as innocent as the turtle-dove. It is not martyrdom we seek. I hate those who seek martyrdom. One wants victory . . . the chance to reconstruct according to one's heart's desire. (Letter to Lady Ottoline Morrell, 26 September 1916)<sup>219</sup>

It's important to stress, however, that the fulfilment of desire, for Lawrence, is a 'sacred' responsibility, that desire itself is a deeply spiritual condition in which God resides, and that it is God who "gives me the understanding to discriminate between . . . greater and lesser desire" (Letter to Catherine Carswell, 16 July 1916). The significance of the body for Lawrence is immediate, primary and everlasting. He goes low and high, like Nietzsche's Zarathustra, takes his "downward path to wisdom"<sup>220</sup>—through the "leaf-clogged, silent lanes of hell",<sup>221</sup> across the mountains of the Tyrolean alps, where he beholds the crucifixes along the road, the first of which is

a man nailed down in spirit, but set stubbornly against the bondage and the disgrace . . . with a kind of dogged nobility that does not yield its soul to the circumstances. (*Twilight* 12)

This is Lawrence's kind of Christ—where "[e]very gesture is a gesture from the blood", like the Bavarian peasant who made this crucifix (14); a Christ who gradually degenerates, however, along the alpine road south towards Italy, into the "death incarnate" of Christianity (18). But Italy, for Lawrence, is the home of the body, of the blood<sup>222</sup>; and it is spring, and "the streams sing again", and there are "flowers of crimson and gold, like Bohemian glass" (90–91).

---

<sup>219</sup> The context of this letter is the Great War. The "organisation of humanity" that Lawrence refers to is capitalism, nationalism, etc.—the forces responsible for the war. Lawrence makes clear in this letter that he opposes the war but that he is not a conscientious objector.

<sup>220</sup> Hamalian's phrase (118) in regard to Ursula in Lawrence's novel *The Rainbow*.

<sup>221</sup> Lawrence, "Medlars" 281.

<sup>222</sup> "That is why I like to live in Italy. The people are so unconscious. They only feel and want: they don't know" (Letter to Ernest Collings, 17 January 1913).

And in the hollows are the grape hyacinths, purple as noon, with the heavy, sensual fragrance of noon. They are many-breasted, and full of milk, and ripe, and sun-darkened, like many-breasted Diana. (91)

Eliot's withdrawal from the world, as Cooper says of "Burnt Norton", was a return to the "primal scenes of consciousness" (*Ideology* 153). The same could be said of Lawrence, generally—when practical politics, when all else fails. He had wanted to set up a commune in New Mexico. But Eliot posited a broadly Christian political community/state to function as a way of living in the world, governed by Christian principles in which the individual consciousness is permeated by God and the spirit of eternity, where time is redeemed. There is something of this spirit in Lawrence too—the sense that every moment exists as an eternity; but one which flourishes on the physical plane, where there is no stability, no eden, no ultimate truth, value and peace; and which is reflected by Lawrence's life—his restlessness, his explorations of place and the dark and light gods that inhabit them. Lawrence was quick to know a place, to sense the spirit that abided in the rocks, the trees, the coiled serpent that lay deep beneath its soil, that would raise its head through the shaft of darkness, and appal.

Eliot's submission to God, as Cooper says (and as I have already noted), was a "radical break", given the appeal of the secular world (Cooper, *Introduction* 27); but for Lawrence this submission might have been a temptation: how easy it would have been to bow before the Father, to relinquish the cruelties of life, and all the suffering! "Service is light and easy" (Lawrence, *The White Peacock* 323). It would be an act of self-abnegation, as the narrator of his first novel says of the devoted wife who, like a nun, lives vicariously for the exalted Other: God/Husband, and this to evade the loneliness and terror that attends the free and responsible human (323). Lawrence was physically weak all his life, and yet devoted himself, not to the God of the Spirit, or the easy comforts of the secular, but to his religion of the flesh—relationships, travel and his art, which itself sprang from life, and served it. He who was "always so frail", loved life: "I hadn't lived before I lived with Lawrence", says his wife, Frieda (68).

## Introduction to Poems

Even an artist knows that a work was never in his mind,  
he could never have *thought* it before it happened.

—D. H. Lawrence, “The Work of Creation”

### 1.

In his preface to *Lyrical Ballads*, Wordsworth said that poetry “takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquillity” (27). I have never found this, in my case, to be true. I reject, too, along with Eliot, the idea that poetry is any kind of ‘recollection’, without stretching the meaning of that term, for it suggests a deliberateness it actually lacks or ought to lack (See “Tradition and the Individual Talent.” *The Sacred Wood* 58); and it feels contradictory to Wordsworth’s own assertion, in the same essay, that poetry is the “spontaneous overflow of powerful feeling”, which by itself might suffice as well as any other poetry formula (19). I like to think of the unconscious body/mind directing the hand that holds the pen that delivers ‘it’—an embryonic, inchoate form—into the light. From here it is nurtured, formed, manipulated into art; and the poem, the feeling/s it invokes, feels like something other than a recollection of emotion. The poet is occupied, in the words of Eliot, with “the struggle . . . to transmute his personal and private agonies into something rich and strange, something universal and impersonal (“Poetry and Philosophy.” *Selected Prose* 53). Where the poem comes from is still, to me, a mystery, despite Eliot’s articulate (and plausible) analogy concerning catalysts and chemical combinations (“Tradition and the Individual Talent.” *The Sacred Wood* 54). The act of creation remains mysterious (as Eliot in a late essay acknowledges)<sup>223</sup> even if the combination of factors that inspired it can be accounted for, were there all along, “in suspension in the poet’s mind”, but unarticulated (“Tradition and the Individual Talent.” *The Sacred Wood* 55).

The ‘recollection of emotion in tranquillity’ suggests, moreover, the *replica* of an emotion, something artificial, even if that is not what Wordsworth meant to imply: he

---

<sup>223</sup> *The Three Voices of Poetry* 18.

does not, he says, always write with a “distinct purpose formally conceived” (19); and art, despite the etymological connection with ‘artificial’, ‘artifice’ etc, must spring, as Lawrence had said, from life (nature)—whether the emotion is discovered (was there all along, like the planet Neptune), or created in a spontaneous act of embodiment—the incarnation of the abstract, unborn *feeling*; an urge, in the language of Lawrence, from which god is born (See Lawrence’s poem “Red Geranium and Godly Mignonette”, 690–691).

Eliot’s dicta concerning the creation of poetry (above) stems from his classicism, his belief in the importance of order and discipline in art, his opposition to romantic subjectivism and so-called artistic freedom of expression. Prima facie this contradicts Lawrence’s ‘liberated demon’<sup>224</sup> of inspiration’, for the latter expression might suggest art unencumbered by the good sense and discipline of structure and coherence. This opposition, however, is more apparent than actual, and has more to do with the stress that is laid on the act of poetry—metaphors and formulas that attempt to explicate and embody the dark process of writing it. Wordsworth wrote beautiful poems regardless of the (in)aptness and (in)accuracy of his formula. Eliot, despite his discipline and sense of tradition, produced some of the ‘freest’ verse in the English language. And Lawrence wasn’t overwhelmed by his ‘demon’: his poems are carefully structured, and he had an instinctive ear for rhythm. There’s no such thing as free verse, says Eliot.<sup>225</sup> What he means is that there are rules nonetheless; and, loosely, these ‘rules’ are to do with structure, rhythm, and good poetic sense. In short, good taste, which implies objective aesthetic principles. The discordant dissonance of *The Waste Land* is rhythmical and structured in a way that the cacophonous ramblings of an illiterate drunk are not. We know, instinctively, the difference between the two, without recourse to demonstrable mathematical truths.

When the poet sets out to write a first draft, the ‘demon’ must be heard, for it is the origin of poetry, the unarticulated feeling, “The Word without a word”, which emerges

---

<sup>224</sup> Lawrence’s symbol or metaphor for uninhibited writing, the true voice of poetry, which the “young man” stifles. See *Collected Poems* 27–29.

<sup>225</sup> See his essay “Reflections on *Vers Libre*.”

from the poet's soul, their unconscious responses to the world that is experienced (*Ash Wednesday* 5.5). Eliot would agree, except it would pain him to hear it expressed in such a way, for it conjures an image of ill-discipline. The idea of Eliot being possessed by a demon as he pens the opening lines of *Ash Wednesday* feels inapt: the mind that composed that poem needed to be stilled, emptied of distractions, where words could approach the Word<sup>226</sup>; and its feelings distilled into a poetry removed from the man and his interactions with the physical world. But Eliot also spoke of certain states of mind, which can be induced by illness, and which are conducive to the production of poetry.<sup>227</sup> This poetic mind, for Eliot, is unconscious, a dark place of "incubation", which is precisely the state needed to encounter Lawrence's 'demon'.<sup>228</sup> He also, in a late essay (first published in 1953), used the word himself: the poet

does not know what he has to say until he has said it. . . . He is oppressed by a burden which he must bring to birth in order to obtain relief. . . . he is haunted by a demon . . . against which he feels powerless, because in its first manifestation it has no face, no name, nothing: and the words, the poem he makes are a kind of . . . exorcism of this demon. . . . not in order to communicate with anyone, but to gain relief from actual discomfort; and when the words are finally arranged in the right way . . . he may experience a moment of exhaustion, of appeasement, of absolution . . . and of something very near annihilation . . . (*The Three Voices of Poetry* 18)

Eliot uses the 'demon' analogy, but retains his classical poise: the exorcism is performed; the demon is delivered onto the page where the artist (the craftsman) moulds it into form, into a coherent work of art. Eliot's final emphasis is on hard work and discipline; in his later poetry, the casual reader would hardly suspect that there ever was a demon, a dark embryonic voice, tapping away at the poet's unconscious mind,

---

<sup>226</sup> "[Eliot] saw the aim of poetry as attempting to let words approach the Word" (Crawford, *After The Waste Land* 95).

<sup>227</sup> "some forms of ill-health, debility or anaemia may . . . produce an efflux of poetry" (*The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism*, 144). He knew this first hand: poetry burst from him while under extreme physical and mental stress (Crawford, *After the Waste Land* 47).

<sup>228</sup> —but the poem "cannot be suspected of being a present from a . . . demon" (*The Use of Poetry* 144).

waiting to be born—so polished and fluid are his lines, with the *appearance* of unruffled water. Lawrence’s emphasis is on the inspiration itself, the unborn feeling that is suppressed by the too-conscious poet, and this emphasis shows in his poetry: the final product feels raw—not unfinished or careless, but throbbing still with the primal first cause of its inception. He doesn’t pretend, however, that this ‘demon’, this unconscious inspiration, fountain of creativity, is *sufficient* to produce art. Lawrence, like any artist, if they’re any good, revised extensively, allowed the conscious man, the fastidious critic, into the room—just as Eliot did. Whether one thinks of a demon liberator, or a dark passage that leads to “the cerebral cortex, the nervous system, and the digestive tracts”, it doesn’t matter (Eliot, “The Metaphysical Poets.” *Selected Prose* 113); it’s one man’s metaphor (or emphasis) against another’s. Each of them drew from the unconscious body/mind—for *there* (wherever that is) lies the secret ‘material’ of poetry—and embodied it.

This, I imagine, is how I write too: the first draft of the poem belongs to the ‘demon’ that “first voice”—“the poet talking to himself—or to nobody” (Eliot, *The Three Voices of Poetry* 4); subsequent drafts belong to the conscious, discerning individual, who refrains, however, from undue interference—who revises or censors for aesthetic and technical reasons only. The pair combined is the artist, and the quality of the artist depends on the voice of their inspiration and their ability to express it.

\*

I have spent the last three years immersed in the poetry (and other work) of Eliot and Lawrence. I have also continued to write my poems—approximately 300 in that time, of which here I present 51—poems that have emerged from my readings of these two poets, and from my own external and internal life. My poems are meant as a complement to my thesis, poetic representations (or distortions) of my critical work. They are not of course merely ideas versified; but rather the product of a life lived, however remotely, in the sensual world of joy and conflict. The reader will notice my preoccupation with body and spirit, with nature, God—familiar themes in Eliot and

Lawrence (and my thesis)—and with the multifarious combinations and life forms, and all the uncountable phenomena that make up existence—the world of impressions, of sensations, as I perceive it—whether physical or metaphysical, a feeling, perhaps, that makes itself known through an ache in the heart, a want of oxygen; or one that is embodied by them: a tangle between the concrete and the abstract, the real and ideal; the body and spirit consummated, merged as one distinct entity, to live again the life of the flesh; or split in an agony of indecision, of doubt, like a tortured, dying Christ. “Do I dare / Disturb the universe?” (“Prufrock.” 45–46). Well, yes.

I have not striven, deliberately, to reproduce (in the idioms of the current age) the poems of Eliot and Lawrence—this despite being conscious of my commitment to write poems that are thematically connected to my critical work. The coincidence of themes, tropes, figures naturally and more or less unconsciously: Eliot’s and Lawrence’s poetic dispositions are similar to mine (despite being different from each other’s) and that, in part, is their appeal for me. I knew in advance that my poems would correspond to my thesis—body and spirit—because my poems have long been embroiled in such dense undertakings.

There are direct links between some of my poems and the body/spirit theme. My poem “One Dying Animal to Another”, for example, confronts a spirituality grounded in the world of physical suffering. But mostly the poems are made up, off the cuff, and written quickly, without undue consideration of what I’m writing about. What I mean is, I didn’t set out to write a poem about, say, the Problem of Evil. The production of poems is something visceral for me, rooted in the body. If poetry involves thinking, then it is a different sort of thinking to that which is applied to calculating the area of a square, or what to cook for dinner: “off the cuff” feels careless, but it suggests, also, ‘freedom of movement’—the elegance of a dancer, movement made to look effortless, even if that movement is the result of revisions made in the course of hours or days. But the initial push comes from within, a sort of primary cause, or a big bang, something out of ‘nothing’.

