



Modernist Poetry and Film of the Home Front, 1939-45

Giles Goodland
Jesus College
Oxford

Abstract

Giles Goodland
Jesus College

D. Phil submission
Michaelmas Term

'Modernist Poetry and Film of the Home Front, 1939-1945'

This thesis is an exploration of the links between modernist literature and film and society at a period of historical crisis, in Gramscian terms a moment of national 'popular will'. In general, these works are informed by a greater organicity of form, replacing the previous avant-garde model of a serial or mechanical structure. This organicity, however, maintains an element of disjunction, in which, as with filmic montage, the organicity is constituted on the level of the work seen as a totality. Herbert Read's aesthetics are shown to develop with these changes in the Thirties and the war years. The work of H.D. and T.S.Eliot is explored in the light of these new structural elements, and the formal questioning of the subject through the interplay of 'we' and montages of location and address in the poems. The pre-war years are portrayed in these works as a time of shame, and the war as a possible means of redemption, perhaps through suffering, or through the new subjectivity of the wartime community. The documentary movement provides an opportunity to trace these formal changes in a historical and institutional context, and with the work of Dylan Thomas, the relations between mass and high culture, film and poetry, are investigated, as well as the representation of the Blitz, in which guilt is sublimated into celebratory transcendence. These aspects, and the adaptation of a European avant-garde to meet British cultural needs, are examined in the work of the Apocalyptic movement. The last structure of feeling is reconstruction, which is related to Herbert Read's thought, but shown to inform all these other works and to be a linking-point between ideology and the structure of the text, formed as an organic unity that promises a reconstructed post-war society.

Contents

Chapter	Page
1. Introduction	1.
2. Herbert Read and the Transformation of Avant Garde Aesthetics.	33.
3. Montage in the Work of Eliot and H.D.	75.
4. H.D., Eliot, and Organic Form.	144.
5. The Changing Structure of Documentary Film.	188.
6. Dylan Thomas's Poetry and Film.	235.
7. The Apocalyptic Movement.	297.
8. Conclusion.	351.
Appendix.	364.
Bibliography.	375.
Filmography	398.

CHAPTER ONE :

INTRODUCTION

Modern works of art, ahistorical as they may seem, are historical through and through.¹

Modernism cannot be satisfactorily explained by any set of shared textual characteristics found in modern art: rather, it should be seen as a set of determinate structural relations towards society, expressed by sections of that society, involving transforming concepts of newness, criticism, self-reflexivity, and social being. As the historian Robert Wohl writes, modernism is 'a response by clusters of intellectuals and artists to the converging processes of modernization as they presented themselves and were perceived'.² These clusters were the associational groupings, either self-defining (movements with manifestos) or linked in other ways; through the little magazines particularly, but also through personal friendships, correspondence, the exchange of manuscripts, political

¹Theodor Wiesengrund Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory* trans. C.Lenhardt, ed. Gretel Adorno and Rolf Tiedemann (London: Routledge, 1984), p.38.

²Robert Wohl, 'The Generation of 1914 and Modernism', in Monique Chefdor and Richard Quinones, eds., *Modernism Challenges and Perspectives* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press: 1986), pp.66-78.

allegiance, and the decision to live in the same area. The often-mentioned modernist migration to the metropolis was often a flocking-together of like-minded bohemians and intellectuals, forming a type of sub-cultural community within the city (Bloomsbury or the Left Bank). It is no coincidence that Baudelaire's '*flaneur*' should so often have been taken as the representative instance of the modernist position.

The artists discussed in this thesis were grouped in such ways: T.S.Eliot, Herbert Read, and Humphrey Jennings were all associated at some stage in their careers with modernist little magazine production. H.D., through Bryher, was associated with the running of the wartime *Life and Letters*. Read's and Eliot's wartime association with poetry editing at publishing houses was the mature continuation of such a grouping: a similar but more formal association was maintained with the contemporary poets that they admired. The Apocalyptic Movement was a self-defining formation, as was, in a more materially unified form, the documentary movement. Dylan Thomas, more of a maverick figure, was deeply embedded in what is now referred to as the artistic Bohemia of 'Fitzrovia' in London in the Forties. He, more than any of the others, confirmed to the *flaneur* type: within the crowded metropolis, yet critically distanced.

A group is more able than an individual to form a definite and coherent stance towards social relations. As modernism developed within the early years of the century, its essential nature as a

social formation became more clear. With the impact of the First World War, the example of the Soviet Revolution, the polarization of European politics with the growth of Fascism, and the perceived threatening advance of mass culture, the stance of these groups was unavoidably explicitly social. It was no longer possible to conceive of art in aestheticist isolation, inhabiting its own lonely sphere. From the time of Baudelaire, this socialization of art had been sublimated into its formal mechanisms: the previously radical naturalism of content was abandoned in order to achieve a formal mimesis. Modernization produces social fragmentation, which is reproduced on the artistic level in the textual discontinuities typical of modernism. As Adorno writes, 'The modernity of art lies in its mimetic relation to a petrified and alienated reality.'¹ The reified nature of modern times is given, for instance, as the aspect of newness in modern art:

In its original economic setting, novelty is the characteristic of consumer goods through which they are supposed to set themselves off from the self-same aggregate supply, stimulating consumer decisions subject to the needs of capital.... Art has appropriated this economic category. The new in art is the aesthetic counterpoint to the expanding reproduction of capital in society.... The only way in which art can henceforth transcend the heteronomy of capitalist society is by suffusing its own autonomy with the imagery of that society.²

But newness is not the only aspect of modern society that is translated into art. Adorno elsewhere characterizes the authentically modern artwork as monadological: this is 'grounded in the nature of a society in which the monadological condition

¹Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, p.31.

²Ibid.

persists universally'.¹ Modernization, as Anthony Giddens recently argued, is also characterized by self-reflexivity;² this also is reproduced in the characteristic modernist artworks. The list of 'mimetic' relations between modernist art and society could be expanded. Such characteristics informed the work of all these artist's in the years preceding the Second World War. However, their work during the war, in purely textual terms, is often striking in its apparent abandonment of those formal aspects known as 'modernist'.

The explanation for this anomaly is that in the Britain of World War Two, modernism was at a point of transition in which it lost some of its acknowledged formal characteristics in order to maintain itself in its structural relation with a transformed society. This often involved an expression of what, as will be shown, was justifiable within these new social conditions: structures of organicism and nationality that spontaneously allied the modernists to the sphere of state ideology and propaganda. The works that I shall discuss in this thesis remain true to the social tenets of modernism (but not to the modernist canon) by being responsively and critically rooted in society: to quote from Adorno once more, the 'mode of conduct and the formal idiom of modern art must react spontaneously to objective conditions'.³ When these conditions were not necessarily 'petrified and alienated', the artwork had to change accordingly. This change was expressed as a formal mimesis or

¹T.W.Adorno, 'Reconciliation Under Duress', in Fredric Jameson, et al., ed., *Aesthetics and Politics* (London: Verso, 1977), p.166.

²Anthony Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity* (Polity Press: Cambridge, 1990), p.38.

³Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, p.40.

homology of the objective social conditions obtaining during the war. The higher 'aesthetic' nature of the modern work of art does not come through the artist possessing a deeper, more unified or profound world-view, but through the artist's process of structuring the world-view of the collective to which he or she belongs. This structuring of material may be into a greater aesthetic 'unity', but it may equally, as in much modernist art, be a structuring into disunity, or what is not apparently more unified than the social reality of the writer, but is more structured. The nature of the artwork depends on the collective to which the artist is aligned, which he or she often will have come from and to which he or she will presumably offer the artwork for the collective's aesthetic judgement.¹ Thus in these works, we find the modern negation of the monadological, reified, and fragmented social reality. The trans-individual replaces the monadic subject. Newness is replaced by a regard for history and older literary forms. Fragmentation gives way to a use of montage which builds up to an organic structure, binding the works together on a synthesised level. Moments of vision celebrate the dis-alienating moment. The presentation of the crowd and the city in these works is recognizably different from pre-war modernist works.

¹This is one of the important functions of literary 'little' magazines in the modernist period, constituting a collective response, an appreciative audience congruous with the writer's perceived group. Many writers of the modern period, if not actually editors or producers of little magazines, were closely involved with the people who were: their work would be printed, reviewed, imitated, and commented on, and ideally this ensemble would reach a collective 'working' definition of the aesthetically good, often elaborated on in manifestos and other group-produced documents.

This thesis is an examination of some of the inter-relationships between modernist poetry - one of the highest of this century's high art forms - and its milieux, at a time of exceptional social change, caused but not always delimited by the Second World War and the unprecedented transformation of the British home front into a 'Total War' economy. In so far as the distinction is meaningful, I shall mainly concentrate on formal elements in these modernist works. By the Forties, most of the original participants in the modernist revolution in English poetry were reaching the ends of their careers. Many younger poets were now writing in a tradition that this first generation of modernists had formed and were often now actively maintaining, by writing reviews, encouraging magazines, endorsing new movements, and working in an editorial capacity in publishing. As such, in the conditions of wartime, their judgements were often influenced by notions of poetry and art as serving, in various ways, a national ideology. Similarly, the younger poets and artists found themselves drawn into institutions with a consciously ideological role, where their abilities were used as part of the national effort, particularly in painting, radio, and film. This thesis examines the surprising formal similarities between works usually described as 'propaganda', such as films about the war, and the modernist poetry that was being produced simultaneously, and sometimes by the same people.

1. The Wartime Background

[T]he war, because it demands a huge collective effort, is compelling us to change not only our ordinary, social and economic habits, but also our habits of thought. We're actually changing over from the property view to the sense of community, which simply means that we realize we're all in the same boat. But... that boat can serve not only as our defence against Nazi aggression, but as an ark in which we can all finally land in a better world.¹

Under the external threat of invasion, or what must have seemed very close to annihilation from September 1940 during the Blitz, areas of Britain, and London in particular, took on collective aspects of behaviour that had rarely been seen before. The working-class districts of East London were the worst hit, and groups of people in these areas rapidly took group decisions, for instance the mass immigration into communal shelters such as the Underground: 'some seventy-nine stations in Greater London became *de facto* shelters, and at a peak near the end of September, 177,000 people were sleeping in the Underground system.'² There were also the lesser known mass movements of people, to the West End or Epping Forest: 'Evening after evening thousands of East End "slum" families set off, with food and bedding, to spend the night in comparative safety "up west".'³ This also occurred in other blitzed cities, such as Plymouth in 1941: 'On one night after a bad blitz, it was estimated

¹J.B.Priestley, *Postscripts* (London: Heinemann, 1940), p.38. Quoted in Paul Addison, *The Road to 1945 : British Politics and the Second World War* (London,1975), p.118.

²Angus Calder, *The People's War: Britain 1939-45* (London: Cape, 1969), p.184.

³Tom Harrisson, *Living Through the Blitz* (London: Collins, 1976), p.61.

that 90,000 left the city and now, after a raid-free period, there are said to be still some 30,000 trekkers, half of them being men.'¹ Such mass movements were directly against official policy of the time. Social patterns of behaviour underwent a significant shift. This was true not just of the London working class. In 1941 a Lord is reported to have said 'it is quite common now to see Englishmen speaking to each other in public, although they have never been formally introduced'.² As an American reporter tellingly described feelings in London, 'fright becomes so mingled with a deep almost uncontrollable anger that it is hard to know where one starts and the other begins.'³ The external threat of destruction caused groups of disparate people to constitute themselves into a collective: 'From 1940... egalitarianism and community feeling became, to a great extent, the pervasive ideals of social life: whether or not people lived up to them, they knew that they ought to.'⁴

Wartime Britain was never an unfissured national collective, even though, due to the success of the country's representation of itself in this period, it is often seen in that way even today. There is much, however, in Gramsci's use of the concept of a 'national-popular will' that commends itself for analysis of the situation of total war. For Gramsci, a period of 'expansive hegemony' is one of 'the creation of an active, direct consensus resulting from the

¹Home Intelligence report, quoted in Ian McLaine, *Ministry of Morale: Home Front Morale and the Ministry of Information in World War II* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1979), p.120.

²Quoted in Paul Addison, *The Road to 1945*, p.130.

³Quoted in Peter Young, *World War 1939-45* (London: Barker, 1966), p.34.

⁴Paul Addison, *The Road to 1945*, p.18.

genuine adoption of the interests of the popular classes by the hegemonic class'.¹ Under normal circumstances of bourgeois society, expansive hegemony could never truly be achieved, because an element of constraint is always necessary to maintain the interests of the exploiting class: 'only the working class, whose interests coincide with the limitation of all exploitation, can be capable of bringing about an expansive hegemony'. However, in wartime conditions, it is possible that spontaneity may be freely (but conditionally) given by all participating classes. For Gramsci, hegemony is not simply a matter of successfully articulating one class's demands. It can only be achieved through

the creation of a *higher synthesis*, so that all [allied classes'] demands fuse in a 'collective will' which becomes the new protagonist of political action which will function as the protagonist of political action during that hegemony's entire duration.²

Gramsci's exposition is important because of the central role he gives to ideology as the unifying power which binds the classes together in this synthesis: 'its very existence depends on the creation of ideological unity which will serve as "cement"'. This ideology is expressed most successfully in terms of patriotism and nationalism, which Gramsci labels 'popular religion', 'that is to say it is the link by means of which the unity between leaders and led is effected'.³ Ernest Mandel unconsciously echoes Gramsci's thesis here, when he observes of the role of British domestic propaganda in

¹My use of Gramsci here is indebted to Chantal Mouffe's essay, 'Hegemony and Ideology in Gramsci', in Chantal Mouffe, ed., *Gramsci and Marxist Theory* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1979), pp.168-204.

²Ibid., p.184.

³Antonio Gramsci, *Quaderni* ii. p.1084, quoted in Mouffe, *ibid.*, p.184.

the Second World War, that it 'succeeded in subordinating basic class antagonisms between capital and labour to the priority of defeating the Nazis'.¹

The threat of invasion enabled the British ruling class to present its own interests as universal and coherent. After the near-breakdown of social hegemony in the Twenties and Thirties, during which time the coercion of internal state power had been resorted to, the war enabled the re-establishment of a consensual alliance between political parties and classes. For a period, all willed effort was spontaneously devoted to the aims of the country as a whole: the resistance of invasion. As Walter Adamson points out, a historical bloc, such as occurred in Britain in this period, can be understood 'on a vertical dimension as a... stable... relationship between structure and superstructure, between the productive, economic life of a society and its political and cultural awareness'.² In Gramsci's writings, the intellectuals provide the cement for this suturing of classes on the superstructural level. The intellectuals discussed in this thesis, along with many other undiscussed filmmakers, poets and journalists; as well as those working in many other areas of cultural and ideological production, structured the new social hegemony into an ideological form. They articulated and made coherent at a superstructural level, the transformation in the

¹Ernest Mandel, *The Meaning of the Second World War* (London: New Left Books, 1986), p.86.

²Walter L Adamson, *Hegemony and Revolution, a Study of Antonio Gramsci's Political and Cultural Theory*, London 1980 p. 176.

relations of production that occurred in Britain during the period of 'Total War'.

One result of this was the formulation of the ideologically powerful notion of the conflict as a leftist 'people's war' against all forms of fascism. However, the fissures in this notion rapidly became apparent. It was problematic for the war to be constructed as a people's struggle, when the reasons for Britain's entry were only incidentally linked to the anti-fascist struggle for democracy.¹ Contemporary commentators, such as Arthur Koestler, progressively became aware of this:

The nearer victory comes in sight, the clearer the character of the war reveals itself as what the Tories always said it was - a war for national survival,... and not what I and my friends to the left said it was - a revolutionary civil war in Europe on the Spanish pattern.²

The difference between a war and a revolution became clearer as the immediate threat of invasion that had constituted the moment of national-popular will disappeared. Fredric Jameson shows that there is always a fundamental difference between the two forms of struggle:

Wartime would seem to be a... state of total mobilization, but it is, of course, initiated from the outside: the revolutionary moment, on the other

¹See, for instance, P.M.H.Bell, *The Origins of the Second World War* (Essex: Longman, 1986).

²Quoted in Angus Calder, *The People's War*, p.524.

hand, which insofar as it is violence is basically a civil war, contains its own cause and maintains itself in its own being.¹

'Initiated from the outside', when referring to the nation as a whole, could perhaps be changed to 'initiated from above'. In wartime, people are only armed within the rigid hierarchical system of the army. Thus the antinomies of the appeal to a 'people's war' showed through as a lurking and persistent paradox that could only be resolved by postponing the revolution to the immediately post-war world. A book by Storm Jameson, *The End of This War*, is characteristic of this appeal:

Those who imagine that a merely patched-up England of doles and insecurity will have the will or energy to deal with the problem of Germany and Europe delude themselves. The issue is a plain one: without a better England than the England of *l'entre deux guerres* no better Germany and no tolerable future for Europe.²

The notion of 'reconstruction' became an almost universal call in this period; its real meaning was perhaps a recognition of how unlike a revolution was the people's war, and hence an acknowledgement of the necessity of real social change, but displaced to the future. Warfare against an external enemy tends, if anything, to strengthen the ruling class in its power, as the resolution of social complaints, however bad, is made to appear conditional on victory over the enemy. The British social historian of warfare, Arthur Marwick, suggests a purely psychological dimension

¹Fredric Jameson, *Marxism and Form*, p.260.

²Storm Jameson, *The End of This War* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1941), p.34.

in which 'total war is a great emotional experience comparable to the great revolutions in history'.¹

It is in this subjective sense that the components of wartime society can justly be seen as a collective. The nation was fused by a common experience. Much of the subject matter of wartime cultural production is concerned with articulating this common experience. As the reviewer G.W.Stonier commented, 'during a war there is nothing much to write about except war.... After nearly five years of world struggle there can be no other framework for anything written seriously and with passion'.² For the cultural researcher, this fact simplifies any study of wartime texts, since one is no longer faced with the many possible determinations that act on the writer in peacetime. Louis MacNeice, on his return to Britain after spending the first months of the war in the United States, found that 'London since the Blitz has become more comprehensible'.³ Another poet of the period, Anne Ridler, reiterates this feeling: 'War is like a bodily pain in that it narrows down the world, so huge and diverse before, to one act or one place'.⁴ For any serious poet of the period, war provided its own experiential architecture, disallowing certain things from being said, in a form of pre-censorship, and making the insistent demand that, in the national 'collective will', poetry also

¹ Arthur Marwick, 'World War Two and Social Class in Great Britain', in A.C.Duke and C.A.Tamse eds., *Britain and The Netherlands: Volume VI, War and Society* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1977), pp.203-227.

² G.W.Stonier, 'Poetry and the War', *The New Statesman and Nation* xxviii no.706 (2 September 1944), 155-156.

³ Louis MacNeice, 'The Way We Live Now', *Penguin New Writing* 5 (April 1941), 9-14.

⁴ Anne Ridler, 'The Lustre Jug', *Transformation* ed. Stefan Schimanski and Henry Treece (London: Victor Gollancz, 1943), p.200.

had to be part of the action. Stephen Spender seems to have recognized this when he wrote of the Blitz that 'Everyone lived in the light of reality and necessity. And reality is comradeship. And necessity is vision.'¹ For Spender, as for Eliot, H.D., Thomas and others, vision gained expression in poetry and other arts, in the struggle to give structure to the experience of comradeship and community. Thus the ideology of the people's war can be seen as but one aspect of a more profound national 'collective will'. It was not a myth that was subsequently imposed (although this has happened as well) but occurred simultaneously with, and was inextricable from, the community. Whereas normally ideology operates through various institutions that attempt to transmit an imposed view of reality, in Total War society there was a consensus of reception that enabled the same expressions of experience from different, and usually not directly ideological sources, such as poetry. It was a period of the penetration of the political realm into the aesthetic, into Bürger's supposedly inviolable 'art institution'.

However, this was not the only effect of the war on culture. The radical change in the nature of society altered the conditions of production of these texts. The main impinging factors can be separated out as the populist-nationalist, the contingent, and the state-ideological. There was an upsurge of spontaneous populist-nationalist feeling, which was partly a spontaneous reaction of the community to danger, and partly a genuine articulation of working-class power through the notion of 'people's war'. As we have seen

¹Stephen Spender, *Citizens in War - And After* (London: G.G.Harrap, 1945), p.104.

through looking at Gramsci's observations, such spontaneity could only be given in the situation of total war, or in revolution. Even a writer as apparently divorced from contemporary politics as John Cowper Powys was quick to pick up on this aspect of the war. Despite living in near isolation in Wales, within only a few days of the war's outbreak, he was writing to a friend with admirable prescience that 'this is a people's war'.¹ However, the major exponent of the idea of People's War was Tom Wintringham, a commander in the International Brigade, who devoted himself to the anti-fascist struggle in the face of the Communist Party's initial opposition to the war. His influential book *New Ways of War* urged that the war could only be conducted with a 'restatement of home policy, including full acceptance of the idea of People's war'.² His ideas reached a very wide audience through a series of articles, in the early war years when invasion seemed imminent, in *Picture Post*. The left-wing magazines were also among the first to give the term a wide circulation, a people's war being called for in the *Tribune* of 31 May 1940, and the *New Statesman and Nation* of 22 June 1940.³

Secondly, there were the contingencies of wartime, partly the truly contingent, such as the direct effects of bombing and shortages of manpower and materials in the publishing and related

¹John Cowper Powys, letter dated 9th September 1939, Louis Wilkinson, ed., *Letters of John Cowper Powys to Louis Wilkinson 1935-1956* (London: Macdonald, 1958), p.52.

²Tom Wintringham, *New Ways of War* (London: Penguin, 1940), p.122. A just appraisal of this unfairly neglected figure, a corrective in every way to Orwell's vaguely populist, dubiously socialist views of wartime Britain, is given by David Fernbach, in 'Tom Wintringham and Socialist Defense Strategy', *History Workshop Journal* 14 (Autumn 1982), pp.63-91.

³Referred to in David R. Costello, 'Searchlight Books and the Quest for a 'People's War'', 1941-2', *Journal of Contemporary History* xxiv no.2 (April 1989), pp.257-276.

industries. For instance, just after completing his bulky historical novel *Owen Glendower*, and having been in contact with his publishers, John Cowper Powys commented in a letter, that 'they say there's a shortage of paper & that no more long novels will be possible'.¹ Thus it was obviously a strong consideration for writers to make their works shorter; another *Owen Glendower* would not have been appropriate by the end of 1940. One poet of the war period, Charles Causley, noted how it was the peculiar conditions of wartime existence, in which poetry 'could be put together in one's head', and written down complete on pieces of paper unlike more extended literary genres, that 'gave me a form'.² Also important were secondary contingencies, such as paper rationing and censorship, which were filtered through the state apparatuses, and may sometimes have contained an ideological element. This effect was seen with particular strength in film production, where the Ministry of Information held discretionary powers over the allocation of rationed film stock, equipment, and the call-up of actors and technicians from the various studios. Thirdly important in wartime cultural production, was the directly ideological, the institutional presence of the Ministry of Information, as well as the relations of the leading publishers and producers to the British ruling class.

¹John Cowper Powys, letter dated January 23 1940, *Letters of John Cowper Powys to Louis Wilkinson 1935-1956*, p.59.

²Charles Causley, in 'Some Autobiographical Statements', Ian Hamilton ed., *The Poetry of War 1939-45* (London: Alan Ross, 1965).