## 2. What Do I Mean by God?

“God” (it appears in nine of my poems) generally signifies the primary/original mystery, which is otherwise nameless—a name for something nameless. But the precise meaning of it changes from poem to poem—sometimes within the same poem. “Worm Theory”, for example, rattles off a succession of gods that modulate from the God of the New Testament (the God of Love) to an impotent, human god—more lovable and relatable because of it. A physical god—a Christ. A killable god.

In “One Dying Animal to Another”, God is invoked as an absence, some ineffable longing. The poem appears to be about a lack of belonging, disconnection. The need for God, for connection. It struggles against a nihilist menace; against the fear that God, that the universe, doesn’t care whether you live or die; doesn’t care if there is evil, if we suffer. I think that the whole collection of these poems is this struggle to keep going regardless. This determination is my defence against the reality of evil, of suffering, of atrocities that I know, at an intellectual level, are committed every second. The temptation is *To Let Go*—to be delivered unto the spirit, unto God where all our loves and sufferings end. My collection is the determination to resist this easy victory. It is much easier to bow before the God of the New Testament, than to resist it. To fight it even though you know that you will lose. But that in itself is a victory. We remain undefeated (to paraphrase Eliot) because we have not given in.

In “Avalanche”, God is in everything that exists, or *is* everything—the only thing that matters. God is connected to physical joy, to sensuous experience:

in the soft utterance of water  
 in the tread upon  
 wet grass & the brush of yellow corn  
 in the horns you clasp, the elm barks  
 which are nameless

Nameless. But something real. Something physical, because God is only possible in a physical world.

### 3. Inconsistencies in capitalisation, grammar etc

i'm 'accidentally on purpose' wayward when it comes to capitals, etc. Whether I use an en dash or an em dash is not determined by anything logical or explicable. I am aware of the inconsistencies, but disregard them anyway.

It is instinct, gut feeling that *determines* (if it can be called that) the presence or absence of a capital letter; it's a random brush stroke. It might well be governed by some aesthetic principle, but if so I am unable to verbalise it. My feeling is that this sort of thing is random. Usually, if I use unconventional grammar in a first draft, it survives—out of respect to the unconscious poet who, for whatever reason, or lack of reason, determined it. The editor in me feels that he has no business in interfering with such things, and doesn't care much anyway—is interested only in the poem itself. He may change a capital to miniscule (or vice versa), but for aesthetic reasons only: for how it looks on the page. Capitalised abstract nouns, for example, (like Love, God) can look overbearing, so I might minuscule it—unless I'm in the mood to be overbearing.

**to not let go**

. . . only undefeated

Because we have gone on trying

—T.S. Eliot, “The Dry Salvages”

**2 wrongs**

to forgive is a cop-out  
& a lie.

if you have ever tried, you know.  
you don't succeed, even if you think you do  
& it kills you – the wound  
plastered.

the second wrong is to do nothing about the first.  
the soul flushed on one side, smarts & festers.  
the one side blood-tipped, struck  
severally, cracks like those momentous  
fireworks, the afterglow of nothing.

**a girl can always hope**

there are no sheets flapping in the moonlight,  
just a pair of black jeans & a white t-shirt.

also there are clouds rolling in from the west,  
a siren flashing her weird dissonance,  
low-level pain.

i'm a stranger in my own garden.  
i tore thru the cosmic womb like a fucking tornado,  
fell from the sky.

when i die, my life's unwound & i'm me again,  
the only one dancing.

the crowd is ashamed & doesn't know where to look  
or what to do with its hands.

**worm theory****I**

who rolled the ball that never stops? the perpetual sop  
that winds us up. i hear the tic toc, break, drop its load  
springs, the intricate mess bodies make, a rip as of linen  
& they're finished; digested, mixed  
in the underlayers of their darkness & bro! we were close  
& you look me up like you don't know me?  
remember me.

**II**

how it ends is not important.  
it never ends. you only think it does  
& there's no beginning, only the middle  
so if the picture's lost, & you're lost  
unavailable, sucking your finger,  
it's the mind & the body's elsewhere,  
at the post shop, standing on the corner  
at home, the crime scene, polishing  
the steak knife, straightening the sheet  
  
on your knees scrubbing the wine stain  
off the carpet.

**III**

i am dry 2 days, slip into idiocy like sleep, dream  
that i'm you, cross the street for no reason. dodge  
buses, air traffic, pedestrians. fail to make contact  
cut the party line, the atmosphere, ignore  
leafleteers. i'm going home, uninterested,

in tears, crack on the pavement, scavengers  
 shit kickers. when i'm on the 9th floor, i live.  
 i can do anything, quick. i can sing. make you feel  
 like i'm behind you. over the moon. i can reach you.

i can teach you. be gentle. thumb your shoulders  
 when you're mad, when you talk with your mouth full  
 in the bathroom; when you're fried on the bed with the nets  
 wide open.

all of this is possible, a blast at the mindscapes  
 we cultivate. i'm still dreaming, not listening.  
 not hearing la la.

#### **IV**

i said i'd stop but kept going. rolling over,  
 not dead, the same ground but different.  
 have you noticed the infinite variation, the sly  
 nuance of word, facials, blades of grass, leaves  
 on their stems, how they resemble when it's winter  
 desiccated bodies.

i'm grafted to myself & tell you about it  
 in electronic letters.

#### **V**

bodies spill.  
 swarms, systems so good  
 majority rule, dictatorship. the end of the neo-liberal  
 emporium. save us jesus, america.

i shake the withered fig tree, but nothing  
 no future, but this, strung between two twigs  
 the instant miracle.

## VI

god loves the suicides as much as us,  
 for their courage, their weakness.  
 god loves the unblessed, the haters  
 for their suffering. loves them indiscriminately  
 w/out blinking. god loves those who help themselves  
 like there was no such thing as possessions.  
 god loves all the trees & all the animals.  
 god loves but can't do anything for me.  
 i love them for that. their impotence, their humanity.

for the dead there's nothing but regret  
 but what's that?

## VII

it's only curiosity that makes me think about jumping off the bridge.  
 to see what happens next. what i think when i hit the water.  
 that's all it is. i tell you, i am joyful. uplifted. i connect, am part of  
 the organic cosmic furniture (of things). i fit, wing it like birds  
 flit, fleshed in the palpitations of the corporeal soil, renascent red  
 white & blue, blood oranges & emerald.

give me peaches, conical clusters, wasp nests, the fruits  
 at the end of summer, joyous flies & the first grapes  
 of the dying year. this is no time to think of death, to meditate  
 our beginnings & ends, but to hold the inordinate weight

of sunlight, the intermittent click of consciousness, cicadas  
on the blink. at night the crickets are thinking.

### VIII

i crossed the arabian desert; saw the confluence of two rivers  
serpents; isis, black beetles, water carriers; here is where  
i reckon the first Man exited africa, a garden we killed in  
were dis-assembled in. there was no such thing as happiness,  
doubt, emotional insecurity. then lunch was served & the monotony  
broken.

when i got to the heart of western christianity,  
i was done, dissatisfied, had i come for nothing, for the roman  
taxi driver—may his jewels roast in the eternal pit  
sink in cocytus, that unscrupulous heartless bastard—  
charged high prices. actually, that time, my cousin picked me up  
from the airport, drove us thru the scorched roads of latium  
until we reached the taciturn sabine countryside, a reclusive  
paradise of rock, high woodlands. francis lived here, conferred  
with birds, beasts of the fields. i lived here, dream of it, wolves  
of your childhood, the crows, owls that signify death, someone close.  
i'm torn; here again, i trudge thru the snow in my old boots, & a gun  
that won't shoot / straight.

**once you peel back the bloody cloth**

there it is at the end of my bed again  
cos last time was such a flop.

this time it's not  
insignificant. if only you are here to believe it.

i walk hand in hand from the station & a switch  
closes.

i'm opened, dropped, flushed  
in the toilet.

i comb my hair like clark gable (i got that wet look).  
all of this is gold, which i smoke.

i sleep curled in the hollows where moonbeams  
can't touch me.

**god**

there's no spark but the body burns  
slowly.

it's weird to know yourself & no one else however  
long, however much, how tender  
you'd be

mortified when—to be  
found bound to a chair, flogged, shamed, showed up for

a Liar  
boned, stuffed with, shit  
spit. delicate, the boy

sprung me naked.  
I was making toast in the kitchen  
when he comes like David.

i'm big but a bullet will do me,  
or a stone. do you know me.

it's good to do a fat man, break the bond  
feel him gush hot in my hand, his heart  
still pumping.

the flesh loves the wet ground  
beneath it.

i take my strength for granted. waste it,  
being had &, giving. what is worse than this  
deprivation.

i tread the boards in the quiet hall between the bed  
& toilet, boredom, brush the wall  
in darkness. the bruised silence

only god knows what i'm thinking.  
this i know when i pass the window.

**consummation**

a cry is confounded for another, joy for demonic  
pain; we can be tossed between these horns  
if we want, a tight ball on the saline floor; from now on drink  
only lemon water

warm milk. or deliver,  
fill your whiteness so u know us better  
than we know ourselves.

ii

we see the light long after the curtains' drawn  
under what is sound, image; the dead, who stink,  
us when we think too much, consumed by an I  
which is golden, its own king.

i join the dots u leave in my consciousness, to please you

**evil**

watch the sky  
fade rose &  
yellows, glide  
river; how  
stillness flays you  
softly, holds u  
to. possess  
other than.  
the interlude

of morning  
bathes, fills  
the silences; of  
thinking of  
doing Is &  
the crack between  
the act &—

remorse.

i remember the rain  
when we say Goodbye.

i want to push my heritage  
but have none; no blood but  
had dad once

-

threaten to kill me &  
not mean it  
sufficiently. passion  
my love, my –

fuck the community  
because 1 day,  
1 of these days,  
etc.

jim's better  
thanks but  
doesn't go out much &  
mary's got a man  
(david), an engineering  
graduate, not  
overly intelligent but  
hard-working,  
honest.

ray likes his football  
on a sa'urday  
& coreen, etc

the azures or  
ibiza &

here's a song about what a bitch  
molly was. hung herself w  
scotch.

what i mean is

is is is is etc

what i mean is

what i mean is what i mean is what i mean is what i fucking mean is.

y'know mostly it's

garbage but

-

day breaks

like bread my body &

when i'm burning / my brothers

my sisters

i'm with you still.

like the morning, the inward smiles of idlers, innocent bystanders, landscape; fountain, green shoots, babies like down soften my branches. this is not my imagination; nor is the nightmare that knocked twice last night. blind wrapped in white in the bleak house & one of us is a killer. we hear nothing & want to call you

but the 1<sup>st</sup> thing is, the

only thing is, is the upward stair toward the landing where there's no-one standing &

nothing moving & i suppose it's 2. 3 in the morning & the

incidental music in the top corner. my vision is –

failing & where's this

going. i have no sun! no

daughter, no wife, o mother: no friend. do i care on the bend in

3<sup>rd</sup>. tearing shit out of it & louie's in the back squealing like the wind. yeh & so what if

eye's drunk & might have killed someone. when midnight  
comes: tears, lamentations.

on the 3<sup>rd</sup> day of the month  
he  
or she  
delivered  
like christ  
open-armed tore their  
shirt off: shoot me.  
hung from a lamp post  
dead 3 days.

i know, a priori, i'm  
for it fucked  
what have i  
done, &  
why &  
when. in

perspective:  
i pissed the bed when  
you least expected, man!  
of mystery & many faces.

i put my suffering before you.  
oh well.

**silver**

the sea roars like a crowd at the football game,  
at the rally, with its banners that flash the sky,  
hail that hits the corrugated plastic.

the sea roars like a crowd that yells *sieg heil*  
when you hold it to my ear, like a child.

the sea is like yellow skies & violet  
eyes when they're wide & violent  
glittering like fish on the shore.

**first man**

first, man/woman.

last but not least

god—

much more beautiful &

bursting with sensory

detail. concrete

like the eiffel tower

& the empire state building.

permanent as daffodils

& the iris with its tendrils

flaunting the sky.

**snake**

if an old man wants to water my garden  
let him. his bladder could burst & why should i make a fuss,  
be the man, to feel good about myself?

but what if i'd thrown a stone at him (because i'd felt repulsed)  
& he'd taken off, the job half done, what then?

well, i might have walked across the grass barefoot  
thinking it was dew & cursed the voice of my education.

none of this ever happened but i tell it like it really did  
to expose myself, some hidden treasure i'd forgotten  
like when i split a log & watch the lice spill.

**rumour**

the moon in Sagittarius makes me curious  
but the sun keeps me grounded, on fire,  
holed in, shy & very poisonous.

who knows me— when i strike, put in 5  
& go, & i'm home like i never left. i've got  
alibis, to go, drop, walk off, over the rainbow.

i might insist, trace sibilants on ur skin  
as you kneel to sign your autograph.  
in this way, each of us is revered.

## boy about town

unlike the vines that curl about the trunk,  
 the lightning that rends the sky, unlike the pulse  
 on the street, the 2/4 4/4  
 beat, i'm free as much as a girl  
 can be  
 working.  
 i'm not like this, anyone or anything  
 summed up, dubbed  
 sic, sick in the gut  
 who can't sit, who's boned by a fist  
 down the throat. man woman other: i am cleansed,  
 damaged, clenched because together  
 we are strong. i am not like this  
 neither, gay at the festival  
 stiff when the sun drops  
 a minute's silence.  
 like this  
 but diffident, when the cradled moon hangs, the criminal  
 waves the air & there's a  
 gasp no-one hears. unlike this  
 but similar, as one heart disassembles another & one brain  
 & one liver. i'm dying  
 for us to be...  
 skint, histamines in the blood a blade  
 couldn't fix unless you do it good, go hard  
 all the way  
 home. i love a man  
 with big hands, who does me in when i'm not  
 spoken to; who breaks *both* my arms: is this what i want

to be: plastered cast like venus  
rained on

**once you go black**

but there's more to me than this closed circle of living, quotidian  
atrocities – roundabouts, s. markets, snuffed drains,  
toilets. i know about the eyes outside

my peripheral vision,  
even when you're talking or the bedhead bangs against the wall.

how ordinary to fuck my brains out on an island  
of palms & coconuts. if you pull it off

it's a gimmick, a shell under which is fear.  
emptiness.

i'd pass the time punching holes, harbouring the offences  
each one sliced on my fingers.

**flowers**

you're mad like flowers that spring in concrete, that dance  
 for anyone, that are wistful, miss the honeybees, in love  
 with everything, me, stray winds, skies that accumulate  
 rainbow these gorgeous accidents, roses in the corner,  
 darkly flourishing, pricked. you're blind like dandelions

wave for fun, no-one; like sunflowers ache for the sky  
 untouched & tender; colossi; deranged wisteria, wild  
 penniless, open to the sunshine, mindless rudiments  
 muttering their silence, rain, loving it (all the same) utterly  
 disinterested. you are lunatic, dwell beneath yourself, are razed

galilean devils, souls driven off the precipice; rizen  
 disengendered; speared like celosia; perfect unto yourself—  
 given, yours as nitrogen is, nitrous oxide, the seven  
 sisters, elliptical rings of uranus & neptune, coniferous  
 forests, white tundra, father's vegetable garden, his apple orchard.

**fuzz**

my laptop hisses at me like the ocean  
rolls the foreshore, froth that waterfalls  
my thighs when i can't speak & my mouth is ash. i'm the devil

you could heal, feel for; like i'm yours, the evil  
you molest, torment; provoke into excess  
into hot effluence, something to pass the time to,

to stoke.

shove your fist down my throat if you think  
i can't bear it, if my tongue's stuck.

light me

**cat**

the cat mourns like it feels pain, silently.  
he doesn't give himself away like a nightingale.

talks only when he has to; slinks  
crevices of what you think when you're not thinking  
looking out the window.

he came to inspect the hole i dug  
at the end of the day & sniffed it before i filled it up again.

he knows death. like me  
there's a dark spot in him somewhere which he gets used to  
& forgets.

## one dying animal to another

1

there's no before no afterwards, but the consequence  
of what's gone, reminders &, blind prognostications.  
it's hell, to feel these presences, buoyed by the floods  
like cattle so long, & friendless. we have no gods  
no idea we're done for. we dig anyways &,  
flayed rise like flies flush with spring.

2

let me in even if i'm violent & look awful.  
you can build me up from scratch, of what's left,  
in the dirt, which is the death of me.

what i want to say, i guess, the short of it is:  
raze me til i'm fine like dust & when you sigh  
i'm the flowering of trees in spring.

3

a car door slams, & another.  
there are 2 men, 2 sets of footsteps, which get to me,  
not like heartbeat, more flexible.  
a new sound almost, not an emotion but close.

take a walk by the river when the shops close. take a breath  
in 1910 or 1912. on the bridge drop your spit, & when you're spent  
spread your hands on the parapet. ask to see the nurse, check your messages.  
list your friends in order of preference. when the old man coughs  
cut your wrist & turn the television on. if you must, breathe. there are 15 years

to live, to think of it, to kill, to think Oh how my holidays fly like barn owls & burn like  
harvest moons.

4

i saw a man kill a black dog at the side of the white road,  
but you know what memory's like.  
he might have just picked it up, slumped its corpse over his shoulder.  
i was a passenger back then pressed against the glass. this is the wilderness  
i love now it's almost winter & darkness flames across the sky.

when i'm alone like this, or on the porch tonight w my heels upon the rails,  
& when the moon hangs close: i could fall for a tall  
lonesome god if he looked like you, was personal, good to talk to,  
when it's dead, late on sundays, at the takeaways,  
& if it's punishment to wait more than 20 minutes, looking out the windows,  
to be deprived of him, then so be it.

**photo — 1991, i think**

this is me in a black hood turning his back on a man kneeling in the snow  
 like he's done. thought i'd die but that was my choice & i light one in the wind  
 & my lips are numb. i'm moved on

up the road by 2 cops, a pair of cunts & i bet the older one, the white one,  
 has a family. a wife who sort of loves him & kids who feel safe when he's on the job.  
 they're only human. it's fucking heartwarming

like you say but i prefer a cold pie & indigestion to getting slammed in a cell  
 w a truncheon like i'm queer or something just because i'm into it, that  
 gladiatorial contact. young man!

remember Salamis. if it wasn't for us you'd be on ur knees getting stuffed  
 by the Persian navy, charmed by the patterns on the carpet thinking  
 What the fuck happened here!

i'm just the messenger, a diplomat: now i'm sucking the milk  
 of human kindness. you get the drift, i digress — & yet, & yet...i marched  
 home, a doss house in islington, off

holloway road, a hole back then but now unaffordable. that day  
 i couldn't get warm & the cut on my hand stung & froze like glass  
 & the blood stopped

as it got to my feet & i couldn't walk but the next day  
 i'm on the Kent coast & board a ship to Calais. i left my gaulois  
 on the train. a score

for the conductor, considering the shit wage he's on. it's no consolation especially now when i'm dropped at some motorway gas station between paris

& lyon: a small town i steal some fruit from. nevertheless i'm no Augustine: i've nothing to confess except i lied to the priest at confession: told him

i swore which was bollocks. but what i kept from him was nothing either or not his business & all this was tacitly assented to & anyway, who knew. i slept

as i've said on ice in sunny Switzerland, a relief after the brown fog of Lombardy & when i got to London, what a night that was. we opened the brandy & watched as the football scores came in.

it was a saturday, dark & 5 in the afternoon.

**Athens 0, Sparta 1**

When the score came thru there was death. Disbelief.

Some stared at the screen. Others turned away. Walked home.

One man dropped to his knees & wouldn't get up. Like a dream.

There wasn't even the usual Saturday night violence.

Before the cock crowed, however, a glass was thrown  
& the splinters split the terminal silence  
(when the sun rose, the street cleaner cut his finger).

Then nothing, but a moan. Some lunatic grief-stricken  
nulled the air like the sound of a  
gong

**put that in your pipe & smoke it**

not me, but smoke from the wet woods, resinous scraps, flakes in the black wind.  
scratched the matchbox, sucked the sulphur. i don't belong in this picture

pressed to the glass, so close you don't notice. it might be carpet burn  
hooked fingers. the inner vision that cracks the egg  
that shakes the nest from its tree.

the child that stones the hive.

i carry a knife to skin the persimmon with, the crisp apple red with liquid vitamin.  
cut loose skeins of bush weed, streams that circumnavigate the city.

from the top floor i'm high enough to touch everything.  
all of it. drop, caught by the flagstones. remain anonymous.

relive the experience in a parachute.  
rise like tuff grass sprung in its cracked electrics  
signals that covet the memory.

i *am* the resurrection. tortured, irritable at the station. signing some papers:  
*you must not deny the body*

**is Shakespeare still relevant**

the sun's up at 6 & the sky is pale  
blue but almost white.

plums are blossoming out the window.  
the wind died.

**II**

tonight on the dew as the stars rise  
destitute the jasmines

rouse the blood like a whip  
the stroke

of your finger soul  
wandering

like it's lost something  
but what.

**III**

here's a character, for his skin  
can't contain him. thinks too much  
or not enough. suffers

in excess of what's expected  
of what's reasonable. an earnest victim  
of barbs, the cosmos

having a laugh; this then  
is your king! labouring the aisles, the high-rise  
offices, breaking stones? assuredly

not! &  
what do you do when some  
handsome fuck leans into you?

call it 'a mistake'  
which is legit, even if  
it's no accident. this shit

happens half the time  
it doesn't even  
hurt like when the hammer

hits the cold  
chisel & the brick  
Splits.

#### **IV**

i'd kill the bitch  
but i'm stuffed, half-hung  
shit what would you do. also, nothing  
i reckon if you

in my position w the light  
in ur eyes  
out the window  
observe

the fronds blown by the wind  
& the shadows on the letterbox  
dance, are  
nonsense, but

what else is there & what  
do you want to say to me?  
that hasn't been said, & if it has

say it anyway.

## V

i like the stilled disorder after the fistfight, & the silences  
when the curtain sighs & the chairs are mute.  
there's a pulse in the room

but where. organ failure  
is not an option, nor is self murder  
& in the morning

when u wave beside the lake  
like u know who i am & i don't know what to say &

i can't speak because of the lawn mower & the mown grass  
& ducks in the sky & pink

blossoms of us

?

**dystopia**

when we meet  
i squeeze thru the crack of u.

i eat nothing.

i fainted in the toilet  
hit my head on the wooden ledge  
of the bathtub;

saw no star but  
darkness &

if it happens again i go to a doctor.  
see what they say.  
what they give me.

i'm nowhere.  
that's the fear,  
the fear i'm  
deadend. i declare,

for something to say, to be  
– to snap  
yr fingers to. thru w  
shit job w  
no job, i'm  
gone

drift across &  
cloud  
winters

Bitter Cold It Was

boy. from milan we sail north  
to zurich & when we get there it's –

i mist something because  
when we left in the morning  
it was nineteen

eightynine & there was  
no fucking euro & the Belgium cops  
hailed me off the bus & said  
in demotic French:

you, Sir,  
are a criminal.

will the howling winds never cease?

**what kind of a lover *are* you!**

meet me at the food court. leave me  
disappointed, a shit gig it is to be  
queen

made-up  
sixty. when you whisper it wild & breathless it sounds so nice  
like 16. we could slip

in a minute this apartment with its splenetic views  
of the harbour & in the evening, when the lights glow we're rolling on the claret seas  
with the moon

over the bow, a stack full of tobacco  
& something to talk about, to root for. there are long narrow houses  
silhouettes, the white hospital

on the shore, caravans flickering in the distance. at 6  
the traffic's  
backed-up on the bridge all the way down to the city, & i'm bummed

sick for home, fumbling the page,  
in the alien corn  
outraged.

**the kingdom of god is at hand**

i come from uterus of bedsit streets that end with a  
wall.— where men tread my stairs; an A4 slab of  
grey sunshine; state accommodation for the very poor who swarm this once  
white respectable  
shithouse; royal blood when rome was hot  
with etruscan kings; from land my kin dug, lived off; sacred  
hills where the enemy crept like slow nightmare. i  
slept  
with the kids, was cast  
down son of  
satan—nana, may your bones be crushed by some new housing plan, transfigured  
into spirit where u live 4 ever. i storm  
when i'm bigger your emptiness &  
there shall be joy & blessings like there never was.

**that's my Frappuccino, you cunt**

you can do what you want  
 go to the theatre  
 read Baudelaire

in French. study opera.  
 get job or grant  
 frm the arts council

whichever comes, get  
 done tongue rolled, lips  
 wide like you don't believe him

bald w  
 barbed tats &  
 bulldog. he jims

evidently, drives  
 to school his daughter.  
 these faces in the water

fluxed  
 break my  
 concentration, my politics. i'm

the masked marauder  
 armed not w  
 love; w fist w

old-school  
denunciations; beware  
the barefoot poor

their litter  
the spill on the asphalt.  
you can't win them w love

or disquisition.  
only fire.

freedom fighters  
who can't abide their personal frustrations  
their vices & devices.

this anyway is culture,  
environment;  
location. must we live

like the end  
is better than the beginning.  
like there's something to win

if ur quick, push-in  
o, where's one's  
fucking manners:

excuse me.  
i'm off  
historical discourse

innuendo  
the fabrication of fact.  
there's a stain on the wall

mixed up in some trauma.  
it got stared at lots  
but wasn't noticed

the clenched molar  
deficient unrequited  
untreatable. what have i to do

w my neighbour? mute forms  
wandering  
malls, eyes assuaged

screens media  
feeds it's good for economy We need  
china

flexible  
markets foreign  
students, to accommodate

the business community.  
she was like  
totally  
etc- him  
deferential  
to inferiors his fairer sexed

colleagues professional equals  
fuck me an email pdf discuss  
at breakfast

toast w marmalade  
black tea, casSandra ; confess where's ur  
analysis, focus

put a face to it.  
the idea makes me sick. it's horrible  
i won't do it.  
howl –

be a bitch, man.  
be fluid, performative.

if nothing makes a difference.  
sit in the corner w ur jaws wired tight.  
pose on the highest stair.

turn like you don't care.

**shadows before**

the sun went, an hour later  
 the moon. the night's  
 hush—not a word, but  
 why wistful, nostalgic  
 for nothing, for stones, inchoate  
 forms that fall short  
 of pathos? when god is dead,  
 a shadow of itself, even suicide  
 is pointless, or murder or  
 any kind of evil—a protest that ends  
 in failure.

the body strayed into the garden & the mind,  
 held by the hand, rocked.

you walked  
 across water, felt a stir in the rookeries; a creak  
 upon the stairs, in the rafters. it comes  
 when everyone's gone,

fills the gap like opium  
 when you're broken, when your back caves,  
 sapped by the weight, in the wrong place,  
 of cumbersome furniture.

it's no-one's fault if we get hurt,  
 are exiled, flee, abused  
 in our sanctuaries. but when our animals go missing,  
 i'd rather it was me, understanding  
 what i'm up against.