The extent of the material changes as they effected the practice of modernist writing can be seen from an examination of little magazine production at the onset of war. Literary magazines tended to embody an editorial policy, even a small collective of closely-related writers and artists. An impressive role-call can be made of these magazines which closed in the crisis period of the start of war, between 1937 and 1940: *Contemporary Poetry and Prose*, *Cornhill Magazine* (closed 1940-43), *Criterion*, *English Review*, *Fact*, *Grand Magazine*, *Left Review*, *Literary Review*, *London Mercury*, *Manchester Quarterly*, *Nash's Pall Mall Magazine*, *New Age*, *New Stories*, *New Verse*, *Night and Day*, *Pearson's Magazine*, *Purpose*, *Saturday Review*, *Seven*, *Twentieth Century Verse*, *Wales*, *Welsh Review* and *Voice of Scotland*.¹ These closures were probably not all due to the economic and social changes that reportedly made magazine production so difficult during the war. This is because, from 1939, an equally large number of new magazines were started. These were *Arson*, *Bell*, *Bugle Blast*, *Caseg Broad sheets*, *Counterpoint*, *Daylight*, *Decachord*, *Dint*, *Dublin Magazine* (published in London), *English Story*, *Folios of New Writing*, *Fulcrum*, *Fury*, *Here and Now*, *Here Today*, *Horizon*, *Indian Writing*, *Kingdom Come*, *Little Reviews Anthology*, *Lyra*, *Manuscript*, *Million*, *Modern Reading*, *New Rambler*, *New Roads*, *New Vision*, *Now*, *Opus*, *Our Time*, *Outposts*, *Penguin New Writing*, *Poetry and the People*, *Poetry Folios*, *Poetry (London)*, *Poetry Scotland*, *Phoenix*, the revised *Poetry Quarterly*, *Selected Writing*, *Scythe*, the revised *Seven*, *Transformation*, *Voices*, *Welsh Review* and *Wind and the Rain*. The size of this list is despite

¹List compiled from Michael N. Stanton, *English Literary Journals, 1900-1950* (Detroit, 1982), as well as from various contemporary reviews and bibliographies.

the fact that, from 25 May 1940, it was illegal to start a new magazine in Britain, due to paper rationing. Some resourceful publishers escaped this law by producing yearly book-like 'anthologies' of new writing. Denys Val Baker noted that it was impossible to make a complete list of wartime periodicals because 'for every review registered at the British Museum, there must be two or three private ones that never reach the bookstalls.'¹ John Lehmann observed that these new poetry magazines also tended to have 'a greater proportion of work by new and unknown poets'.² Clearly, the literary context in Britain during the war was one of new and intense activity among all kinds of writers.

¹Quoted in Robert Hewison, *Under Siege / Literary Life in London 1939-45* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), p.60. Hewison mentions the figure of a hundred new magazine titles between 1939 and 1945.

²Quoted in Denys Val Baker, 'A Review of War-Time Reviews', *Transformation Three*, p.198.

2. War, Propaganda, and Culture

Adorno suggests that the social processes that give shape to mass culture cannot be kept out of art works of the highest ambition and that any analysis of modernist... art will have to trace these processes in the trajectory of the aesthetic materials themselves.¹

The notion of wartime Britain as a period of national-collective will must be disentangled from the widely propagated myth of the heroic pulling together of the nation in 1940, after the well-known class dissension of the Thirties, as for instance described in Paul Addison's demystificatory *The Road to 1945*: 'The year 1940 has gone down in our annals as the time when all sections of the nation put aside their peace-time differences, and closed ranks under the leadership of Churchill - "their finest hour"'.² This way of depicting the year 1940 among historians can be traced back to the patriotic popular history writer, Arthur Bryant. His book *English Saga* was published in that year, and set out to trace the history of Britain from the year 1840 to a century later, concluding with the battle of Britain. Central (but unobtrusive) in this construction is the placement of the immediately previous years as a period of uncharacteristic national shame. He describes the events of 1940, in a religious terminology that is characteristic of the period, as Britain's 'war of redemption... for her own soul', and explains how in the face of

dangers greater than any in her history she has fallen back on the rock of her national character. Her future and that of the world depend not only on

¹Andreas Huyssen, *The Great Divide*, p.35.

²Paul Addison, *The Road to 1945*, p.17.

her victory but on her ability to restate in a new form the ancient laws of her own moral purpose and unity.¹

Charles Mowat's standard textbook history of the inter-war period, recently re-published, also concludes in the year 1940, which again, as in Bryant's account, is seen as a time of a 'war of redemption'.

In the summer of 1940, as [the British people] awaited the battle of Britain, they found themselves again, after twenty years of indecision. They turned away from past regrets and faced the future unafraid.²

It was the historians as much as anyone who, up until quite recently, helped to create and sustain this widely accepted and resonant image of Britain redeemed, or finding itself, in the war.

In order to articulate 1940 as a year of miraculous national reunion, it was necessary to portray the time before as a period of disunity and political dishonesty. A country, like a person, has to be redeemed *from* something. Thus, just as the Adamic Fall of the First World War becomes enmeshed in a myth of a previous 'Golden Age' of Edwardian summer, the heroic Second World War myth is entangled with and inseparable from the Thirties as a 'low, dishonest decade'. For Read and Eliot (among others), it was the dismal twilit world of *entre deux guerres* and artistic failure. For the documentary film makers, it was the period of unemployment and poverty. For many on the left, it was the time of appeasement with Fascism. From this,

¹Arthur Bryant, *English Saga (1840-1940)* (London: Collins, 1940), p.334.

²Charles Loch Mowat, *Britain Between the Wars 1918-1940* (London: Methuen, 1955), p.657. I am grateful to Malcolm Smith at Saint David's University College for calling this passage to my attention.

the war could be constructed as a transforming experience, a burning crucible, or the flames from which a phoenix might arise: the range of elemental myths that could be drawn upon to articulate the experience, particularly for the Blitz itself, was wide. Read's biographer tells how, as early as 1938, Read felt that 'the whole country had to be reduced to ashes "before the phoenix can rise again"'.¹

Another important myth fostered during the war, and still recurrent, is that during the war there really was a fusion of the nation into a single collective will. There was a debate in academic circles over wartime society as a 'collective identity', even as a group mind. An article by Julian S. Huxley is entitled 'The Growth of a Group Mind in Britain Under the Influence of Total War'. He strives to define the nature of the new collectivity:

This war has afforded British people the extraordinary experience of participating in the formation of a new group-consciousness. Here in Britain it has been possible to witness the rapid permeation and spread of new ideas until they become in a real sense collective, part of a group-thought and a group-will.²

However, Huxley only vaguely defines what he means by the term 'group mind', and towards the end he is merely contrasting the political polarities of the Thirties with a general prevailing

¹Herbert Read, letter to Douglas Cooper, 20 August 1988 [presumably a misprint for 1938], quoted in James King, *The Last Modern*, p.171.

²Julian S. Huxley, 'The Growth of a Group Mind in Britain Under the Influence of Total War', *The Hibbert Journal* xxxix no.4 (July 1941), 337-350.

political consensus in the early Forties. Characteristically for the period, he emphasizes that 'pre-war England is over and done with'.

It was in the interests of the ruling class to fight the war with as little internal dissension as possible, not only by incorporating elements of the parliamentary left and the TUC into government, but by making huge efforts to appease and encourage the civilian population. This was a war in which 'as front-line troops, the role of the civilian was crucial.... The citizen's morale and his willingness to contribute to the war effort had therefore become of decisive military importance.'¹ According to Raymond Aron, modern wars, because of their mass, conscripted nature, are characterized by the need to generalise the aims of the war 'in terms acceptable to the people'.² The more difficult and long-drawn out the war, and the more that ordinary people were brought into it, the more important this appeal, and the nature of its expression, became. The importance of addressing this appeal in the correct manner was discovered the hard way: a poster designed by the Ministry of Information before the Blitz had the text 'Your Courage, Your Cheerfulness, Your Resolution, Will Bring Us Victory'. The distinction between 'You' and 'Us' was so maladroit it produced a large outcry in the bombed areas of London: 'who, people asked, was this mysterious US to whom 'your' efforts would bring triumph? Fat men in the City of London, humourless bureaucrats in Whitehall, the bosses, the

¹Ian McLaine, *Ministry of Morale*, p.2.

²John Hall, 'Raymond Aron's Sociology of States, or the Non-Relative Autonomy of Inter-State Behaviour' in Martin Shaw, ed., *War State and Society* (London: Macmillan, 1984), p.77.

generals, the party caucus sprang variously to mind.'¹ Grammatical form itself, the very linguistic structure of propagandist exhortation, had been demonstrated as a matter of political dissension.² Generally, the use of the second-person pronoun, 'you', was subsumed, in almost all political and national appeal, into the third-person objective pronoun, 'us', or the subjective pronoun, 'we'. This inclusiveness was essential in constructing a populist nationalism during the war. A later poster combined the text 'Let Us Go Forward Together' with a photomontage of Churchill and an advancing V-formation of planes: 'together' binds with 'us' to make the appeal an apparently unequivocal address to the nation as a whole.

The change was not simply grammatical. Another major importance of this example is how quickly the government learnt its lesson, not just in how to address the country, but in how to position itself in relation to it. A department of the Ministry of Information called Home Intelligence was rapidly established 'to monitor the public for the first time';³ 'for the first time a government had at its disposal a reliable machine for testing public responses to administrative and policy decisions and for gauging the needs of the people.'⁴ Weekly reports were compiled from observations submitted from a number of different observers (usually people such as doctors

¹Angus Calder, *The People's War*, pp.61-2.

²For instance, the anarchist periodical *War Commentary* entitled one article 'YOUR food YOUR wages YOUR lives will bring THEM victory'; i no.4 (February 1940), 9.

³Tom Harrisson, *Living Through the Blitz*, p.53.

⁴Ian McLaine, *Ministry of Morale*, pp.259-66.

and M.P.s) throughout the country. A report in August 1940 described how

Low income people [were] glad to be questioned, report several observers, and even express gratification that Government wants to know what they think because "this is a people's war".¹

The phrase 'people's war' was soon taken up by officials in the Ministry of Information, upon the arrival there of Duff Cooper, one of Churchill's appointees:

As an official pointed out, 'The keynote... is that it is a People's War.' By August 1940 the Planning Committee agreed that 'Exhortation must as far as possible be abandoned.'²

However, although public exhortation was ostensibly abandoned, a propagandist content was maintained, in part sublimated into the nature of wartime cultural production. The process involved a significant element of feedback and negotiation across levels of class and culture. Often, this negotiation centred around new definitions of 'we', of the exact nature of the collective in wartime, as a significant shift in the dominant image of the nation took place. A relatively simple example of this effect is given by Arthur Marwick, when he charts the relative popularities of Britain's newspapers during the war, and tries to account for the huge surge in popularity given to the *Daily Mirror* in this period. The answer lies

¹Report dated 14 August 1940, *Home Intelligence reports on Opinion and Morale 1940-1944* (Brighton: Harvester Microform, 1979), INF 1 264 pt.1.

²Marion Yass, *This Is Your War. Home Front Propaganda in the Second World War* (London: HMSO, 1983), p.38.

in the unprecedentedly close liaison it maintained with its readers, which centred around its use of 'we', in editorials and articles, in a sense that was oppositional to many government policies.¹

The new, popular appeal taken up by the ruling class can be seen not only from Churchill's speeches but from British films of the period, in which working-class figures suddenly have a heroic role to play in defending the nation, working and fighting chirpily alongside characters (and actors) who in films of the Thirties would unmistakably have been portrayed as their superiors. Mass Observation saw this very specifically in relation to the government-produced propaganda 'shorts', which were shown in cinemas regularly during wartime as part of a programme which also included news reports and a feature film:

Studies during 1940 showed shorts having a much higher degree of popularity and response among middle-class people than among some working-class people. This derived largely from the strictly upper and middle-class attitude of many of the films, starting with the original 'Careless Talk' films, in each of which the spy was a worker. During 1941 this unsympathetic element in short films was greatly reduced, perhaps largely because the blitz made the working man and housewife the admired figure, the romantic hero, who could no longer be described even as a fool, certainly not a villain.²

¹Arthur Marwick, 'Print, Pictures, and Sound: The Second World War and the British Experience', *Daedalus Journal of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences* iii no.4 (Fall 1982), pp.135-155.

²*Home Propaganda: A Report Prepared by Mass Observation for the Advertising Service Guild* (London: published as 'Bulletin of the Advertising Service Guild, no.2' , n.d.[1941]), p.31.