**cat ghost**

she who was dead now treads soft the floors of where i live.  
i have seen her twice from the corner of, & the third  
time it was just the cockroach  
but still. these are real experiences.

i have one cat left & it's now at the threshold  
of lounge & kitchen, waiting & it's almost midnight;  
but there's no mouse or bug or anything  
you can squash.

**phil**

1

zero is not a number  
 not real. zero is counter-intuitive, a fixed  
 idea—you're done  
 re-possessed in the dusk on the cusp  
 of short days  
 on the way home.  
 nothing is ever absolutely cancelled.

2

not even light or darkness. nothing rolls us: not millennia, not  
 re-runs, eternities beaten into images,  
 set fire to. we're halved  
 again but extinction never comes.  
 even if you hack me off  
 skewer me with charred capsicum &  
 eat. these

3

indigestible portions. recline  
 the hours, days, shades of languorous  
 juniper, sofa.  
 call your servant Sweetheart, maculate, have him stuff you up  
 with olives  
 whatever you stomach

& when your palms are splayed on the bathroom floor  
 & you're dry & you can't talk, & you're wondering about nothing

even then you're someone  
who is not alone.

**discord****I**

this is not a time of tranquillity.  
i am not mollified, not ok, not wise  
with hindsight. i have tried pain  
moral heterodoxy, those little toys,  
time-killers that buzz about the soul.

i recall now in a bottled rage.

**II**

so what if i stride over hills, wandering  
lonely, inhaling the roses, conscious  
of the moment, how it steals the odour  
of roll-on, waves like distant advertising,  
bowed in the phone glow, a satellite  
no-one names.

**III**

this is not a record of experiences  
a recollection of dead hours; but now,  
the unexpunged unexpurgated unadulterated tale,  
a heart smoking in the corner,  
no-one talks to.

**IV**

here's the glass, the marble index  
i crack your skull with.  
you exhale. we stay  
close, like bruised skin.

we are friends.

we understand each other.

we know when to say yes.

when to stop

mostly, to not

let go.

**remembers**

it's only terror half remembered, torched  
 mangers, kids torn, & their mothers;  
 makes me fail, in

god's name, blasphemies tossed  
 in sleep, tongues you haven't heard of  
 flamed like suns.  
 do we have to go thru this again.

where do i sign  
 which way do you want me to face.

\*

let dawns come. night falls &  
 the mediocre dread, hum  
 of loneliness  
 of tinnitus.  
 we have been thru this.

i remember the curtains sunstruck  
 tombstones, wails of black women  
 at the funeral, the unyielding spine  
 of a loved-one, & when my mother died

there were these 2 guys  
 w a digger.  
 we didn't even have to walk the coffin  
 but bowed

**hole**

how long has it been, have i waited so patient  
sat, stood up again, lied on the bed, carpet, leaned  
out the window for you, hung like a pendant  
& no-one to pray for? how queer (it is) your footsteps  
relive the experience, echo in the mind when i'm out  
sleeping, spasmed on the pillow next to you. i have tried  
to keep time, i have slow-danced, seen the dull faces  
over your shoulder, the asymmetrical horror, torn  
wallpaper, cracked lips in the mirror when i bit down so hard  
because i loved it & didn't know what to do, how long have i lived like this, sustained  
every moment, borne it &, simultaneously, knew i couldn't, i can't  
hold & it slips & i'm somewhere  
else in fact or imagination; trust still in what's  
impossible; count the petals on my flower, remember the  
m-nemonics of you. where you live.

## liberate us from the tyranny of the useful

the dish washer sings bliss doors swing polished floors violin  
bar chords mostly the xylophone incidentally on a soundtrack some rudimentary  
cartoon; wilfully simple.

don't do what i have done shot pool w drunks in the House, pissed on the velvet green  
to mark my territory

draw the curtain of sleep horror & what's to come in hamilton meanwhile i'm content to  
fx sunday see magnolia blossoming i'm dumb but take note / a bird i've never sung, a  
man w dog & gum boots. i'd kill him / but it can't happen / host companions; share  
walks, talk in dreams or sleep w

actually as if they hear me—give them lines because i'm not a vain egotist totally &  
anyway am so effing desolate & when i saw you in the video call after 15 years . . . it's  
because of silence, a dog barks & a leaf stirs against my glass.

are we in time still in touch w. this could be the most sensuous thing in history i roll  
consonants you neva heard of we're

together, me in the mirror & hand synch say who come 1<sup>st</sup> irrespective of. my  
prepositions i propose to if i may & think of any number between 0 &

i'll double it. miss the siren cos i'm so in luv w what to say to you. go gentle. how death  
is dormant, dominates god, everything horn in the dusk sky setting fraction of actual  
living slightly more than nothing or less a

chasm. ocean...

-

i caught her last breath  
on film.

my hands long have known  
labor.

i'm destitute, despicable  
in the sunshine,  
at the theatre.

i mis-perform,  
& when for the crescendo...

i fail, bear thorns, bees  
in my hair.

why should i be practical  
or a man of the people?

or a poet when i'm ill-fit  
for what's expected.

when i say i wander the desert lonely  
it's a stretch, at best  
an ill-advised  
swing; kick  
at the pricks.  
not just the bankers,  
moneymakers but

-

poetry is for softcocks,  
wankers in the closet  
& guys, we don't care  
what you think, but  
art liberates us from fictions.

i'm at war w the times  
& it's only the fear of painted devils  
stuffs the crack of morality,  
& prison. call it passion – my want  
of continence turns disaster.  
i don't care for guy fawkes,  
either, murder for a cause  
& the pissy wizz  
of shit fireworks.  
war is over.  
fulfilled.  
it is written  
i broke doors, glass  
to the sparks  
of carnival.

i wanted beauty.

i learnt my hatred  
in one room.

## becoming

the face indistinct composite says nothing but bluffs, a closed bud a violet the garden  
hung w starlight no-one sees, the trees undercut, shades between, the plane that glides  
the voided sky at Pisces.

call it digression, a slip in standards. my dna is 99% gorilla

2% banana, but we're not similar.

death of nations. heads rolling in the last flush of sickness. my bed, slant of sky, that  
narrow band ½ moon wide, am i dying for sure. the sins of mankind's mine 2 as much  
as gut ache is & indigestion is & fists that clutch the emptiness. the mind indolent. if i kill,  
it's clean like in the shower.

i'm not serious & you know & that makes me sad. [what does Sad look like; what does it  
feel like; what does it taste?] rip it up, regret it later; find sellotape & where to peel it  
back from. dig but don't come, rub w ringed fingers, the cheap metal makes you swell, &  
don't come, & tear the skin off my face & don't come. [what does Frustration look like.  
what does it feel like? happy, happy love that can't be quenched, boughs that won't  
shed]

**i, candy**

i sing for myself & you can do as you please but music doesn't change anything  
 but the murmurs of heart & the beat of the wild, wild — only my blood  
 knows & yours. it's enough. we could be a hit, a quartet; i'd thrum  
 bass strings & no-one knows me til i stop talking like a heat pump, a grief  
 -stricken pine on its last night. the next day

we might rail

against government, sonnet form & chainsaws & the day after that attack  
 liberal democrats, anyone who won't fight because they're stuck on academics  
 or science fiction. do not pump your fist unless you're prepared to use it, squat  
 on the square as tanks roll you. but that's bloody stupid —

to be anything, to name yourself, right? to feel exalted, to nail one hand to a cross  
 & look dumb when you can't do the other. what a fucking disappointment. —

when all the blood collects at our fingertips, the end of our noses & the face  
 powder white & the eyes blind like a statue's & the heart's biological function  
 brain feeder, & the brain a series of nerve endings, signals that no intelligence  
 can decipher.

bah

why should the aged pair stretch their limbs, descend the stairs every morning  
 take a piss & boil tea & put toast on? i'm dying, *did you know that?* did i tell you that  
 despite my rose complexion, my vigorous demeanour, i'm going soft, in the head  
 & i forget my raison d'être. pardon moi

but why should the dove give a shit, hang out for the scraps i toss as if it was  
 dependent, scourge of the garden, a peace offering, a disease? more importantly

the points of light between the wind-swept trees are fireflies blinking in the dark  
but it's winter.

**coldcase**

someone took my phone & now they're calling up my contacts pretending to be me.

i'd been in the bath all week head down, fixed on the white noise that's not me & no-one  
i've heard of, drunks long past the peak of happiness, seagulls on a loop,  
gannets that blitz the sea.

i think what it is to be that fish caught in the beak, what it means, gripped by the fist  
of your self  
consciousness.

i could take a stroll, inhale the frost, turn my head for no reason, pop. there on  
the pavement. that's the moment to believe in Fate. anyway

no-one knows who this caller is, except they sound almost identical to me.  
there's a catch in the voice that only the dog (an intelligent german shepherd)  
registers, who barks til someone calls the police.

when this person started to say some crazy shit, people got suspicious.  
my mate des for instance swears he felt a chill down the line when he asked how ada  
was.

the voice began to spasm, & he knew in his gut it wasn't me.



**fire**

if i was deaf & blind i'd write this poem for the thrill  
 of it, the fly on my lip, step across the void &  
 hold the light, buttercup to my skin, stripped.

who speaks against it, holds me, to colour, symbols  
 like crashed cars? all this i know hands tied  
 & a tongue that slakes your thigh.

i'd know the red camellia at the back of our garden  
 how it waves its flowers at me when the wind  
 blows. i'd know you like no-one else does with my limbs cut off.

i'd swallow the black smoke of your atrocities.  
 rapes. bear with you in darkness. torchéd animals.  
 knuckle the stone wall when i'm out walking.

i'd relieve myself on your shag pile carpet  
 or the chessboard linoleum. i'd feel the sting  
 of your flushed demeanour. yes. i'd walk

into it. the wild conflagration. oh help oh calamity  
 save us. you're in your furs right now at the coffee house  
 talking with a girlfriend, osculating the creamed pastry

from your gums.

**sign**

there's more chance that a bullet finds me than you  
crashing thru the glass feet first, but the dream  
repeats itself, babels in the corner, clings to it, has  
potential, coiled in its darkness, maybe sleeping. there are personal

animosities, loves, that circulate sickness, that breed  
vice, that cast us, egregious, marked, first born  
discontinued. when you wet yourself you feel  
simultaneously the clanged bell & the roots within you,

entrails, new dawnings; the universe Yea  
unfucked remakes itself & there is s/laughter, wild  
jubilation, collision of elements, of members  
restored, of lost limbs. wine on sundays. my hands

have sought you, nailed themselves, with anticipation  
have yielded, relented; have gestured like it is  
what it is &, have taken it upon themselves  
to demolish, to rubinate &, make the world in your image.

**contact**

A white butterfly follows us down the sun-dipped path by the green river.  
 light shreds the shade of flora—ferns; cabbage trees, palms in the languid air &  
 when they dance they're like our ancestors, arched across the endless curve of days

—

I write to be near you, for no reason, to be for no ultimate purpose, suffering, bored  
 a spirit of the 3rd circle torn by divine winds. if there's no god, make her up

Burn when it's cold. mouth incantatory vespers, let our myths mingle  
 circulate the veins of our corpulent spaces, the primo nightmare  
 of where we came from, the white-hot light. you step

The abysmal gap between banks, the untrodden dark  
 racked across the sky, the unmissable hole amongst the stars  
 that is yours

And mine . . . . .  
 which is like which is like which is kinda like which is like  
 nothing you want to talk about, because like it's kinda  
 null? the unwanted addition to the already-saturated

Market of sound, right

—

Shut up. listen.

be attentive. notice the difference. how many finger/s am i holding/up?  
 you say, I have lost my vision; i miss the furniture

because it's presence is palpable; the sun to me is dark & the way down  
& the way up is the same, etc

When i go up the escalator of a hospital or a department store  
it feels true. i am somewhere new & all the sick  
bric-a-brac corroborates the story

—

In the east the morning glory, pink & it's tuesday  
& it's good to be high in the bedroom leaning ur head  
on the cool condensation. i make eyes with a blackbird.  
today we are mute. today, also,

Is the equinox & everything is about to fall but doesn't.  
it just gets bigger & better. me & you  
outside! 12 hours from now we walk into the sunset  
but this isn't over

**superpower**

when i'm on the street i live, glow red, rubinate between  
two stones. killer horns / albatross  
wings. nothing can dislodge this

no bullet. on my bike it's the same when i piledrive leaves  
on the windy pavement. plough the rails on my train. scratch my name  
on your tombstone. i get nirvana

when i glide along the river with the violet shades of evening. when the light's  
perfected. there are green mountains you touch  
with the naked eye.

**scorpion**

you are the throb of a siren that sings Get Out.

Call The Fire Brigade.

you stinketh like a sulphurous match, a malevolent spirit

martyred. you go to the heart of me & when i breathe it is like unto mossed copper.

why mate when it's the death of you? dance & the climax a flashed

blade that severs.

you are cast into the night sky by a jealous god, set upon the flamed wheel.

your brain is the cluster of ants on the kitchen table.

i want to feel your sting split my cells. to be dying & to know it, & to know i am the living  
coursing darkness, o death i'm yours.

tattoo my skin with your love. with your violence.

i pick you up by the tail, you poor black darling.

i like your viciousness because it's excessive. i get it like the mouse does.

i could crush you w my slippered heel.

**plane crashes in the mountains**

where the full stop lands is where you are  
a boulder in the white wonderland. it's no good  
arguing about it. you could shake my hand

with a blade, shot or baseball bat. talk  
the talk. walk diplomacy. use an interpreter  
with no ear for the poetical. i'm going

places even if it's sideways  
or back. i don't talk your language  
but i'll piss my name on the snow  
of your country. dispose my empties.

if i'm killed for it, what's that to me?  
the violence of getting taken out, stopped  
short—gone: & who cares what was on  
some stupid bucketlist.

because when ur done there's no-one  
apart from you & the spirit's off  
to mondo bizarro—ideas  
zeros. minuses. unreal city.

i have not come here to kneel but to be  
struck down & later, when all this shit's  
under the bridge, forgotten.

**travel's good for the mind**

i too disappeared, trailed off  
watched the cherry sky, high  
waves blossoming like sails

apparently. i am not  
nowhere to be seen  
impossible. if i send

postcard still i'm  
uncorroborated  
sliced out of

jib. let the white dust  
be parched  
body parts. when i fall you're

gone but infer  
my absence. the loquat's  
snatched a power line.

the moon's  
light bends it towards me.  
should i be tied whip

lashed for what i've done not  
done thought of or  
strung?

up feet

first. I'd sooner starve than  
swallow, suffer these holy

i-pod, life-bearing

luxuries.

grateful for the minutes

the Xtras

i live. you think i'm

done but, never. sucked

in shoved

down up-

cycled re-live it w

m/self i might have

drowned in the bath but no

hands held me

**nature**

i'm remote from everything that disconnects me.

at the park, the arboreal grounds of university. i say good evening.  
smile at the child on the grass who arranges, in the shape of a heart,  
decapitated black-eyed susans. she looks up, says *no*

actually. i stroke my palm against the bark of a pine high as the sky  
tower, this mindless, sightless monster, so quiet & so gentle.  
one of its kind lost a limb in lightning. nearby was a car with the numberplate  
*lethyl*. i wish it had gotten crushed. art laughs darkly at such coincidence.

i've seen the driver, by the bye, what a dud—the onanism  
of it, personalised; like he was stroking his chainsaw  
some treasure he keeps locked in the shed\* Save me

from these geniuses, money-men, tech women. we swallow  
when the market crashes. i prefer the splash of bodies disposed of but evil  
follows evil as postTruth follows ordinary lies\*

i fall in love one day with the leaves i kick in the forest, those dead embryos,  
cracked eggshells. the crab who eats her babies like popcorn.  
i go mad if i don't shake her off.

**when you're dead there's time to think**

what comes my way goes thru me, like when you step on my grave.

i'm opened, glazed with light. part of you remains but u don't notice.

i bear what is said, what is presumed & chew a long long time.

i don't write it down. i am not the subject or the object of your discourse,

your wicked temper, when you twist the stalks of live roses. i am not the victim

of your terrorism, eye-deep in water. i wave & you wave back.

you think you must know me somewhere but you don't.

**daylight**

you hear a dog bark  
 someone cough, water  
 sprinkling the basin. —

this, consecutive; more or less  
 simultaneous. you don't notice.  
 then silence.

a plane cruised at altitude  
 remote constellations; the ear  
 traced it precisely

as the mind perceived it.  
 there's no sun  
 when you're not here,

a moon in libra—wistful  
 what never happened,  
 remembered when lungs fill.

2

when the train emerges again into daylight, sun splashed hills & straggled houses,  
 the man opposite is smiling at your reflection: it's glorious to finger the moment.  
*one of us must bend.* 3 i dreamt i was 80,

on the deck. i'd misplaced my shades & my glass was half empty.  
 the liquor store was shut for good friday & easter sunday; tomorrow  
 i dive like any other mug. when i woke up i was shamboiling the aisle  
 of bottle-O with an anzac in my buttonhole, sporting a colostomy bag. i woke up

grieving, my head leaning out the window, heckling the brass, the christmas carolers. i was up Sinai lecturing the multitude on the spiritual decrepitude of postTruth, the pleasure machine, the burlesqued emotion; an alien intelligence that hums in the style of You when you're ripped. when you're hurt. when i come to i'm on the engine, rocked by the frictive movement, watching the houses wave sparkling like streamers.

**aeroplane**

i raise my head on instinct, an auto  
 reactive movement: the fear  
 of bad posture? an antonymous  
 gesture—a dig at the multi-headed  
 machine bowed before me? you choose:  
 google clues for a current location.  
 i could tell you but i'm too high  
 to spot the colour of my shoes.  
 meanwhile tho,

i condescend to urinate; behold  
 the waning sky, arched flora, an owl  
 with its back to the camera; it won't  
 defer the moment, transmogrified  
 to a captured memory, 4D'd—  
 out there, but not really.

at the top of the road, the sky fell  
 several km. an aeroplane  
 crawled like beetle, sleek white.  
 i could have held it, flung  
 with the wind, got home before it.  
 of course, this is all  
 talk, imagination; actually  
 this fraught metaled thing, winged  
 & clinical knows its own end  
 lives for the head rush, the ultra  
 unbelievable  
 amyl nitrate

minute flitting like its sisters  
amidst the complex  
algebraic  
branches.

**against nihilism**

my heart's the size of your fist is  
the size of my mouth is—

i'm dark.  
where my teeth was—

i lie on my back til dawn.

when the cold air stirs & leaves  
rattle the long street  
i'm fine,

course your fingers  
thru. diaphanous, i weigh  
the orbit of mercury. neptune  
annihilation. the ache is wedged  
in memory. indispensable.  
like thorn

rose. crack  
to the jaw. i'm pared. hands  
planed into clubs i bludgeon with.  
my gut is stone. you could pitch it  
w a fork. the note's dead

still born.  
i get up when i'm kicked.  
mop the floor

w you.

i'm flower. steel

nerved, keen to.—lose

my head &

not know. bow

to the unknown,

say yes to

**beaten up, not drunk**

i push for you, cut across the scavenger crowd,  
 use my wings like  
 elbows, rush  
 the ticket booth, the misanthropic  
 vendor gaslit, wrapped in  
 perspex. haloed

winter:  
 lost my grandmother to pleurisy or pneumonia.  
 don't remember which. i'm  
 hit, will eat  
 pig squeal, wholeheartedly  
 anything—that interests me, that  
 horrifies, presents itself  
 ad lib  
 my limitations. i'm king

but what are you?  
 ploughing the field  
 setting the table.

what a scandal it is to outlive your children,  
 to live past 30  
 when u said you'd kill ur self, when u said —  
*someone's* got to.

i'm here now because of willpower.  
 i have suppressed the urge to be  
 no-one, to do

nothing, to be only what you do  
to me. i am not a machine.  
you wink at me in the bedroom but you're not human  
or even friendly

.....

. . . deep in the year & the crickets are still thinking.  
i can hear them.  
they are thoughtful, mesmerised  
by their own breathing.  
they are not dying  
they are not relinquishing.

when they stop, the air is ponderous.  
like the minted head of Tiberius  
you weigh in your hand.

when i shut my eyes I can hear the sea heaving,  
expiating beneath me.

**the blue curtains**

the curtains are still there  
unwanted. had clashed  
with your jumper  
no longer with us. i'm not

either, have brain waves  
i shouldn't, that are  
incommensurate with  
accepted standards  
of living. i'd have you

share it with me.  
don't let me go, in a hospital  
bed, gagged by an oxygen  
mask, serviced by indifferent  
staff. don't let me fall into the hands of

placid bureaucrats, officials  
with the morals  
of robots, the legally  
entitled, shit-wipes like in  
Kafka. i'd lie

on the pavement,  
admire the red  
rivulets, the bland 2-tone  
psychedelia; claim  
the land, chained to the iron rails

some red-neck brother  
erected against us.

i'm torn between burial  
cremation, stranger  
than fact; i belong  
where you are, in a

dark corner, a lamp  
you switch

**avalanche**

i

when you name something you demystify it, break taboo.  
even 'Tiger' is emasculate compared to what it is.  
in this way, too, devils are conquered.

ii

when you  
liberate the hands from the tyrant mind, unwind  
the cloth, there is god.  
not anywhere

iii

in the soft utterance of water  
in the tread upon  
wet grass & the brush of yellow corn  
in the horns you clasp, the elm barks  
which are nameless,  
there it is

iv

it's not a vision  
like in a pool or when you're high  
in the mountains, but a shadow  
at dusk.

you never get warm after that

v

it's there  
 in snowdrift, the way it  
 blows, fingers  
 your hair, hot  
 breath, a spasm

as of bowels fathomed

vi

when you fled the trauma in the carpark  
 you lost a shoe.

glass sparkled under a lampost.  
 bodies like moons formed  
 rose, blew. your feet

blister in the hard  
 anfractuous  
 sunshine. dapple the turquoise sea.

vii

there are swings you take  
 blind, sighs hovering  
 trees, flowers poised  
 beneath you, rusted

creak of slow iron  
 you sleep to.

viii

your teacher said there are no stupid questions  
so you say: who invented existence?  
someone answered God, which is so lame,  
& someone else groaned.

(that was me. at the back on the end  
by the window)

ix  
after this it's a breeze. you roll  
downhill. sit back  
& relax while we drive. watch  
the staid, familiar  
landmarks, bars  
fruit machines  
for the terminally frazzled.  
smashed

you know what dying is  
but you can't explain it.  
it's related to living, you say.  
a truism but not  
obvious.

life is the antagonist of death.  
(i said that. there was an embarrassed silence  
& someone coughed

& coughed . . .

& wouldn't stop—not  
when i thumped their back, not  
when i cracked their head on the table  
not even when i called the cops.

how one suffers these blasted humiliations)

x  
you jump off a rolling train & run run  
& wave &  
no-one understands  
but some bloke in the carriage  
thinks it's drugs  
or woman problems.

xi  
they dug you from the snow  
thousands of years later  
haloed, illuminated  
by the ice-cool intellect  
that spans the sky like a new  
disinterred heaven.

how beautiful!  
(that was me who said that & i kept on  
because no other words would come)

## Conclusion

Eliot lived his life even if he didn't love it; he engaged purposefully in the temporal world—of work, art; and, naturally, in the process, permitted himself the occasional sensual pleasure—a happy second marriage, for example, and the comic relief of light verse. He “does not find escape from the frustrations and problems of the modern secular [world]” (Woelfel 129)—because, short of becoming a desert-rambling hermit, or forming (or becoming part of) a self-sufficient community, as Lawrence at one time had contemplated, this was impossible, and probably, for Eliot, undesirable: his whole art depended on the arduous journey of body and spirit; and it is difficult to visualise Eliot outside of the ‘cultural heartland’ (or wasteland) of the big city, with its dirty glamour, and the “Sweet Thames” that runs softly through it while he sings his song.<sup>229</sup> Eliot's body traversed the hard road while his soul cried for the release into the spirit world, a tension which is perfectly maintained in his *Ariel Poems* and *Ash Wednesday*, a ‘halfway house’ where the body begins to disintegrate, and grows wings. This process is just about complete (in his poetry) by the time we arrive at “Little Gidding” and encounter the wandering ghost on a street in war-time London (2.25–96). This is the end of desire, the tensions and frustrations of the (modern) world—body resolved into spirit. It marked, too, a clear division between his life and his work. Eliot, ultimately, chose work (his art, his religion), which for him became a pilgrimage, over ordinary life: “the poet-dramatist slips away from the woman (Emily Hale) with whom he had walked the beach” (Gordon 238)—as the Trojan hero Aeneas had done, abandoning *his* love, Dido, on the Libyan shore for a greater, quasi religious, glory: the founding of Rome. Eliot's love for Emily is, like Dante's love for Beatrice, transmuted into a ‘higher’ love—a love whose object is the “Lady of silences” (*Ash Wednesday* 2.25): that is, spiritual love—in the garden “Where all loves end” (2.34). And where all creativity ends: Leavis noted the irony of Eliot's denial of life and human creativity in his “seeking to establish an apprehension of the supremely Real . . . by the use of his gifts as a poet”—in the *Quartets*, an exploration of the unknown—his “magnum opus” (*Thought, Words and Creativity* 17).

---

<sup>229</sup> “Sweet Thames, run softly till I end my song (*The Waste Land* 183). Eliot had ‘borrowed’ this line from Spenser's *Prothalamion*: Sweete Themmes runne softly, till I end my Song”.

Lawrence's awareness of the unknown and unknowable, however, unlike Eliot's, is at the same time an exaltation of creative life, and inseparable from an acceptance of responsibility as inhering, necessarily, in the human individual's self-gathered, delicately intent and unanalysably intuitive wholeness. (18–19)

For Lawrence, art and life emerged from the same soil—two knotted branches from the one root. He maintained the tension—not only in his art and metaphysics, but also, willingly or not, in his personal life: the “tension between the self's need for restorative isolation and the conflicting drive to be engaged with others in some form of purposeful collective activity . . .” (Smith 152).<sup>230</sup> Lawrence suffered, as a result of these frustrations, the demands of living in the physical world, the inevitable confrontations, the conflict between the body and spirit, which he religiously exhibited in his art, most lovingly, perhaps, in his poetry—or in his prose that most resembles poetry. The tension had to be maintained, for without it the cosmos would collapse. There would be nothing, but a spirit world, an imaginary heaven.