Film was seen by the government as an important element in the non-exhortatory propaganda necessary for internal unity in the war effort, as also to a lesser extent were radio broadcasting and publishing. Film, however, was the dominant ideological medium of the period, with mass audiences hitherto unequalled, and the government was careful not only in controlling the information that could be released to the newsreel companies, but also, through the vetting of film scenarios, in exercising effective power over the nature of the films that were released. This control was generally exercised as a liberalisation of the permissible scenarios, compared to pre-war levels. For instance, from the start of the war, the censors approved 'stories with an industrial setting, which they had done only rarely pre-war'.¹

But film production, financed by large capital and often state-regulated and censored, and intended for the largest possible audience, is a different world from the writing and publishing of poetry, in which material and ideological impingements, where present, are more difficult to trace. The role of the Ministry of Information was characteristically discreet and behind the scenes:

In the field of publications the Ministry decided that 'so far as possible the production of literature should be carried on by the normal publishing channels', and arrangements were concluded with publishers such as Penguin and the Oxford University Press.... The Ministry's power over the release of extra supplies of paper, exercised by recommendations to the

¹Peter Stead, 'The People as Stars: Feature Films as National Expression', in Philip M. Taylor ed., *Britain and the Cinema in the Second World War* (London: Macmillan, 1988), p.66.

Paper Controller, considerably enhanced its ability to persuade publishers to co-operate in joint ventures.¹

Historians frequently use film as a primary source, because of its status as a commodity rather than an artistic text. The characteristic evaluation of historians is valid in its own terms:

no matter who first articulated the point of view, it must receive broader endorsement within the production company to survive several script revisions, the shooting and re-shooting of scenes, and editing and re-editing. Films, in short, are group products, and in the narrowest sense they reflect the attitudes of those social groups that make films.²

Notwithstanding the ambiguity of the word 'make' in the last sentence in this quotation, in which the film-makers are apparently not seen as subject to any influence from the film's enablers, the financiers and moral guardians who may be from a significantly different social group than that of those that physically 'make' films, the point is true that films generally better reflect social attitudes than do literary texts. 'Reflect' here, however, can only be taken in the crudely representational sense of the realistic representation and reproduction of social manners. The stylistic and formal changes discernible in film during the course of the war can also be seen in other types of cultural production, including poetry.

Different structures of representation were used to frame such ideas as 'the nation' in the new terms that were required by the

¹Ian McLaine, *Ministry of Morale*, p.48.

²William Hughes, 'The Evaluation of Film as Evidence' in Paul Smith ed., *The Historian and Film* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), pp.67-68.

ideological changes I have discussed. This theory of ideology as structure is still an influential model in many areas of cultural studies. Stuart Hall, for instance, approvingly quotes from E. Veron:

If ideologies are structures... then they are not 'images' nor 'concepts' (we can say, they are not contents) but are sets of rules which determine an organization and the functioning of images and concepts.... Ideology is a system of coding reality and not a determined set of coded messages... in this way, ideology becomes autonomous in relation to the consciousness or intention of its agents.... an 'ideology' may be defined as a system of semantic rules to generate messages.¹

Veron and Hall locate ideology within the code itself. This is true in so far as an ideological content can only be located within such texts, but it overturns any notion of intentionality. A code must have a master, a key to enable it to be read, and in some areas of discourse (for instance, propaganda), such coding is clearly deliberate. The oldest form of literary studies was that of rhetoric, which is the science of persuasively encoding texts. What is unintentional for the individual may at the same time express the response of the collective to problems of rule and subjugation. Thus the 'group consciousness' of the dominant or contesting class can be invoked as a source for the coding and its key. Ideology, then, is manifested in a system of coding or structuring reality, and may be autonomous in relation to 'the consciousness or intention of its agents', but is not purely unconscious in relation to the group's aims.

¹E. Veron, 'Ideology and the Social Sciences', *Semiotica* iii no.2 (1971), p.68. Quoted in Stuart Hall, 'The Rediscovery of "Ideology": Return of the Repressed in Media Studies', in Michael Gurevitch et al., eds., *Culture, Society and the Media* (London: Routledge, 1982), p.71.

All war-time texts, whether high art or mass cultural, are potentially capable of being revealed, by means of an analysis of their structures of feeling, as related to the nature of wartime society. In terms of production, the major difference between such works would be that between the commissioned and the 'spontaneous' cultural artefact. Traditional romantic criticism tends to see the highest art as spontaneous. However, the spontaneity of many of these works of high art may be questioned. Spontaneity implies self-determination, and refers back to a romantic concept of the inspired artist. Eliot, however, toyed with the idea of labelling his *Quartets* 'patriotic poems', which would imply composition with some intention beyond spontaneous self-expression in view. Bürger, discussing montage, notes that an approach to the work of art as intentionally determined leads to considering them in terms of their production, rather than reception. He notes importantly that Benjamin's schematization of allegory is useful 'principally in the sphere of production aesthetics', whereas 'supplementary efforts' are needed in the analysis of aesthetic effect. In montage proper, however, there is no necessity to differentiate between production aesthetics and aesthetic effect, because the intention, for instance in the agitational photo-montage work of John Heartfield (which Bürger significantly describes as 'anti-aesthetic'), is to convey a message. A photograph of Adolf Hitler with his hand in the air is super-imposed with an image of a much larger industrialist, placing a sheaf of notes into Hitler's out-stretched hand. Is there an aesthetic effect in this beyond the political, extractable 'message' that Hitler is in the pay of big industry? If the aesthetic effect is indeed the same as the reception of the message, then there is no

difference between production and reception aesthetics in such works. Eisenstein fully recognized this effect in the 'intellectual cinema':

The strength of montage resides in this, that it includes in the creative process the emotions and mind of the spectator. The spectator is compelled to proceed along the selfsame creative road that the author travelled in creating the image. The spectator not only sees the represented elements of the finished work, but also experiences the dynamic process of the emergence and assembly of the image just as it was experienced by the author.¹

Adorno's late acceptance of film as an art form, after he had dismissed it as part of the culture industry and technologically determined in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, came with an emphasis on 'its inherent affinity with subjective modes of experience', as well as an acknowledgement of 'the role of intentionality in both representation and construction'.² He found in montage the location of this intentionality, which could supply 'the objectifying recreation' of a 'movement of interior images'.³ Montage, in Adorno and Eisler's words, is 'an instrument for the cognition of reality'.⁴ Hence film aesthetics are conjoined with the sociology of film: 'There can be no aesthetics of the cinema... which would not include the sociology of the cinema.'⁵

¹Sergei Eisenstein, *The Film Sense*, p. 34.

²Miriam B.Hansen, 'Introduction to Adorno, "Transparencies on Film"', *New German Critique* 24-25 (Fall/Winter 1981-2), 186-189.

³Theodor W. Adorno 'Transparencies on Film', *New German Critique* 24-25 (Fall/Winter 1981-2), 199-205.

⁴[Theodor W. Adorno and] Hans Eisler, *Composing for the Films* (London: Dennis Dobson, 1951), p.73.

⁵Adorno, *New German Critique*, Ibid.

The poetic theorist who is the strongest presence behind both Read, Eliot and H.D., is T.E.Hulme. The reasons for his strong influence may have much to do with the compatibility of his poetics with those forms of montage that were being developed within film. Not only does Hulme define the modern work of art as discontinuous: he calls for images which 'would be juxtaposed asyntactically, so that the reader would have to reconstruct the poet's original perceptions himself'.¹ An intellectual pioneer, Hulme laid down the theoretical preconditions that enabled these poets to develop such methods of montage, in a way that came to fruition in the war. True to this modernist aesthetic, the problematic subjectivity of wartime group existence is not concealed under layers of mimetic representation, but revealed as a matter of (troubled) consciousness. This can be seen in particular in the questioning of the nature of subjectivity and group identity in this period, a questioning that penetrates to the forms and grammar of the works in question.

It should be no surprise to see these poems and films as far more socially engaged than the earlier work of the modernists: the conditions themselves made any exploration of individual subjectivity, such as characterises an earlier stage of modernism, invalid. Another important element in the 'spontaneous' creation of high cultural art during the war was the instant prestige that such art commanded. High culture, even if implicitly critical of the war,

¹Andrew M. Clearfield, *These Fragments I have shored / Collage and Montage in Early Modernist Poetry* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1987).

had a certain propaganda value merely by being produced. Thus, the intensely myth-making book *Ourselves in Wartime* surprisingly includes in its list of praiseworthy wartime actions, the fact that

In days of constant threat and almost continuous assault goods were manufactured, books were written, printed and distributed... not at some remote base from which the fighters had been sent, *but on the battlefield itself*.¹

As we shall see from film, and its development in Britain in relation to state institutions, the modernist aesthetic was often sponsored and encouraged in order to provide, simply by the fact of its existence, an element of prestige to the institutional patron.

¹ *Ourselves in Wartime* (London: Odhams Press, n.d.[1945]), p.11. Emphases in the original.

CHAPTER TWO :

HERBERT READ AND THE TRANSFORMATION OF AVANT GARDE AESTHETICS.

1. Organicism and Poetics.

The golden lemon is not made
but grows on a green tree.¹

It is impossible to consider Herbert Read's work in the Forties justly, without reference to a large and varied body of writing that stretches back to the previous world war, and in which certain themes are slowly elaborated and developed into a complex, if not always consistent, philosophy. It is equally impossible to consider his poetry in isolation from his theoretical work on aesthetics, his changing relations to artistic movements of the period, his increasingly individualistic politics, his role as the editor of a new but influential publisher's

¹Herbert Read, 'A Song for the Spanish Anarchists', *Collected Poems* (London: Faber, 1966), p.149.

poetry list, and his status, like Eliot's, as a generally acknowledged cultural arbiter. Other commentators on Read's work have usually attempted to take one strand of his thought and trace it through his life, without adequate reference to developments in his thought in other areas, or to the social changes which often profoundly affected him.¹ Often, these effects can be traced more clearly in his ephemeral writings than in the deliberate, supposedly conclusive statements of his books.

His position was a paradoxical one, at once a celebrator and publicist of continental and British avant-gardes, and at the same time an upholder of an artistic theory that, because of these very movements, was coming to seem increasingly conservative: that of organic form. In the Thirties his name was associated particularly with the surrealist movement in Britain, although his influence also touched upon constructivism and the generally abstract work by modernistic artists such as Barbara Hepworth and Henry Moore that defied easy categorisation.² Rather than explore the particularities and contradictions of his many articles and books, that were often written polemically, in reaction to specific changes within the rapidly transforming field

¹David Thistlewood, *Herbert Read: Formlessness and Form, an Introduction to His Aesthetics* (London: Routledge, 1984).

Worth Harder, *A Certain Order: The Development of Herbert Read's Theory of Poetry* (The Hague, 1971).

George Woodcock, *Herbert Read: The Stream and the Source* (London: Faber, 1972). This book comes close to an all-round approach to Read's work, but it tends to be over-anecdotal and, written by a friend of Read's, over-reverential.

²See e.g., Herbert Read, ed., *Unit 1 : The Modern Movement in English Architecture, Painting and Sculpture* (London: Cassell, 1934). The book champions not only Hepworth and Moore, but Paul Nash, Ben Nicholson, and other British artists then virtually unknown to the public.

of modern art and party ideologies, I shall view him as a theorist always eager to synthesize new events, ever adapting the philosophies of the avant garde and modernism in order to bring them into a synthesis with or show them as the heirs of romantic thought, where his primary, over-arching allegiance lay. This same general pattern is repeated throughout the large body of Read's critical writing. In this chapter I shall examine how his synthesis developed in the Thirties and the war years, as he strove to adapt and theorise differing ideas, always in relation to the continuing social crises consequent upon the war, and I shall also relate some of these ideas to his poetry in this period.

The key to the working of this synthesis, and central to the romantic tradition he continued to espouse for the greater part of his life, was the principle of organic form in the work of art. Read would often refer to the modern movement in English literature as starting with Coleridge, whom he in turn traces back to Schelling, and the lecture Coleridge is particularly indebted to, 'On the Relation of the Plastic Arts to Nature'.¹ Like Coleridge and Schelling, Read believed that

When a work of art has its own organic laws, originating with its very invention and fusing in one vital unity both structure and content, then the resulting form may be described as *organic*.²

¹Schelling's essay is quoted in full in Herbert Read, *The True Voice of Feeling: Studies in English Romantic Poetry* (London: Faber, 1953) pp.323-358.