I have, in this thesis, endeavoured to maintain a tension myself: that of the dual concepts of body and spirit, in particular as they are invoked in the poetry of Eliot and Lawrence, the interplay and exchanges between them (body and spirit), and the potential means of their resolution—a holy ghost, an intersection of time and no time, the fusion between what is apparent and what is ‘actual’; a meeting point where two worlds collide, or maintain their polarity. Eliot's poetry thrived on the distinction between body and spirit, desire and dissociation; the ‘ostensible’ realities of life in the flesh, the spiritual vacancy where nothing connects with nothing, countered by the awesome reality that is God, consummated by death in the flesh, and the end of desire; where “the fire and the rose are one” (“Little Gidding” 5.46). Lawrence, on the other hand, laboured to maintain the unity of body and spirit, to deny, in fact, that one exists without the other.

---

<sup>230</sup> Smith's comment is made in the context of Lawrence's novel *Kangaroo*.

This difference between Eliot and Lawrence manifested itself throughout their poetry and prose, and in the way they lived their lives. I have alluded, for example, to Eliot's negative depictions of the body in his poetry, and to his religious resolve, as expressed in his poetry, to abandon the pursuit of easy comforts, of happiness itself, even. There was, throughout his poetry, this antipathy towards the body and the life of the flesh. He was always, one senses, walking away, disowning the moment, the sensual reality of life now. Eliot wanted (in his poetry, at least) to obliterate his Self—to scuttle the silent seas, to be disassembled, consumed. There is something mortifying and life-denying in Eliot's spirituality (in Christianity), in his desire to flee desire, to master it, to transcend the cares of the here and now. One wants to ask: why the self-torture, the mortification, the (spiritual) denial of life? This attitude is the polar opposite to Lawrence's acceptance of life as it is—all of it: the suffering, the humiliation, and the glory.

---

There is, I believe, in my poems presented here, something of the spirit of Eliot and Lawrence, if not the style and execution. To have attempted to write like either of them would have, of course, been an artistic failure, however skillfully managed. I have written my poems (needless to say?) without considering the poetic mannerisms of Eliot and Lawrence. I am deeply influenced by them, intimate with their styles and sensibilities, and they feel modern, current: the material and spiritual conditions that animated their poetry are with me today, transmuted into a new world more ugly and more fearful than either of them might have imagined. But my poems, whatever their defects, originate from my own Self and are produced as naturally as the scrawls on a sheet of paper made by the hand.

## Bibliography

- Ackroyd, Peter. *T. S. Eliot*. Hamish Hamilton, 1984.
- Adelman, Gary. "The Man Who Rode Away: What D. H. Lawrence Means to Today's Readers." *Triquarterly*, no. 107/108, 2000, pp. 508–536.
- Aldington, Richard. "To Frieda Lawrence." Introduction (1932). *Apocalypse*, by D. H. Lawrence. Penguin Books, 1981, pp. v-xxvi.
- . "Introduction to Last Poems." (1932). *The Complete Poems of D. H. Lawrence*, edited by Vivian de Sola Pinto, and F. Warren Roberts, Viking Press, 1971, pp. 591–598.
- Alighieri, Dante. *La Divina Commedia*, edited by Giovanni Fallani and Silvio Zennaro, Newton Compton, 2013.
- . *Paradise*. Translated and introduced by Mark Musa, Penguin Books, 1986.
- Andrewes, Lancelot. *Seventeen Sermons on the Nativity*. Griffith, Farran, Okeden & Welsh, 1989.
- Armstrong, Tim. *Modernism, Technology and the Body": A Cultural Study*. Cambridge University Press, 1998.
- Bailey, Amanda and Mario DiGangi, editors. *Affect Theory and Early Modern Texts: Politics, Ecologies and Form*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2017.
- Banerjee, A., editor. *D. H. Lawrence's Poetry: Demon Liberated: a Collection of Primary and Secondary Material*. MacMillan, 1990.
- Barry, Peter. *Beginning Theory: An Introduction to Literary and Cultural Theory*. Manchester University Press, 1995.

- Beal, Anthony, editor. *D. H. Lawrence: Selected Literary Criticism*. Mercury Books, 1961.
- Bell, Michael. "An Analytic Note on Myth in Modernism: the Case of T. S. Eliot." *Religion and Myth in T. S. Eliot's Poetry*, edited by Scott Freer and Michael Bell, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2016, pp. 65–76.
- . "The Idea of the Aesthetic." *The Edinburgh Companion to D. H. Lawrence and the Arts*, edited by Catherine Brown and Susan Reid, Edinburgh University Press, 2021, pp. 11–22.
- . "Lawrence and Modernism." *The Cambridge Companion to D. H. Lawrence*, edited by Anne Fernihough, Cambridge University Press, 2001, pp. 179–196.
- . "The Tree of Life: D. H. Lawrence, Peter Wohleben and Richard Powers." *Études Lawrenciennes*, no. 53, 2021. <https://doi.org/10.4000/lawrence.2540>.
- Bellour, Leila. "Gender Identity and the Crisis of Masculinity in T. S. Eliot's 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock.'" *El-Tawassol: Langues et Littératures*, vol. 37, 2014, pp. 7–27.
- Benson, Fiona. *Vertigo & Ghost*. Penguin Random House, 2019.
- Bergonzi, Bernard, editor. *Four Quartets: A Selection of Critical Essays*. Macmillan, 1969.
- The Bible*. Authorized King James Version with Apocrypha, Oxford University Press, 1997.
- Blackmur, R. P. *Language As Gesture*. George Allen & Unwin, 1961.
- Blake, William. *Complete Writings*, edited by Geoffrey Keynes. Oxford University Press, 1972.

Bloom, Harold, editor. *Till I End My Song: A Gathering of Last Poems*. Harper-Collins, 2010.

—. *T. S. Eliot's The Waste Land*. Chelsea House Publishers, 1986.

Bouche, Benjamin. "At the Limits of Species: D. H. Lawrence's Critical Anthropomorphism in "Fish." *Études Lawrenciennes*, no. 53, 2021.  
<https://doi.org/10.4000/lawrence.2805>. Accessed 26 January 2023.

Boyle, Richard. "D. H. Lawrence: A case of not being in love with Ceylon." *The Sunday Times*, November 01, 2015.  
<https://www.sundaytimes.lk/151101/plus/d-h-lawrence-a-case-of-not-being-in-love-with-ceylon-169490.html>

Bratcher, Dennis. "Body and Soul: Greek and Hebraic Tensions in Scripture: Thoughts on the Di-/Trichotomous Debate." *The Voice*, March 25, 2013.  
<http://www.crivoice.org/bodysoul.html>

Braunias, Steve. "D. H. Lawrence in NZ." *News Room*, August 15, 2022.  
<https://www.newsroom.co.nz/dh-lawrence-in-new-zealand?amp=1>

Bricout, Shirley. "Biblical Aesthetics." *The Edinburgh Companion to D. H. Lawrence and the Arts*, edited by Catherine Brown and Susan Reid, Edinburgh University Press, 2021, pp. 90–101.

Brooker, Jewel Spears. "T. S. Eliot." *American Poets, 1880–1945, Dictionary of Literary Biography*, vol. 45, edited by Peter Quartermain, Gale Research, 1986, pp. 153–181.

Brooker, Jewel Spears and M. Thomas Inge, editors. *T. S. Eliot: The Contemporary Reviews*. Cambridge University Press, 2004.

Brown, Catherine. "D.H. Lawrence: Icon." *The Edinburgh Companion to D. H. Lawrence and the Arts*. Edinburgh University Press, 2021, pp. 426–441.

—. "Finding God in D.H. Lawrence's Poetry", 2019.

<https://catherinebrown.org/finding-god-in-dh-lawrences-poetry/>.

Brown, Catherine and Susan Reid, editors. *The Edinburgh Companion to D. H. Lawrence and the Arts*. Edinburgh University Press, 2021.

Brown, David. "Body as Graced or Vile: Tensions in the Christian Vision." *The Body and the Arts*, edited by Corinne Saunders et al., Palgrave MacMillan, 2009.

Burack, Charles. "The Religious Initiation of the Reader in D. H. Lawrence's *The Rainbow*." *Mosaic: a Journal for the Interdisciplinary Study of Literature*, vol. 33, no. 3, 2000, pp. 165–182.

Bynum, Caroline Walker. *The Resurrection of the Body in Western Christianity, 200–1336*. Columbia University Press, 1995.

Cauchi, Francesca. "Romantic Scepticism and the Descent into Nihilism in T. S. Eliot's 'Burnt Norton.'" *Journal of Language, Literature and Culture*, vol. 64, no. 1, 2017, pp. 62–77, doi:10.1080/20512856.2016.1221619.

Champion, Margrét Gunnarsdóttir. "Technologies of Affect in D. H. Lawrence's 'Lady Chatterley's Lover.'" *Nordic Journal of English Studies*, vol 19 (5), 2020, pp. 155-179.

Chaudhuri, Amit. *D. H. Lawrence and Difference: Postcoloniality and the Poetry of the Present*. Oxford University Press, 2003.

Collini, Stefan. *Common Reading: Critics, Historians, Publics*. Oxford University Press, 2008.

- Colón, Susan, E. "‘This Twittering World’: T. S. Eliot and Acedia." *Religion & Literature*, vol. 43, no. 2, 2011, pp. 69–90.
- Cooper, John Xiros. *The Cambridge Introduction to T. S. Eliot*. Cambridge University Press, 2006.
- . *T. S. Eliot and the Ideology of Four Quartets*. Cambridge University Press, 1995.
- Crawford, Robert. *Eliot After The Waste Land*. Farrar, Status and Giroux, 2022.
- . *Young Eliot: From St. Louis to The Waste Land*. Vintage, 2015.
- Cuda, Anthony. "T. S. Eliot." *A Companion to Modernist Poetry*, edited by David Chintz and Gail McDonald, Wiley Blackwell, 2014, pp. 450–463.
- Dick, Susan and Declan Kiberd, editors. *Essays for Richard Ellmann: Omnium Gatherum*. McGill-Queen's University Press, 1989.
- Dirda, Michael. Review of *Eliot After ‘The Waste Land’* by Robert Crawford. *The Washington Post*, 28 September 2022.  
<https://www.washingtonpost.com/books/2022/09/28/eliot-wasteland-private-life/>
- Dix, Carol. *D. H. Lawrence and Women*. The Macmillan Press, 1980.
- Domestico, Anthony. "The Twice-Broken World: Karl Barth, T. S. Eliot, and the Poetics of Christian Revelation." *Religion & Literature*, vol. 44, no. 3, 2012, pp. 1–26.
- Dunn, Allen. "Mixed Messages: The Religions of Modernism." *Symploke*, vol. 27, no. 1–2, 2019, pp. 375–377, doi:10.5250/symploke.27.1-2.0375.
- Dyer, Geoff, editor. *The Bad Side of Books: Selected Essays: D. H. Lawrence*. New York Review Books, 2019.
- . *Life With a Capital L: D. H. Lawrence*. Penguin, 2019.

- Eagleton, Terry. *Reason, Faith, and Revolution: Reflections on the God Debate*. Yale University Press, 2009.
- Eliot, T. S. *After Strange Gods: A Primer of Modern Heresy*. Faber and Faber, 1934.
- . *The Complete Prose of T. S. Eliot: The Critical Edition*. Volume 4, “English Lion”, 1930-1933, edited by Jason Harding and Ronald Schuchard, John Hopkins University Press, 2021.
- . *The Complete Prose of T. S. Eliot: The Critical Edition*. Volume 6, “The War Years”, 1940-1946, edited by Jason Harding and Ronald Schuchard, John Hopkins University Press, 2021.
- . *The Family Reunion*. Faber and Faber, 1939.
- . *For Lancelot Andrewes: Essays on Style and Order*. Faber and Faber, 1970.
- . *The Letters of T. S. Eliot*. Volume 4, 1928-1929, edited by Valerie Eliot and Hugh Haughton, Yale University Press, 2013.
- . *The Idea of a Christian Society and Other Writings*. Faber, 1982.
- . *Murder in the Cathedral*. Faber and Faber, 1938.
- . *The Poems of T. S. Eliot. Volume 1, Collected and Uncollected Poems*, edited by Christopher Ricks and Jim McCue, Faber and Faber, 2015.
- . *The Poems of T. S. Eliot. Volume 2, Practical Cats and Further Verses*, edited by Christopher Ricks and Jim McCue, Faber and Faber, 2015.
- . *The Sacred Wood: Essays on Poetry and Criticism*. Methuen, 1960.
- . *Selected Essays*. Faber and Faber, 1953.
- . *The Three Voices of Poetry*. Cambridge University Press, 1955.
- . *Selected Prose*, edited by John Hayward, Peregrine Books, 1963.

- . *The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism: Studies in the Relation of Criticism to Poetry in England*. Faber and Faber, 1933.
- Ellman, Maud. "Eliot's Abjection." *Abjection, Melancholia and Love: The Work of Julia Kristeva*, edited by John Fletcher and Andrew Benjamin, Taylor & Francis Group, 2012.
- Feinstein, Elaine. *Lawrence's Women: The Intimate Life of D. H. Lawrence*. Harper Collins, 1993.
- Fernihough, Anne, editor. *The Cambridge Companion to D. H. Lawrence*. Cambridge University Press, 2001.
- Fiddes, Paul S. "Versions of the Wasteland: The Sense of an Ending in Theology and Literature in the Modern Period." *Modernism, Christianity and Apocalypse*, edited by Erik Tønning, et al., vol. 8, 2015, pp. 29–52.  
doi:10.1163/9789004282285\_003.
- Fletcher, John Gould. "A Modern Evangelist." *D. H. Lawrence's Poetry: Demon Liberated: a Collection of Primary and Secondary Material*, edited by A. Banerjee. Macmillan, 1990, pp. 81–84.
- Ford, Mark. Review. "I Gotta Use Words." *London Review of Books*, vol. 38, no. 16, 11 August 2016. [www.lrb.co.uk/the-paper/v38/n16/mark-ford/i-gotta-use-words](http://www.lrb.co.uk/the-paper/v38/n16/mark-ford/i-gotta-use-words). Accessed 28 January 2020.
- Freer, Scott. "'Man enough for Damnation': Ennui and Acedia in T. S. Eliot's Poetry." *Religion and Myth in T. S. Eliot's Poetry*, edited by Scott Freer and Michael Bell, Cambridge Scholars, 2016, pp. 77–97.

- Freer, Scott and Michael Bell, editors. *Religion and Myth in T. S. Eliot's Poetry*. Cambridge Scholars, 2016.
- Gallup, Donald Clifford, editor. *T. S. Eliot and Ezra Pound: Collaborators in Letters*. New Haven, Conn. H. W. Wenning/C. A. Stonehill, 1970.
- Gardner, Helen. *The Art of T. S. Eliot*. The Cresset Press, 1968.
- Geary, Matthew. *T. S. Eliot and the Mother*. Routledge, 2021.
- Gilbert, Sandra. *Acts of Attention: The Poems of D. H. Lawrence*. Cornell University Press, 1972.
- . "Apocalypse Now (and then). Or D. H. Lawrence and the Swan in the Electron." *The Cambridge Companion to D. H. Lawrence*, edited by Anne Fernihough, Cambridge University Press, 2001, 235–250.
- Gillard, Barry. "Lancelot Andrewes and T. S. Eliot's 'Journey of the Magi.'" *Quadrant*, Vol. LXV, number 12, no. 582, December 2021, p.p 99–101.
- Glicksberg, Charles I. "The Poetry of D. H. Lawrence." *New Mexico Quarterly*, vol. 18, no. 3, 1948, pp. 289–303.
- Goldman, Emma. *Anarchism and Other Essays*. Dover Publications, 1969.
- Gordon, Lyndall. *The Hyacinth Girl: T. S. Eliot's Hidden Muse*. Virago, 2022.
- Graves, Robert. *The Greek Myths 1*. Penguin, 1955.
- Gregg, Melissa and Gregory J. Seigworth. "An Inventory of Shimmers." *The Affect Theory Reader*, edited by Melissa Gregg and Gregory J. Seigworth, Duke University Press, 2010.

- Gregory, Horace. "The Poetry of D. H. Lawrence." *Lawrence's Poetry: Demon Liberated: a Collection of Primary and Secondary Material*, edited by A. Banerjee, Macmillan, 1990, 132–147.
- Griffin, Roger. *Modernism and Fascism: The Sense of a Beginning under Mussolini and Hitler*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2007.
- Gutierrez, Donald. "The Ancient Imagination of D. H. Lawrence." *Twentieth Century Literature*, vol. 27, no. 2, 1981, pp. 178–196. doi:10.2307/441138.
- H. D. *Collected Poems, 1912–1944*, edited by Louis L. Martz, New Directions, 1983.
- Hamalian, Leo. *D. H. Lawrence and Nine Women Writers*. Associated University Presses, 1996.
- Hammad, Iman Morshed. "The Journey from the Inferno to the Purgatory: Eliot's Religious Odyssey." *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, vol. 6, no. 6, 2016, pp. 1149–1156. doi:10.17507/tpis.0606.03.
- Hazlitt, William, editor and translator. *The Table Talk of Martin Luther*. London: George Bell and Sons, 1895.
- Hensher, Philip. "Over the Rainbow: D. H. Lawrence's Search For a New Way of Life." <https://spectator.com.au/2021/05/the-great-rule-breaker/>
- Hough, Graham. "Imagism and its Consequences." *T. S. Eliot's The Waste Land*, edited by Harold Bloom, Chelsea House, 1986, 33–53.
- Ingersoll, Earl G. "Gender and Language in *Sons and Lovers*." *The Critical Response to D. H. Lawrence*, edited by Jan Pilditch, Greenwood Press, 2001, pp. 52–60.
- James, Clive. *The Metropolitan Critic: Non-Fiction 1968–1973*. Picador, 1994.
- James, David. *Modernism and Close Reading*. Oxford University Press, 2020.

- Janik, Del Ivan. "D. H. Lawrence's 'Future Religion': the Unity of *Last Poems*." *The Critical Response to D. H. Lawrence*, edited by Jan Pilditch, Greenwood Press, 2001, pp. 297–310.
- Jefferson, Ann and David Robey, editors. *Modern Literary Theory, a Comparative Introduction*. Batsford, 1982.
- Jenner, Katherine. *Christian Symbolism*. A. C. McClurg & Co, 1910.
- Jones, Bethan. *The Last Poems of D. H. Lawrence: Shaping a Late Style*. Ashgate, 2010.
- Kalnins, Mara. Introduction. *D. H. Lawrence: Apocalypse And Other Writings on Revelation*, edited by Mara Kalnins, Cambridge University press, 1980, pp. 3–36.
- Keats, John. *The Letters of John Keats*, edited by Robert Gittings. Oxford University Press, 1975.
- . *Selections From Keats: Poetry and Prose*, edited by John Earnshaw, Methuen & Co., 1949.
- Kenner, Hugh. "Into Our First World." *Four Quartets: A Selection of Critical Essays*, edited by Bernard Bergonzi, Macmillan, 1969, pp. 168–196.
- Kermode, Frank. "Bearing Eliot's Reality." Review of *T. S. Eliot* by Peter Ackroyd, Published on Thu 27 Sep 1984.  
<https://www.theguardian.com/books/1984/sep/27/biography.peterackroyd>
- Kessler, Jasgha. "D. H. Lawrence's Primitivism." *Texas Studies in Literature and Language*, vol. 5, issue 4, 1964, pp. 467–488.
- Kirkham, Michael. "D. H. Lawrence's Last Poems." *The D. H. Lawrence Review*, vol. 5, no. 2, 1972, pp. 97–120. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/44233390>.

- Lamos, Colleen. "The Love Song of T. S. Eliot: Elegiac Homoeroticism in the Early Poetry." *Gender, Desire and Sexuality in T. S. Eliot*, edited by Cassandra Laity and Nancy K. Gish, Cambridge University Press, 2004, pp. 23–42.
- Lawless, E. J. "Woman as Abject: Resisting Cultural and Religious Myths That Condone Violence against Women." *Western Folklore*, Vol. 62, No. 4, 2003, pp. 237–269.
- Lawrence, D. H. *Apocalypse*. Viking Press, 1982.
- . *The Complete Poems of D. H. Lawrence*, edited and Introduced by Vivian de Sola Pinto and Warren Roberts, Viking Press, 1971.
- . *David*. Martin Secker, 1930.
- . *Fantasia of the Unconscious and Psychoanalysis and the Unconscious*. Heinemann, 1961.
- . *Kangaroo*. Cambridge University Press, 1994.
- . *Lady Chatterley's Lover*. Penguin, 2008.
- . *The Letters of D. H. Lawrence. Volume 1: September 1901–May 1913*, edited by James T. Boulton, Cambridge University Press, 1979.
- . *The Letters of D. H. Lawrence. Volume 2: June 1913–October 1916*, edited by James T. Boulton, Cambridge University Press, 1981.
- . *The Letters of D. H. Lawrence. Volume 3: October 1916–June 1921*, edited by George J. Zytaruk & James T. Boulton & Andrew Robertson, Cambridge University Press, 1984.

- . *The Letters of D. H. Lawrence. Volume 4: June 1921–March 1924*, edited by Warren Roberts, James T. Boulton & Elizabeth Mansfield, Cambridge University Press, 1987.
- . *Life With a Capital L*, edited by Geoff Dyer, Penguin, 2019.
- . *Mornings in Mexico*. Penguin, 1986.
- . *Movements in European History*. Oxford University Press, 1971.
- . *Phoenix I: The Posthumous Papers of D. H. Lawrence*. Heinemann, 1936.
- . *Phoenix II: Uncollected, Unpublished and Other Prose Works by D. H. Lawrence*. Heinemann, 1968.
- . *The Plumed Serpent*. Wordsworth, 1995.
- . *The Prussian Officer*. Penguin, 1945.
- . *The Rainbow*. Penguin, 1949.
- . *Selected Essays*, introduced by Richard Aldington, Penguin, 1950.
- . *Sketches of Etruscan Places And Other Italian Essays*, edited by Simonetta De Filippis, Cambridge University Press, 1992.
- . *Sons and Lovers*, edited by Helen Baron and Carl Baron, Cambridge University Press, 1992.
- . *Twilight in Italy and Sea and Sardinia*. Heinemann, 1968.
- . *The Virgin and the Gypsy and Other Stories*. Heinemann, 1988.
- . *The White Peacock*. Penguin, 1971.
- . *The Woman Who Rode Away and Other Stories*. Penguin, 1996.
- Lawrence, Frieda. *Not I, but the Wind*. Cedric Chives, 1973.
- Leavis, F. R. *The Common Pursuit*. Penguin, 1952.

- . *D. H. Lawrence: Novelist*. Chatto & Windus, 1955.
- . *The Living Principle: English as a Discipline of Thought*. Chatto & Windus, 1975.
- . *Thought, Words and Creativity: Art and Thought in Lawrence*. Chatto & Windus, 1976.
- Leitch, Vincent, B. "T. S. Eliot's Poetry of Religious Desolation." *South Atlantic Bulletin*, vol. 44, no. 2, 1979, pp. 35–44, doi:10.2307/3198931.
- Levenson, Michael. *Modernism*. Yale University Press, 2011.
- Lockerd, Benjamin G. *T. S. Eliot and Christian Tradition*, edited by Lockerd, Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2014.
- . "T. S. Eliot & Christopher Dawson on Religion and Culture."  
<https://theimaginativeconservative.org/2022/01/ts-eliot-christopher-dawson-religion-culture-benjamin-lockerd.html>.
- Lowell, Amy. "A New English Poet." *D. H. Lawrence's Poetry: Demon Liberated: a Collection of Primary and Secondary Material*, edited by A. Banerjee, Macmillan, 1990, 85–91.
- Luther, Martin. *Martin Luther's Table Talk*, edited by Henry F. French (abridged), Fortress Press, 2017.
- MacDiarmid, Laurie J. *T. S. Eliot's Civilized Savage: Religious Eroticism and Poetics*. Routledge, 2003.
- MacDonald, A. A. et al., (editors). *The Broken Body: Passion Devotion in Late-Medieval Culture*. Egbert Forsten, 1998.

Mahaffey, Vicki. "The Death of Saint Narcissus' and 'Ode': Two Suppressed Poems by T. S. Eliot." *American Literature*, vol. 50, no. 4, 1979, pp. 604–612.

<https://www.jstor.org/stable/2925243>.

Mailer, Norman. *Prisoner of Sex*. Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1971.

Mao, Douglas, and Rebecca Walkowitz. "The New Modernist Studies." *PMLA*.

*Publications of the Modern Language Association of America*, vol. 123, no. 3, 2008, pp. 737–748.

Martin, A. Introduction. *W. B. Yeats: Collected Poems*. Vintage, 1992, pp. xxxiii–xxxii.

Martz, Louis. "The Wheel and the Point: Aspects of Imagery and Theme in Eliot's Later Poetry." *The Sewanee Review*. January–March 1947, vol. 55, no. 1, John Hopkins University Press, pp. 126–147.

Matthews, Sean. "T. S. Eliot, D. H. Lawrence, and the Structure of Feeling of Modernism." Article submission for the D. H. Lawrence Society of Japan. *D. H. Lawrence Studies*, 30, pp. 23–57, 2020.

Maude, Ulrika. "Modernist Bodies: Coming to Our Senses." *The Body and the Arts*, edited by Corrine Saunders et al., Palgrave Macmillan, 2009.

Menand, Louis. "T. S. Eliot." *The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism. Volume 7, Modernism and the New Criticism*, edited by A. Walton Litz et al., Cambridge University Press, 2000, pp. 17–56.

—. "Practical Cat: How T. S. Eliot became T. S. Eliot." *The New Yorker*, September 19, 2011.

<https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2011/09/19/practical-cat>

- Meredith, Christopher. "'Eating Sex' and the Unlovely Song of Songs: Reading Consumption, Excretion and D. H. Lawrence." *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*, vol. 42, no. 3, 2018, pp. 341–362. doi:10.1177/0309089216677674.
- Metzger, Bruce M. and Michael D. Coogan, editors. *The Oxford Companion to the Bible*. Oxford University Press, 1993.
- Miller, Henry. *The World of Lawrence: A Passionate Appreciation*. Capra Press, 1980.
- Millett, Kate. *Sexual Politics*. Doubleday & Company, 1970.
- Milne, Drew. "Lawrence and the Politics of Sexual Politics." *The Cambridge Companion to D. H. Lawrence*, edited by Anne Fernihough, Cambridge University Press, 2001, pp. 197–214.
- Milton, John. *Samson Agonistes and the Shorter Poems*, edited by Isabel Gamble MacCaffrey. The New American Library, 1966.
- Montgomery, R. E. *The Visionary D. H. Lawrence: Beyond Philosophy and Art*. Cambridge University Press, 2009.
- Moody, Alys. "Indifferent and Detached Modernism and the Aesthetic Affect." *Modernism/Modernity*, vol. 3, cycle 4. Dec 11, 2018.  
<https://doi.org/10.26597/mod.0075>.
- Moore, Harry Thornton, editor. *D. H. Lawrence: A Critical Survey*. Forum House, 1969.
- . *The Intelligent Heart: The Story of D. H. Lawrence*. Heinemann, 1955.
- Morris, Wright. "Lawrence and the Immediate Present." *D. H. Lawrence: A Critical Survey*, edited by Harry T. Moore, Forum House, 1969, pp. 7–12.
- Mousley, Andy. "Felt Significance." *Religion and Myth in T. S. Eliot's Poetry*, edited by Scott Freer and Michael Bell, Cambridge Scholars, 2016, pp. 49–63.