²Herbert Read, 'Organic and Abstract Form', in *Collected Essays in Literary Criticism* (London: Faber, 1938), p.19.

Read kept to the spirit of these thinkers by locating organic form within nature, but a nature without the Kantian sublime, the mystified and quasi-religious feelings of awe that the early romantic philosophers located within an external and unsurpassable nature. Read defined nature as 'the whole organic process of life and movement which goes on in the universe... which includes man, but which is indifferent to his generic idiosyncracies'.¹ Read's organicism was thus more dialectically conceived as a process of structural change, in which certain mechanical laws lie behind both natural growth and aesthetic creation and apprehension:

the elementary forms which men have instinctively given to their works of art are the same as the elementary forms which exist in nature.... there is not a form in nature which is not due to the operation of mechanical laws under the impulsion of growth. The rate of growth, the basic material, the function or use may vary, but the laws of physics do not vary.... It is to these forces that we owe, not only the variety, but also the logic of form. And from the logic of form proceeds the emotion of beauty.²

In some of his criticism, Read went so far as to use the scientific notations and equations of physicists to explain the organicity in, for instance, the sculptures of Henry Moore.³ The use of scientific and mechanical laws to account for organic form put him, as we shall see, in a strong theoretical position from which to

¹Herbert Read, *Education Through Art* (London: Faber, 1943), p.16.

²Herbert Read, *ibid.*, pp.16-20.

³See Read's Introduction to *Henry Moore : Sculptures and Drawings* (London: Lund Humphries, 1944), p. xxiii. The source he refers to for these ideas, here as elsewhere, is D'Arcy Thompson's scientific treatise, *On Growth and Form* (London, 1942).

incorporate into his aesthetics a modified form of the surrealist theory of automatism.

Read also differed from the romantic thinkers in his description of how this organicity was constituted. In one of his essays he quotes a passage from Coleridge about the "totality of a system" in a poem, and disagrees that this totality should include thematic consistency:

Poetry - indeed, all art - accepts contradictions; it is an irrational activity whose only object is to seize and enhance the objective sensuous elements of life in a reality which is organic, and not in a wholeness which is logical.¹

Thus, uniquely among the long tradition of aestheticians of organic form, Read allowed for, and even praised, disunities and ruptures within the artwork. This enabled him to accept poetry, painting, and sculpture of the modernist movement, and indeed the radical avant garde, within his system. Later in his life, he stated:

Reality has only one possible centre of coherence: the individual consciousness, and that is not a permanent or persisting focus: we are only conscious when we are conscious of something. The only unity we can achieve is constituted by the bridges we hastily improvise

¹Herbert Read, 'The "Prelude" in Wartime', in *A Coat of Many Colours* (London: Routledge, 1945), p.50. First published *Briarcliff Quarterly* ii no.6 (July 1945), 99-105.

Read's ephemerally published essays were often collected at irregular intervals in his various books. Due to the chronological importance of specific political and social events of the period, I have tried where possible to include the source of first publication of his essays written during the war, as well as the more accessible, collected source from which, in those cases where they have been collected, I quote.

between one sense-impression and another, and poetry is the bridge with the widest span.¹

Further on in the same passage, Read applies this apparently paradoxical notion of (organic) unity through disruption and brokenness, to the canonical works of modernism in poetry in English, and also, perhaps surprisingly, to some of the strands of European artistic thought that seemed to most strongly reject notions of the organic. In the modern age, he implies, to create successfully it is necessary for artistic form to be ruptured and disunified. *The Waste Land*, for instance,

in remaining true to the fragmentary or disjointed nature of our consciousness, presents an image of reality far more acceptable to the disillusioned mind of modern man.... The same justification can be advanced for any typical product of contemporary art; for *Ulysses*, the *Cantos*, for futurism, cubism and surrealism. They are all fragments of a mirror forever broken.

The links he makes between 'Modernism' and the avant gardes that developed in Europe throughout the twentieth century are significant. In the system he elaborated, both movements are (albeit with modifications) the heirs of romantic thought. This is despite the fact that, judging by articles written in the same period as the above, he was aware of a strong distinction between the two movements.² Both in their fragmentation are linked by the shifting focus of individual human consciousness, which

¹Edward Dahlberg and Herbert Read, *Truth Is More Sacred, A Critical Exchange on Modern Literature* (London: Routledge, 1961), p. 212.

²Herbert Read, 'Avantgardism and Modernism', *The London Magazine* xvii no.3 (March 1960), 57-60: '[The avant garde] is an underground tradition with its own surrogates of darkness and obscurity, and has nothing much to do with the solid constructions above ground - Rilke, Kafka, Yeats, Eliot, Valéry, Stevens.'

nevertheless has its own laws of coherence: laws that Read felt came from deep within the human mind, where the organic had its source. In his usage of Freudian, and later Jungian psychology, and his appropriation of surrealist automatism, he endeavoured to define this source.

Read was undoubtedly influential in publicising the surrealist movement among British intellectuals, many of whom would have remained ignorant or prejudiced towards it without his articles in *The Listener* and *New English Weekly*, and its enshrinement in a Faber book on the subject, which he edited. However, his deployment of arguments in favour of surrealist theory differed significantly from those formulated by Breton on the continent, and also from the more consistent proponents of surrealism in Britain, such as Humphrey Jennings, Roland Penrose, and Hugh Sykes Davies. Read's major transformation of surrealist thought was in his re-introduction of the romantic idea of 'imagination', apparently partly to replace the term which Breton used, 'the unconscious'. Read defined imagination in terms similar to Breton's definition of automatism as 'Thought's dictation, in the absence of all control exercised by reason and outside all moral or aesthetic preoccupations':¹

the internal activity of the mind when uncontrolled by immediate sensational awareness and when free from the various moral

¹André Breton, *Manifestoes of Surrealism* trans. Richard Seaver and Helen R.Lane (Michigan, 1969), p.59.

conventions and social taboos which constitute the accepted social reality.¹

Later in the same article, Read describes how 'the mental furniture' of the imagination 'is constructed from elements reflected from the exterior world, memorised or repressed'. The first definition places his 'imagination' in line with Breton's unconscious, as being free from ideologies, libidinally unconventional and hence anathema to bourgeois culture. The second definition, however, makes it dependent upon 'the exterior world', and thus invalidates his claim that imagination is free from 'the accepted social reality'. The 'reflections' he proposes here may invert, or, following Freudian theory, transfer by repression the external social world, but they cannot escape it. He describes art as a synthesis of imagination defined in this way, and reality:

Art is the synthesis of these two opposites [realism and the imagination]. It projects the imaginative faculty outside the mind, seeking in the world of reality objective equivalents of its fantasies. It is an exteriorisation and a materialisation of the imagery of the mind.... This synthesis is the superreality of art. *Reality transformed by the imagination* - that is the definition of art and the aim of surrealism.²

The dialectic is not so radical if the imagination - as Read implies - is already an affect of the exterior world. 'The world of reality' can hardly be fundamentally transformed by an imagination that is originally constructed from the attempt to

¹Herbert Read, 'Surrealism - The Dialectic of Art', *Left Review* ii no.10 (July 1936), supplement facing p.508, ii-iii.

²Ibid.

neurotically sublimate that very world. Within two years, as his support for surrealism became slightly less unqualified, Read widened the scope of his 'imagination' to be the means whereby the sundered reality, 'the antithetical terms of our existence' in the modern world could be reintegrated into the organic whole of the artwork: it is 'a light which fuses [the oppositions] into a wholeness, a coherence, a plastic and sensuous integrity which is the work of art'.¹ Whereas in his previous argument 'reality' had been an unproblematic unity, synthesized *with* the imagination, here reality presents its own internal oppositions, synthesized *by* the imagination. Read was in fact gradually re-translating the surrealists' radical poetics back into the terms of romantic aesthetics. If the unconscious could be brought back into line with 'imagination', then automatism, which Breton stressed as absolutely central to surrealism, could be re-aligned with 'inspiration'. Writing on the movement in his book *Art and Society*, Read does this, describing how, because of the movement,

Perhaps for the first time in history the artist has become conscious of the springs of his inspiration, is in conscious control of such inspiration, and able to direct it to the specific course of art, which is the deepening of our sense of the total reality of existence, and, in a generic sense, the further development of human consciousness.²

Significantly, he footnotes the word 'control': 'The paradox of such "conscious" control being that its aim is to circumvent the intellect, the normal instrument of conscious control.' Compared

¹Herbert Read, 'Myth, Dream, and Poem', *Transition* no. 27 (April-May 1938), 192.

²Herbert Read, *Art and Society* (London: Heinemann, 1937), pp.256-257.

to the use of automatism as an instrument of revolutionary subversion in attacking the foundations of the artistic establishment, as advocated by Breton, for whom *anyone* who produced art automatically was a valid artist, Read's 'inspiration' seems distinctly ineffectual. For Breton, human consciousness should be revolutionized, not just 'further develop[ed]'. In Read's lengthy introduction to *Surrealism* he hardly touches upon the theme of automatism, although he does spend some time writing about elements (especially visual images) in his own poetry being influenced by his dreams. Even while warmly embracing the surrealist movement, he never accepted the main tenet of its philosophy, automatism. Later, after the dissolution of the English group, he admitted that this came from his view of the artwork as an organic inter-relation of images:

I believe that from the beginning an exclusive devotion to a theory of artistic automatism was a mistake.... The projection of a symbol or image from the unconscious is not an act of creation in that sense: it is merely the transfer of an existing object from one sphere to another - from the mental sphere, for example, to the verbal or plastic sphere. The essential function of art is revealed in a coordination of images (whether unconscious or perceptual does not matter) into an effective pattern. The art is in the pattern, which is a personal invention of the artist, and not in the imagery.¹

The 'pattern' of the work of art is presumably its form, while the imagery is related to the content. Thus it is somewhat surprising to find that when Read does allow for a limited role for automatism in the process of artistic creation, this role does not

¹Herbert Read, 'The Situation of Art in Europe at the End of the Second World War', in *The Philosophy of Modern Art, Collected Essays* (London: Faber, 1952), p.53.

lie in the realm of content, but in that of artistic form. It is the way in which the 'organic form' residing in nature is transmitted into the artwork:

The artist in particular... is a man who is gifted with the most direct perception of artistic form. It is not necessarily a conscious perception; he may unconsciously reveal his perceptions in his work of art. Artists are to a considerable degree automata - that is to say, they unwittingly transmit in their works of art a sense of scale, proportion, symmetry, balance and other abstract qualities which they have acquired through their purely visual and therefore physical response to their natural environment.¹

The idea of the artist as automaton is significantly different from the automatic poetry that, according to the surrealists, following Lautréamont, 'should be made by all'. In Read's system, only the artist has this gift: without using the word, he is referring to 'inspiration'. However, the passage shows that Read was open to mechanistic interpretations of the artistic process, so long as they still kept rigidly circumscribed to the gifted artist. Although unacceptable to orthodox surrealists, such a view would be equally repugnant to much bourgeois literary criticism, then and today. He once went so far as to state 'I believe that the greatest power of... poetry... is derived from the automatic workings of the poet's mind'.² His view of Pound and Eliot, for instance, is ready to accept that the accumulation of images in their most critically analysed poetry may have been achieved automatically:

¹Herbert Read, 'Art and Crisis', in *The Grass Roots of Art* (London: Lindsay Drummond, 1947), p.78. First published *Horizon* ix no.53 (May 1944), 336-350.

²Herbert Read, 'A Further Note on Superrealism', in *A Coat of Many Colours*, p.197.

a process that is not deliberate, but rather an automatic release of imagery from what would technically be known as the pre-conscious - that level of the mind just below conscious memory, from which images can be drawn more or less pell-mell in a state of poetic excitement.¹

This could be the foundation for a refreshing approach to the *Cantos* and *The Waste Land*, relating them more closely to the productions of the European avant gardes. As we have already seen, he viewed both modernism and the avant garde as examples of an organic but fragmented art. He keeps ideologically firmly in the modernist camp, however, being quick to forestall the idea that any person might be capable of writing such poetry, if all that is needed (as the surrealists claimed) was to be in a state of poetic excitement:

nothing proves to be so dreary as the furniture of an inferior mind. The surrealist movement was responsible for much forced imagery of this kind, and the process itself... was eventually discredited by abuse.²

Such an elitist attitude was somewhat inconsistent with the egalitarian anarchism he professed, even if this view was expressed comparatively late in his life. In the Thirties and Forties, the mandarin aspect to Read's views, although less pronounced, was still recognisably present.