- Murphet, Julian, et al., editors. *Sounding Modernism: Rhythm and Sonic Mediation in Modern Literature and Film*. Edinburgh University Press, 2017.
- Murry, John Middleton. "D. H. Lawrence: Creative Iconoclast." *D. H. Lawrence: A Critical Survey*, edited by Harry T. Moore, Forum House, 1969, pp. 3–6.
- . *Son of Woman*. Jonathan Cape, 1954.
- Ngai, Sianne. *Ugly Feelings*. Harvard University Press, 2005.
- Nietzsche, Friedrich. *Beyond Good and Evil*. Translated by R.J. Hollingdale. Penguin, 1990.
- . *The Birth of Tragedy*. Translated by Shaun Whiteside. Penguin, 1993.
- . *The Gay Science*. Translated by Walter Kaufmann. Vintage Books, 1974.
- Nin, Anais. *D. H. Lawrence: An Unprofessional Study*. Black Spring Press, 1985.
- Oates, Joyce Carol. *Beasts*. Camden, 2005.
- . *New Heaven, New Earth: the Visionary Experience in Literature*. Vanguard Press, 1974.
- Oliboni, Mário Fernando. "T. S. Eliot and the Experience of Believing a Dogma." *Revista de letras (Marília)*, vol. 13, 1970, pp. 167–191.
- Orwell, George. *The Collected Essays, Journalism & Letters. Volume 2: My Country Right or Left, 1940–1943*, edited by Sonia Orwell and Ian Angus, Nonpareil, 2000.
- Pagels, Elaine. *Adam, Eve and the Serpent*. Random House, 1988.
- . *The Origin of Satan*. Vintage, 1996.

- Paster, Gail Kern. "Afterword: Thinking About Affect and Emotion in Julius Caesar".  
*Affect Theory and Early Modern Texts: Politics, Ecologies and Form*, edited by  
Amanda Bailey and Mario DiGangi, Palgrave Macmillan, 2017.
- Phelps, J. "'Flesh Cometh Only Out of Flesh': Darwinian Considerations of D. H.  
Lawrence." *D.H. Lawrence: New Critical Perspectives and Cultural Translation*,  
edited by Simonetta De Filippis, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2016, pp.  
77–93.
- Phillip, L. Marcus. "Lawrence, Yeats, and the Resurrection of the Body." *D. H.  
Lawrence: A Centenary Consideration*, edited by Peter Balbert and Marcus L.  
Phillip, Cornell University Press, 2019, pp.210–236.
- Pilditch, Jan, editor. *The Critical Response to D. H. Lawrence*. Greenwood Press, 2001.
- Pinion, F. B. *A D. H. Lawrence Companion: Life, Thought, and Works*. Palgrave  
MacMillan, 1978.
- Pinto, Vivian de Sola and Warren Roberts, editors. *The Complete Poems of D. H.  
Lawrence*. Viking Press, 1971.
- Plutarch. *Makers of Rome: Nine Lives by Plutarch*. Translated and Introduced by Ian  
Scott-Kilvert, Penguin, 1965.
- Pondrom, Cyrena. "T. S. Eliot: The Performativity of Gender in *The Waste  
Land*." *Modernism/Modernity*, vol. 12, no. 3. September, 2005, pp. 425–441.  
<https://muse.jhu.edu/article/186782>
- Potter, Rachel. *Modernism and Democracy: Literary Culture 1900–1930*. Oxford  
University Press, 2006.

Pound, Ezra. *Make it New: Selected Essays by Ezra Pound*. Yale University Press, 1935.

—. *Selected Poems: 1908–1959*. Faber & Faber, 1975.

Prisco, Mark. “All This Will Be Yours One Day.” *Minarets*, 2022.

—. “At the Roundabout.” *BlazeVox*, Spring 2019.

—. “Blood/Let.” *BlazeVox*, Spring 2019.

—. “Boy About Town.” *Minarets*, 2022.

—. “Cold Case.” *Mayhem*, 2022.

—. “Dissolutions in the Morning 3.” *BlazeVox*, Spring 2018.

—. “Dreamscape.” *Minarets*, Spring 2019.

—. “Drift.” *Mayhem*, 2018.

—. “Dystopia.” *Poetry New Zealand*, 2022.

—. “Fortissimo.” *Mayhem*, 2020.

—. “Freedom.” *Poetry New Zealand*, 2020.

—. “Harm.” *BlazeVox*, Spring 2018.

—. “I, Candy.” *Mayhem*, 2022.

—. “I Wish it Was the Winter of Discontent.” *Minarets*, Spring 2019.

—. “Liberate Us from the Tyranny of the Useful.” *Poetry New Zealand*, 2020.

—. “Lines by the River.” *Mayhem*, 2016.

—. “The Lonely Shepherd.” *Minarets*, Spring 2019.

—. “My Forgetfulness.” *BlazeVox*, Spring 2018.

—. “Nature Boy.” *BlazeVox*, Spring 2019.

—. “Pillow.” *Mayhem*, 2019.

- "Put That in Your Pipe and Smoke it." *Poetry New Zealand*, 2023.
- "Queer Theory." *BlazeVox*, Spring 2018.
- "Reflex." *Mayhem*, 2017.
- "Romancing." *Mayhem*, 2016.
- "Some Other Time." *Mayhem*, 2016.
- "Something Out of Nothing." *Mayhem*, 2018.
- "Submission." *BlazeVox*, Spring 2018.
- "That's My Frappuccino, You Cunt." *Mayhem*, 2020.
- "Well Fuck Me, Right?" *Mayhem*, 2018.
- *X/Y*." *Mayhem*, 2019.

Probyn, Elspeth. "Writing Shame", *The Affect Theory Reader*, edited by Melissa Gregg and Gregory J. Seigworth, Duke University Press, 2010.

Reid, Susan. "Enumerating Difference: Lawrence, Freud, Irigaray and the Ethics of Democracy." *Études Lawrenciennes*, no. 45, 2014, pp. 125–140.  
doi:10.4000/lawrence.213.

Rexroth, Kenneth. "Poetry, Regeneration and D. H. Lawrence." *D. H. Lawrence's Poetry: Demon Liberated: a Collection of Primary and Secondary Material*, edited by A. Banerjee, Macmillan, 1990, pp. 159–173.

Ricks, Christopher and Jim McCue, editors. *The Poems of T. S. Eliot. Volume 1, Collected and Uncollected Poems*. Faber and Faber, 2015.

— *The Poems of T. S. Eliot. Volume 2: Practical Cats and Further Verses*. Faber and Faber, 2015.

- Robson, W. W. "D. H. Lawrence and *Women in Love*." *The Pelican Guide to English Literature. Volume 7: The Modern Age*, edited by Boris Ford, 3rd ed., Penguin, 1978, pp. 298–318.
- Rzepa, Joanna. "Tradition and Individual Experience: T. S. Eliot's Encounter with Modernist Theology." *Religion and Myth in T. S. Eliot's Poetry*, edited by Scott Freer and Michael Bell, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2016, pp. 99–119.
- Sagar, Keith. "Open Self and Open Poem: the Stages of D. H. Lawrence's Poetic Quest." *The Critical Response to D. H. Lawrence*, edited by Jan Pilditch, Greenwood Press, 2001, pp. 286–296.
- . *D. H. Lawrence: Poet*. Humanities-Ebooks, LLP, 2007.
- Saksena, Divya. "The Fallacy of Understanding: D. H. Lawrence's Emotional Logic in *Fantasia of the Unconscious* and *Apocalypse*." *Études Lawrenciennes*, no. 42, 2011, pp. 123–152. doi:10.4000/lawrence.122.
- Saunders, Corrine et al., editors. *The Body and the Arts*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2009.
- Schneider, Daniel, J. "D. H. Lawrence's Physical Religion: the Debt to Tylor, Frobenius, and Nuttall." *Essays for Richard Ellmann: Omnium Gatherum*, edited by Susan Dick and Declan Kiberd, McGill-Queen's University Press, 1989, pp. 161–166.
- Schuchard, Ronald. "Burbank with a Baedeker, Eliot with a Cigar: American Intellectuals, Anti-Semitism, and the Idea of Culture." *Modernism/modernity*, vol. 10, no. 1, 2003, pp. 1–26, doi:10.1353/mod.2003.0021.

- Sharpe, Tony. "‘Somehow Integrated’: ‘Doctrine’ and ‘Poetry’ in T. S. Eliot." *Religion and Myth in T. S. Eliot's Poetry*, edited by Scott Freer and Michael Bell, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2016, pp. 27–47.
- Sherry, Vincent B. *The Cambridge History of Modernism*. Cambridge University Press, 2017.
- Simpson, Hilary. *D. H. Lawrence and Feminism*. Croom Helm, 1982.
- Smith, Stewart. "Resisting ‘Dull London’: Nietzsche and Nihilism in D. H. Lawrence’s Leadership Novels." *Journal of the D. H. Lawrence Society*, vol. 5.2, 2019, pp. 143–162.
- Spitzer, Jennifer. "On Not Reading Freud: Amateurism, Expertise, and the Pristine Unconscious in D. H. Lawrence." *Modernism/modernity*, vol. 21, no. 1, 2014, pp. 89–105. doi:10.1353/mod.2014.0022.
- Spurr, Barry. "Anglo-Catholic in Religion": Aspects of Anglo-Catholicism in Eliot’s Poetry." *Religion and Myth in T. S. Eliot's Poetry*, edited by Scott Freer and Michael Bell, Cambridge Scholars, 2016, pp. 1–25.
- Squires, Michael and Lynn, K.Talbot. *Living at the Edge: A Biography of D. H. Lawrence and Frieda Von Richthofen*. University of Wisconsin Press, 2002.
- Stead, C. K. *The New Poetic: Yeats to Eliot*. Penguin, 1964.
- Stirner, Max. *The Ego and Its Own*. Translated by Steven Byington, Cambridge University Press, 1995.
- Sultan, Stanley. "Was Modernism Reactionary?" *Journal of Modern Literature*, vol. 17, no. 4, 1991, pp. 447–464.

- Swanson, R. N. "Passion and Practice: the Social and Ecclesiastical Implications of Passion Devotion in the Late Middle Ages." *The Broken Body: Passion Devotion in Late-Medieval Culture*, edited by A. A. MacDonald et al., Egbert Forsten, 1998.
- Sword, Helen. "Lawrence's Poetry." *The Cambridge Companion to D. H. Lawrence*, edited by Anne Fernihough, Cambridge University Press, 2001, pp. 119–135.
- . "Leda and the Modernists." *PMLA: Publications of the Modern Language Association of America*, vol. 107, no. 2, 1992, pp. 305–18, <https://doi.org/10.2307/462642>.
- Tiverton, Father William. *D. H. Lawrence and Human Existence*. Rockliff, 1951.
- Tonning, Erik. "Old Dogmas for a New Crisis: Hell and Incarnation in T. S. Eliot and W. H. Auden." *Modernism, Christianity and Apocalypse*, vol. 8, 2015, pp. 236–259, edited by Tonning et al.
- Traverso, Enzo. *The New Faces of Fascism: Populism and the Far Right*. Translated by David Broder, Verso, 2019.
- Underhill, Evelyn. *Mysticism*. Methuen, 1960.
- Utell, Janine. "Reading 'Voice.'" *Modernism/Modernity*, vol. 4, cycle 1, March 4, 2019. <https://modernismmodernity.org/forums/posts/voice>. <https://doi.org/10.26597/mod.0095>.
- Vendler, Helen. *Coming of Age as a Poet: Milton, Keats, Eliot, Plath*. Harvard University Press, 2003.
- Voight, Ellen Bryant. *The Art of Syntax: Rhythm of Thought, Rhythm of Song*. Graywolf Press, 2009.

Waters, Lindsay. "Literary Aesthetics: The Very Idea." *Chronicle of Higher Education*, vol. 52, no. 17, 2005, pp. B6–B9.

West, Rebecca. "Elegy." (1930). *The Bad Side of Books: Selected Essays: D. H. Lawrence*, edited by Geoff Dyer, New York Review Books, 2019, pp. 472–488.

Williams, Raymond. "When Was Modernism?" *New Left Review*. nlr 1/175 May–June 1989, pp. 48–52.

Wilson, Edmund, J. R. "The Poetry of Drouth." *The Dial Magazine*. vol. 73.6, December 1922, pp. 611–16.

<https://theworld.com/~raparker/exploring/ts Eliot/reviews/poetry-of-drouth.html>

Wilson, Frances. *Burning Man: The Ascent of D. H. Lawrence*. Bloomsbury, 2021.

Winkiel, Laura. *Modernism: The Basics*. Routledge, 2017.

Woelfel, Craig Bradshaw. *Varieties of Aesthetic Experience*. University of South Carolina Press, 2018.

Wordsworth, William. "Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*". *Literary Criticism of William Wordsworth*, edited by Paul Zall, University of Nebraska Press, 1966.

Wright, T. R. *D. H. Lawrence and the Bible*. Cambridge University Press, 2000.

Yeats, W. B. *Collected Poems*. Vintage, 1992.

Zall, Paul, editor. *Literary Criticism of William Wordsworth*. University of Nebraska Press, 1966.