¹Herbert Read, 'The Image in Modern English Poetry', in *The Tenth Muse: Essays in Criticism* (London: Routledge, 1957), p.131.

²Ibid., p.132.

The development of an organic poetics from the very anti-organic theorisations of the continental avant-garde is doubly significant in the context of the late Thirties and the war period. Firstly, it emphasized once more Britain's own traditions, re-inscribing the national isolation of English culture and philosophy, and running in parallel with the domestic socialism of 'the people's war'. Secondly, it legitimized the poetic form that was to be employed by the modernists during the war, by elaborating a new frame in which rupture and discontinuity were contained within an over-arching organicity that allowed for the totalising ideological codes of nationality and tradition.

2) Theory of the Image

Read's early association with the imagist movement, and his editing of the papers of T.E.Hulme, perhaps predisposes his later criticism to an alertness to the aesthetics of the image in modern poetry. His conception of the image is similar to that of the French poet and critic, Pierre Reverdy, one of the most influential theorists behind surrealism. Reverdy in fact provides a bridge between the two apparently unrelated strands of modernist art that Read also attempted to unite: the abstractionist tendency, represented for Reverdy by the Cubists, and surrealism. Reverdy was first of all involved in an obscure Parisian movement called 'simultanism', which tried to represent simultaneous disparate events, and was heavily influenced by cinematic principles. He was familiar with the futurist manifestoes, and was also a close friend and colleague with the leading Cubists, Picasso and Braque. It was his seminal essay in the March 1918 issue of *Nord-Sud*, 'L'Image', which drew on Cubist theory to define the image, but which was approvingly quoted by Breton in his *First Surrealist Manifesto* (1924).

L'image est une création pure de l'esprit. Elle ne peut naître d'une comparaison mais du rapprochement de deux réalités plus ou moins éloignées.

Plus les rapports des deux réalités rapprochées seront lointains et justes, plus l'image sera forte - plus elle aura de puissance émotive et de réalité poétique.¹

The image is a pure creation of the mind. It cannot be born from a comparison but from a juxtaposition of two or more less distant realities.

The more the relationship between the two juxtaposed realities is distant and true, the stronger the image will be - the greater its emotional and poetic reality.²

The image, to be successful in art, had to be a juxtaposition of two terms or objects in a relationship both distant and just: the more of these two qualities that the image contained, the greater emotive power and poetic reality it could command. Reverdy stresses that the power of such images comes from the mind of the viewer or reader: it was not a poetic 'comparison' contrived by the artist. By this means the poem becomes autonomous, as with non-representational art, bearing no necessary relation to the visual or sensory world, but presenting instead 'an exclusively poetic reality'.³ One writer on Reverdy finds a strong connection between this, and such painterly cubist practises as 'collage':

Reverdy's elimination of context finds its counterpart among the cubists. The terms of Reverdy's images often bear relationships which have no given existential meaning or, if they do, the contexts are constantly changing. If the latter situation prevails, the images overlap with the result that the new context is constantly annulled by that which

¹Pierre Reverdy, 'L'Image' *Nord-Sud* (March 1918) 73-5. Quoted in Theo Hermans, *The Structure of Modernist Poetry* (London: Croom Helm, 1982), p.162.

² Quoted in André Breton, *Manifestoes of Surrealism* *ibid.*, p.21. It is this translation that I have used.

³Theo Hermans, *The Structure of Modernist Poetry*, p.164.

is about to follow. The perpetual replacement of context brings to mind analytical cubist painting in which several visual contexts are superimposed one upon the other by planes orientated in different directions. There is, essentially, no real context because as one experiential impression begins, it is superseded by another such impression resulting from a randomly intersecting plane.

It is here that surrealist practice can be seen as relevant, with their production of automatic texts and emphasis on the aleatory.

As the writer continues:

The destruction of context found in Reverdy's poetry appealed to the surrealists, for they were interested in poems independent of existential reality which were, in a sense, "simply given".¹

Read would have been familiar with Reverdy's thought not just from the *First Surrealist Manifesto* (translated by David Gascoyne in *What is Surrealism?*, 1936) but from the use that the French Catholic philosopher Jacques Maritain had already made of Reverdy in *Art and Scholasticism*. As early as 1930, Read quoted the Reverdy passage, as quoted by Maritain, and noted 'This is the whole secret of the so-called obscurity of modern poetry'.² In 1936 he quoted the same passage again and wrote, less gnominically, 'the modern poet has passed beyond the metaphor to a new figure of speech. This has been called the *image*'.³

Reverdy may have been influenced, through the simultanist movement, with film technique and film theory. There are

¹Jean Schroeder, *Pierre Reverdy* (Boston: Twayne, 1981), p.62.

²Herbert Read, 'The Form of Modern Poetry' *Symposium* i no.3 (1930), 309.

³Herbert Read, 'Obscurity in Poetry', in *In Defence of Shelley and Other Essays* (London: Heinemann, 1936), p.160.

certainly many connections between his theory of the image, and the idea of montage, as it was discussed and popularized, somewhat later than Reverdy's article, by Soviet cinematographers such as Pudovkin and Eisenstein. Particularly, the idea of the 'perpetual replacement of context' brings Eisenstein's intellectual montage to mind. In this case, film practice pre-dated its theorisation. By the late Thirties and Forties, however, both sets of theories were available to English readers such as Read.

Read was familiar with film theory, and contributed to *Cinema Quarterly* on aspects of cinematography that coincided with his own aesthetic interests.¹ In a 1934 article, he refers to the aesthetician Rudolph Arnheim's book, *Film*. Read in fact translated another Arnheim book, *Radio*, and so was more than usually familiar with his work. In *Film* Arnheim states

if strips of film are joined one to another, it is often observed, especially with really good montage, that these strips do not simply stand 'additively' beside one another but take on quite different shades of meaning through this juxtaposition.²

Like Reverdy's image, filmic montage depends not on the artist's or editor's comparison of two objects, but relies on the viewer's or reader's independent piecing together of the juxtaposed objects. Not metaphor, but the modern poetic image.

¹See e.g. Herbert Read, 'Experiments in Counterpoint', *Cinema Quarterly* iii no.1 (Autumn 1934), 17-20.

²Rudolf Arnheim, *Film* trans. L.M.Sieveking and Ian F.D.Morrow (London: Faber, 1933), p.104.

It is also possible that Read was familiar with the Soviet film theorists. Pudovkin's book *On Film Technique*, with its central contention that 'the foundation of film art is *editing*',¹ had been published in translation in Britain in 1929. Eisenstein made a connection between montage and organic form in *The Film Sense*:

the fundamental basis which equally determines both the content enclosed by single frames and the compositional juxtaposition of these separate contents with each other, i.e., to the content of the *whole* the *unifying principle* itself. This is precisely that principle which should determine both the content of the shot and the content which is revealed through a given *juxtaposition of these shots*.... each montage piece exists no longer as something unrelated, but as a given *particular representation* of the general theme that in equal measure penetrates *all* the shot pieces. The juxtaposition of these partial details in a given montage construction calls to life and forces into the light that *general* quality in which each detail has participated and which binds together all the details into a *whole*, namely, into that generalized *image*, wherein the creator, followed by the spectator, experiences the theme.²

This is also strikingly similar to Reverdy's thoughts on poetry. The paradox of *constructing* an artwork out of discontinuity is held together by the dialectical relations between the 'semantic disparity' that the modernist artist introduces, and 'the perception of the whole as a unity held together by contiguity relations and in which each element has its proper place'.³

¹V.I.Pudovkin, 'Introduction to the German Edition', in *On Film Technique* trans. Ivor Montagu (London: Victor Gollancz, 1929), p.15.

²Sergei Eisenstein, *The Film Sense*, pp.20-21.

³Theo Hermans, *The Structure of Modernist Poetry*, p.161.

Eisenstein had been expressing similar ideas, that had been translated in British periodicals from the mid-Thirties, when he abandoned his idea of the 'intellectual cinema' because it

fell into the error of letting us have not a unity of form and content.... But when these things became "telescoped" into "one," then was discovered the march of inner thinking as the basic law of construction of form and composition.¹

This 'march of inner thinking' is the filmic approximation of the automatic flow of consciousness. Read and Eisenstein, both influenced by romantic thought, and striving to adapt it to developments in twentieth-century art, reached remarkably similar conclusions. For both of them, the unconscious was not a source of content, or image, but of the form of the artwork. Adorno also sees in this aspect of film form 'the images of interior monologue', which 'may be to film what the visible world is to painting'. In so far as film can reproduce these interior images through the discontinuous movement of montage, 'film may become art'.² As we have seen, Read's use of image theory had developed, by the late Thirties, into a vehicle capable of mediating between automatism and organic form:

nothing is more difficult to secure than the immediate translation of the dream into its verbal equivalents.... we still have to cross the gulf between experience and expression. It can only be done in a state of trance or automatism, in which state the images of the dream draw words from the memory very much as a magnet might draw needles

¹Sergei Eisenstein, 'Film Form, 1935 - New Problems' *Life and Letters To-Day* xiii no.1 (September 1935), 185-194.

²Theodor W.Adorno, 'Transparencies on Film', *ibid.*

from a haystack.... The rhythm is found just as the words are found: by the law of attraction which seems to operate in the unconscious mind, a law which selects equivalents in visual image, verbal expression, musical expression, temporal extension. There is the image like a photographic film and there is at the same time an automatically selected and adjusted sound-track, perfectly expressing and faultlessly accompanying the imagery.¹

If words, rhythm and musical expression are taken as the form of the poem, and the thought image as the content, as Read implies, then it is through the operation of the imagination that the unconscious or dreamt contents of the mind are expressed: the poetic image is the organic form produced by automatism. It is in this sense that 'Artists are to a considerable degree automata'.² Expressed most concisely, the imagination 'fuses, melts and recombines the elements of perception, and bodies them forth in a unity or synthesis which is the work of art'.³ The function is almost an impersonal one, expressed in mechanical terms: as in his description of artists as 'automata', he abandons metaphors from the natural world to describe this process, but resorts instead to the mechanistic metaphors of magnets, and the film itself. As in the passage I have quoted from before:

The imagination is the faculty by which we can encompass the antithetical terms of our experience, thus bringing the widest oppositions within a single focus, under a light which fuses them into a wholeness, a coherence, a plastic and sensuous integrity which is the work of art.⁴

¹Herbert Read, 'Myth, Dream, and Poem', *Transition* *ibid.*, 184-185.

²Herbert Read, 'Art and Crisis', *Horizon*, 338.

³Herbert Read, *Coleridge as Critic* (London: Faber, 1949), p.26.

⁴Herbert Read, 'Myth, Dream, and Poem', *Transition*, 192.

Plainly, theories of organic form had travelled a long way from their origins with Schelling and Coleridge.

For both Read and Eisenstein, the inner automatic workings of the mind determine the form of the finished artwork. It is such artworks which possess 'organic form', even if they may be constructed in the most jarring and dislocatory modernist methods of montage and collage. The fact that Read reached this conclusion, and expressed it at its strongest, in the Second World War, leads one to a consideration of this structure of thought as a homology to the great social forces of the period which we have described as a 'community of praxis'. In Gramscian terms, such a period of 'expansive hegemony' is characterised by the creation, out of the disunity of objectively opposing class interests, a 'higher synthesis' of a greater 'collective will'.

3. Read in the War

I am one of those who went before you
 Five-and twenty years ago....
 The world was not renewed.¹

In Read's wartime poetry, these formal elements can be distinguished, along with new concerns that developed in response to the huge social changes brought by the war. He shared with Eliot a complete rejection of the intellectual and social developments before the war - the '*entre deux guerres*'. Like many of the modernists after the First World War, they both tended to follow the Spenglerian argument that Western Civilisation was slowly submerging itself in a period of chronic decline. The pre-war period was, following Sartre's distinction, one of 'serial history' in which each individual was condemned to his own universe: a state of monadological subjectivity similar to the one Eliot, in a footnote to *The Waste Land*, quotes his teacher Bradley as describing:

my experience falls within my own circle, a circle closed on the outside; and, with all its elements alike, every sphere is opaque to the others which surround it.... the whole world for each is peculiar and private to that soul.²

Such a passage would not be appropriate as a gloss for the inter-subjectivity characteristic of *Four Quartets*, or of Read's poetry.

¹Herbert Read, 'To a Conscript of 1940', *Collected Poems*, p.152.

²F.H.Bradley, quoted in T.S.Eliot, 'Notes on the Waste Land', *The Complete Poems and Plays of T.S.Eliot* (London: Faber, 1969), p.80.

A new sense of solidarity within the group was briefly found and celebrated by these poets in the war.

The search for the 'guilty men' of the pre-war period that had supposedly led to their present situation was also a common political theme throughout the nation in the early war years. The querulous and bitter turning back to the previous decade was not characteristic merely of the modernists or the intellectual strata of society, as is indicated by the massive sales of the book *Guilty Men*. In 1940, in the Preface to his autobiography, *Annals of Innocence and Experience*, Read wrote that 'These pages will make sufficiently clear that I consider the no-man's-years between the wars as largely futile, spent unprofitably by me and all my kind.'¹ As with Eliot, the crisis years of 1938 and 1939 were a turning point in the development of his social views. The idealism of the position he had gradually adopted in the aftermath of the First World War, as with many of his generation, in the hope of bringing an end to warfare and political oppression, was abandoned in the face of the clear necessity of facing strength with strength. Munich was seen as a dishonest betrayal. The moral nullity of this action was but a symptom of a wider social malaise, which, in Read's view, included the fields of art and literature. Writing in January 1939, he recalled that three years previously

I was already struggling against a certain sense of defeat which the political events of the previous two years had induced. The contrast between... the present year of grace is still more depressing. It is not

¹Herbert Read, *Annals of Innocence and Experience* (London: Faber, 1940), p.9.

merely that the triumph of fascism has everywhere carried along with it the exultant forces of philistinism, so that over more than half of Europe art, in any vital sense, can no longer be said to exist; but even in those countries which are still professedly democratic, a wave of indifference has swept over the art world.¹

Eliot also sees the immediate pre-war years as a time of artistic indifference. In an article published in 1947, he reflects on the closing of the *Criterion* in 1939. He had edited the review in the hope of expressing a Europe-wide cultural consciousness, but political events, 'the gradual closing of the mental frontiers of Europe', made this impossible, forcing him to close it down. He uses the quaint phrase 'autarky' to describe the totalitarian political systems becoming predominant in Europe. In such systems, there is cultural autarky as well as political and economic. 'This did not merely interrupt communications: I believe that it had a numbing effect upon creativity within every country.'² Read and Eliot's version of between-wars culture as a waste land enabled a new kind of wartime myth: that of the rebirth of culture and inspiration with the war. For Eliot, this rebirth was to come with the purifying experience of the Blitz. For Read, it was lodged more firmly in the political hopefulness of 1940-1941, when radical social transformation in Britain seemed a possibility.

¹Herbert Read, 'In What Sense "Living"?', *London Bulletin* no. 8-9 (January-February 1939), 5.

²T.S.Eliot, 'Culture and Politics', *The Adelphi* xxiii no.3 (April-June 1947), 119-121.

In Read's reviews and articles in the early Forties, he seems to have regarded the fault of between-wars art as its elitism, creating 'a private world which a few sensitive amateurs may share, but which does not touch the great public'.¹ Events were too huge and disturbing, and the artists, realising they were without influence, retreated from these concerns:

The Russian revolution seemed to have lost its early idealism; Fascism had triumphed in Italy and was gathering force in Germany; there was an immovable burden of lethargy and indifference in this country. It began to look as though the poet had no effective power in national life: his intelligence was not wanted, his idealism was despised.²

Like Eliot, this attitude of retrospective disillusionment was transmitted into his poetry. His major wartime poem, 'Ode Without Rhetoric, Written Before the Battle of Dunkirk, May, 1940', reflects on the period that followed the Great War, in what must surely be a consciously Audenesque tone:

Human, to relapse
into the old ways, to resume
the normality so patiently acquired
in the years of peace:
the family business, the suburban train
the tepid beer, the dart-board
the choice of golf or matins
the double bed, the gossip and the news
- the comforting news of arrested thieves
of women caught in adultery
of steady markets and the victory

¹Herbert Read, 'Public Styles and Private Languages', *The Listener* xxiv no.604 (8 August 1940), 207.

²Herbert Read, 'The New Romantic School', *The Listener* xxvii (23 April 1942), 533.

of the favourite team.

And so we drifted twenty years
down the stream of time
feeling that such a storm
could not break again.¹

Then he turns to a tone strongly reminiscent of the passage in
'East Coker' on *l'entre deux guerres*, 'Twenty years largely
wasted'.²

faith formulated but not maintained
twenty years
without design.

Also like Eliot, there is a clear theme of the war as a form of
retribution for the previous years of error and apathy, in a
passage which also is strikingly similar, in style and theme, to
parts of 'Little Gidding':

This is the hour of retribution
The city shaken, the power taken
from falsified hands.

This is the hour of retribution
the last farewell and the repetition
of the father's sacrifice....

¹Herbert Read, 'Ode Without Rhetoric, Written Before the Battle of Dunkirk, May, 1940', *Transformation* 1 (1943), 66-7. Despite the title, the first publication date implies that it may well not have been completed until two or three years after Dunkirk. When published in his *Collected Poems*, the title changed to 'Ode Written During the Battle of Dunkirk'.

When published, simply as 'Ode', in his *Collected Poems*, pp.157-164, Read excised some of the above lines, from 'the family business' to 'the favourite team'.

²T.S.Eliot, 'East Coker' section V.

This is the hour of retribution
 the hour of doom, the hour of extreme unction
 the hour of death.

For Read, the retribution, although depicted with a self-consciously ecclesiastical vocabulary, does not become part of a universalizing religious system that gives meaning to the experience. Firstly, it is not a universal retribution: it removes those in power, allowing for a secular reconstruction. The religious language is the only available language for these themes of death and redemptive punishment. Read's faith lies in people, so the religious terms are translated almost entirely to secular application. The retribution for Read comes only in the form of human and material destruction, while for Eliot the destruction is a manifestation of a greater meaning. Admittedly, Read wrote most, if not all of his poem before the Blitz. However, he had already experienced to the full the horrors of modern warfare: indeed, this had been instrumental in his early loss of religious faith, and his adoption of an oppositional political belief. As with many of those artists who formed the Continental avant garde, a major lesson of the previous war for British combatants had been the spiritual meaninglessness of the carnage. Discarding religion, many of these people adopted pacifism and socialism, or a more diffuse faith in humanity, as forms of belief that might avoid further carnage. Read explicitly acknowledges this difference between himself and the religious observers of the Second World War, such as Eliot:

Happy are those who can relieve
 suffering with prayer

Happy those who can rely on God
to see them through.
They can wait patiently for the end.

But we who have put our faith
in the goodness of man...

where can we turn for consolation?

The answer that Read proposes is partly political, and concerns only human agency. Rather than the passivity in the face of divine revelation that lies behind Eliot's poem, Read strikes to the core of the crisis - the apocalyptic fear of invasion - and sees beyond this, a source of hope within the people themselves. Even if the country is invaded, and the tyrant takes control,

He has put down a people but the people will rise again....
He has destroy'd their poets their seers and imagemakers
but others will be born and their works will withstand

the advance of armies that have power but no grace...
for against his symbol is the spirit and the spirit is a breath

that rises invincible to seek reincarnation
in flesh that cannot be defeated in hearts that rescind
the powers without persuasion the hands without art
to reign in aeons that are ageless in worlds without end.

Read proposes eternal human qualities that will always resist fascism, and, he believes, will eventually triumph. This was perhaps a belief easier to hold in the war, with the old order rapidly changing and apparently dissolving, as it strove to meet the demands of Total War. His faith is that of a utopian anarchist with the belief that the massive destruction of the war might

lead to a regeneration of the world along egalitarian principles. Important, if not central, to this regeneration, is the artist, who can create works that 'withstand' with grace and invincible spirit. The unusual quasi-religious use of the word 'grace' in the poem recalls his statement in *The Knapsack*: in wartime 'the real good' is 'an act of courage or of grace'.¹

In another of Read's wartime poems, 'To a Conscript of 1940', the concept of 'grace' is central to the meaning of the poem. It recounts a ghostlike meeting that for Read strongly recalls the previous war. Like Eliot's ghost in 'Little Gidding', the figure has a dreamy lack of distinctiveness, 'His footsteps muffled, his face unearthly grey', yet simultaneously there is a strong identification with 'my brother and my ghost'. Again as in 'Little Gidding', the narrator hails the ghost and addresses it. Read warns him how little was achieved in the last war, how

Power was retained where power had been misused
And youth was left to sweep away
The ashes that the fires had strewn beneath our feet.

Furthermore, heroism is an illusion, the conscript must go knowing that there is 'no certain use / In all your sacrifice', only then to understand the hard message

To fight without hope is to fight with grace
The self reconstructed, the false heart repaired.

¹Herbert Read ed., *The Knapsack, A Pocket-Book of Prose and Verse* (London: Routledge, 1939), pp.vi-vii.

In Read's quixotic politics, there is little room for hope. His anarchism is not so much a political position as the expression of an idealised and perfected utopian image of the fused group, the wartime community of praxis. Central to such anarchism is the personalist emphasis on the self which 'returns reluctantly upon itself', and, as with H.D., the importance of maintaining subjectivity in relations of organic interdependence:

The self perfected
 tranquil as a dove
 the heart elected
 to mutual aid.

Poetry and anarchism: Read's political position is gained from the belief that all 'doctrinaire civilizations', capitalist, fascist or marxist 'by their very structure and principles exclude the values in which and for which the poet lives'.¹ The position is, very much like Eliot's, an elitist one, in which the cultural values of the artist are seen as besieged by the advance of mass civilization. Armies that 'lack grace', hands 'without art' that kill poets and painters: it is not just fascism, but an Orwellian fear of the rise of mass society.

¹Herbert Read, *Poetry and Anarchism*, p.23.

4. Read, Politics and Poetry.

Throughout the Thirties and Forties, Read simultaneously deplored what he termed 'bourgeois academicism' in painting, and maintained a constant polemic against socialist realism: indeed, for him, they were both representatives of his major enemy, realism. He describes how Marxism, as represented by the Communist Party,

has become an exclusively rational and anti-aesthetic doctrine. It grows more and more calvinistic towards all works of the imagination, and produces, in the name of socialist-realism, a substitute art which would be contemptible if it were not so pathetically bourgeois.¹

In the Thirties he saw surrealism as the great hope of revolutionary art, and simultaneously hailed it as a 'reaffirmation of the romantic principle'.² As he struggled to define these terms, it became clear that his conception of revolution was pre-Bolshevik, entertaining the romantic hopes of an instant classless society, which would be a revolution away from mass society. The strength and consistency of his aesthetic position entailed a rejection of instrumental political policy such as was practiced by the Communist Party. In practical terms, this was an ineffectual position in face of the struggle to the death between fascism and the political systems that it threatened.

¹Herbert Read, 'Why I am a Surrealist', *New English Weekly* x no.21 (March 4 1937), 413-414.

²Herbert Read, ed., *Surrealism* (London: Faber, 1936), p.28.

Read's consistently anarchist politics puts him at a similar distance from the mainstream of British political thought as Eliot's extreme conservatism; although, if anything, Read was in an even more contradictory position in relation to society than his friend and fellow editor. It is consistent, and hence relatively acceptable, for a conservative to adopt an elitist position. For an anarchist to preach high cultural values is to court the suspicion of hypocrisy. In the pre-war years Read's anarchism often seemed a convenient position from which to attack communists, by professing to inhabit an even more radical position. Like Eliot, and from a similar lofty position as high-cultural poet-prophet, pronouncing on human affairs, he conflated the two powerful political forces of the inter-war years into one indistinguishable enemy:

I believe that the poet is necessarily an anarchist, and that he must oppose all organised conceptions of the State, not only those which we inherit from the past, but equally those which are imposed on people in the name of the future. In this sense I make no distinction between fascism and marxism.¹

Similarly Eliot, writing at the same time, in *The Idea of a Christian Society*, rhetorically debunks one set of terms ('democracy', 'fascism', and 'communism'), and replaces them with words of his own devising (the former as 'neutral' and the latter two as 'pagan' society). By their nature these words tend to lend support to his argument

¹Herbert Read, *Poetry and Anarchism* (London: Faber, 1938), p.15.

that his own conception of a 'positive' Christian society is the only alternative, while simultaneously obscuring that the 'pagan' and his 'positive' have much in common in terms of their authoritarian nature; they really only differ in what Eliot called the 'ends' of the society. Like Read, he conflates fascism and communism. With these terms in place, Eliot can state starkly that 'the choice before us is between the formation of a new Christian culture, and the acceptance of a pagan one'.¹ More extremely yet, Eliot later in this book states it thus: 'If you will not have God (and he is a jealous God) you should pay your respects to Hitler and Stalin.'²

Such an extremity of choice seems slightly unreal to the modern reader. However, this was a common thought structure of the period of political polarisation in the Thirties, and especially the period of extreme crisis just before the war.³ Often, with a subtle shift of terms, it also carried on into the early war years, as the Thirties were looked back on as a period of moribundity and appeasement, a time of spiritual nullity in which the evil of fascism had been allowed to grow. Thus Eliot in the wartime *Quartets* still insists on the moral necessity of choosing between 'pyre or pyre'. Although the appeal is not in such directly political terms, the choice still embodies 'the only hope', the alternative to

¹T.S.Eliot, *The Idea of a Christian Society* (London: Faber, 1939), p.13.

²Ibid., p.63.

³For instance Stephen Spender, also writing in the late Thirties, perceives 'that there are only two political ways left, that of the capitalist rivals and rulers or the "Brotherhood of Man"' (Stephen Spender, *Forward from Liberalism* (London: Gollancz, 1937), p.20.)

which is 'despair'.¹ Lurking in Eliot's statement of Christian ethos, there is still, not too far from the surface, the unsubtle warning that it is either Hitler and Stalin on one side, or 'a jealous God' who will burn you with just as intolerable a torment as the dictators, but in a refining fire.

With the approach of war, and in the experience of Britain's period of isolation up until 1942, Read's friend George Orwell developed an attitude that was also strikingly similar to Eliot's, but from an almost mirror opposite position. Like Eliot, he thought that the lamentable situation of Britain in the early Forties could be blamed on the negligence of the previous decade, and exemplifies the fact that that the present order was unacceptable. Like Eliot, he felt that in order to fight totalitarianism, Britain would first have to go through a radical social transformation. Unlike Eliot, the transformation would be into his idealistic English form of socialism, as outlined in his essay *The Lion and the Unicorn*.²

The years 1940 and 1941 were simultaneously a period of the greatest danger, and yet the greatest hope for British intellectuals. Hope because at this danger point, socialism seemed a viable alternative, and perhaps the only choice, for the conduct of the war. At the same time that Orwell was writing his

¹T.S.Eliot, 'Little Gidding', section iv.

²George Orwell, *The Lion and the Unicorn* (London: Searchlight Books, 1941).

essay, Read wrote to a friend 'we can only win by social revolution'.¹ For Read, as for Orwell, the posing of a choice in the late Thirties was made difficult by his growing antipathy towards the Communist Party, architects of the popular front and the major beacon of hope to most left-wing intellectuals. Read's involvement with the surrealists was characterised by an insistence on the revolutionary nature of their art, stating at a speech during the 1936 International Surrealist Exhibition that 'Surrealism will only be truly successful in the degree to which it leads... to revolutionary action.'² Parallel with this there was an ongoing condemnation of the Communist Party, with which the surrealist movement aligned itself, not only because of the Party's official espousal of socialist realism,³ but more and more because of Read's doubts about the nature of Soviet communism and its unscrupulous international alliances. As we have seen, his view of revolution was imbued with nineteenth-Century romantic principles: more Kropotkin than Lenin. He supported the anarchists in the Spanish Civil War and, as a friend of Orwell's, must have been aware of their cynical and violent repression by the Soviet-backed socialists in Barcelona. From the late Thirties he publicized his anarchism more and more frequently, and in late 1939, possibly as a consequence of these activities, he was ejected from the English Surrealist Group.⁴

¹Herbert Read to Rayner Heppenstal, 2 March 1941, quoted in James King, *The Last Modern*, p.195.

²Herbert Read, 'Speech by Herbert Read at the Conway Hall', *International Surrealist Bulletin / Bulletin Internationale Du Surréalisme* no.4 (September 1936), 7.

³He was castigated in *Contemporary Poetry and Prose* for his remark that surrealism was 'more marxist than the marxists'.

⁴See Paul C. Ray, *The Surrealist Movement in England*, pp.227-228.

Another possible reason for Read's expulsion was his involvement in over-orthodox groupings: he was a frequent contributor to *The Listener* and edited the connoisseur-orientated art journal, *The Burlington Magazine*. He edited a patriotic literary anthology of poetry on being English, *The English Vision*, and immediately on the outbreak of war, came out with another anthology designed for use by soldiers, *The Knapsack*. In his preface, his tone is almost indistinguishable from the patriotism of the previous war:

In my choice I have been guided by certain convictions. One is that the love of glory, even in our materialistic age, is still the main source of virtue. The real good is not done by calculation nor defined by reason; it is an act of courage or of grace. I have therefore given a certain prominence to great deeds and noble characters.¹

To his credit, he did include the letters to his son of Nicola Sacco, the executed American anarchist,² along with the traditional English military heroes.

Nothing, however, could show more clearly how the ethos of the junior officer in the trenches lasted, well after he had rejected other aspects of militarism. Many of the Labour politicians in the ascendancy during the Forties, including

¹Herbert Read, ed., *The Knapsack*, p.vii.

²This inclusion, incidentally, probably provided the inspiration for Alun Lewis's wartime poem 'Sacco Writes to His Son' in Alun Lewis, *Selected Poetry and Prose* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1966), p.92.

Clement Atlee himself, came from a similar background. Another member of MacDonald's ineffectual Twenties Labour government, who had fought at Ypres, was Oswald Mosley. The difficult role of officership in the trenches necessitated constructing a solidarity with 'the men' in a common effort, by means of a devotion to their immediate interests that was often selfless, combined with blind and fatal heroism in the greater and fundamentally unquestioned cause of winning the war. As a result of this unity of officers and men, the view of the working class among people of Read's background was often sentimental, as much as it was paternal and sometimes authoritarian. The coming of this generation to power and maturity in and before the Second World War perhaps explains the ease with which the principles of the people's war were taken up by large sections of the press, civil service, and politicians. The beauty of the concept was that, in true populist fashion, it combined nationalism with socialism: unlike the internationalist and Communist-dominated left politics of the Thirties, the home-spun socialism of the people's war was born into a totally isolated Britain. Since there was little serious question of communist involvement, it allowed the anti-Stalinist left writers, such as Read and Orwell, freely to develop their own hopeful political ideas, with the euphoric but short-lived sense that they had most of the country behind them. For such writers, the years 1940-41 were a period in which expression of the utopian was possible. However, once Orwell recognised that the huge social transformation he had envisioned was not going to happen, he reacted by writing the bleak dystopian novels, *Animal Farm* and *1984*. Read also moved from the hopefulness of some of his poetry, and the ideal vision of a society restructured by

means of an art-centred education in *Education Through Art*, to an increasingly bleak and more embattled position in his essays and poems.

Read's poetry in the war period is distinguished by its appeal to pastoral, an appeal which instantly brings to mind the similar pastoral motif running through patriotic poetry of the previous war. The motif is in fact common to almost all levels of British poetry in the Second World War, and much of it has to do with the idealized image of the country that is necessary during war. Necessary not just in a social sense, but also (and the two are, of course, linked) in a personal way. Norman Nicholson points to this characteristic:

Many poets... were cautious about [the war's] aims and dubious about its eventual results.... but they still found, in the English landscape, something of the world that they hoped would survive.¹

For Read, the intended effect of his use of pastoral forms may have been to do with his Morrissian syndicalist politics. The organic becomes not just a formal principle of his aesthetics, as an increasingly romantic depiction of nature becomes the content of much of his wartime poetry. It is no coincidence that the closest parallel with these

¹Norman Nicholson, 'The Regional Poets of the Forties', *Aquarius* nos.17 & 18 (1986/7), 84-89.

informal poems can be found in the 'conversation poems' of the English organic philosopher, Coleridge.

In 'Ode Written Before the Battle of Dunkirk', human form is first seen as part of the organic 'life / and growth, colour and form', and indeed, is 'like a petal on the provident soil'. War is shown as an interruption of this organic life:

the human bond
is broken, the race divided. The petals
no longer lie withering where they fall
but are torn and crush'd, and into the soil
mashed rawly.

Later in the poem, the properly balanced self is described as a blossoming flower. As a symbol of the garden, a pastoral image of peace,

this flower shall exhale
its scented peace
bringing to the war-weary world
the perennial release
from fear.

Pastoral for Read thus becomes a source of symbols not only for man's lost state of bliss, but also for images of regeneration and reconstruction. It is in his other long war-time poem, 'A World Within a War', that the pastoral theme receives its fullest treatment. Centring on the house that he

built sixteen years before, 'By an oak tree on an acre of wild land', he concentrates on the rural details, the trees that surround the house. Like the common theme of pastoral as continuously under threat, his house is

A secular and insecure retreat -
The alien world is never far away.¹

Throughout the poem there is a continuous sense of the external world of 'alarm and horror' of which Read is simultaneously aware, as he contemplates beauty. In such a situation, his wood is

a chancel where the mind
Sways in terror of the formal foe.

The threat to the pastoral world first takes the form, in a familiar Thirties image of impending mass culture, of the developing suburbs of a city advancing towards his retreat, temporarily halted by the war. Later in the poem, the threat takes the form of beaters hunting for game, and then, evocatively, an image of a falcon swooping for its prey, hinting at the ever-present image of the dive-bomber. As with Eliot, as we shall see in the next chapters, the threat of destruction was both external to the natural world yet also part of it, a technological foe endowed with a beak and claws.

¹Herbert Read, 'A World Within a War', *Collected Poems*, p.167.

However, in the terms of the poem the pastoral is also a source of strength. There is the traditional literary invocation of the seasonal changes in country life:

To the sere earth
The ancient ritual returns: the months
Have their heraldic labours once again.

He describes this process, season by season, with himself, working in his study, at the centre of this rural activity, on a new 'Book of Hours'. He contemplates the laws in nature that are, in his aesthetics, those of organic form

Illustrious in leaves, in tiny webs
Spun by the ground-spider: in snailshells
And mushroom gills: in acorns and gourds -
The design everywhere evident
The purpose still obscure.

People, he implies, find their own true form in the contemplation of nature:

the pattern once perceiv'd and held
Is then viable; in good gait and going
In fine song and singular sign: in all
God's festival of perfect form.

This organic union with nature endows the woodland inhabitants with the 'grace' necessary to withstand the external threat, even in death. With this strength, there is still the possibility of constructing 'A crystal city in the age of peace'. The mixture of organic and geometric form is significant in Read's thought.

The struggle between concepts of subjectivity and membership of the social group that Read portrays in his poetry and theoretical writings reaches a synthesis during the war. As such, the pattern of his work strongly echoes the triumph of the organic as a new model for the nature of society: whereas in the Thirties and previously, State Welfare arguments had always been defeated by an appeal to libertarian individualism, during the war

Rearmament, bombing, evacuation, food rationing, military and industrial conscription - all gave an existential reality to the organic conception of society in a way that had never been achieved by abstract analysis.¹

In the concluding chapter, I will examine how these ideas of organic form helped to shape some notions of reconstruction in the achievement of the post-war world.

¹José Harris, 'Political Ideas and the Debate on State Welfare, 1940-45', in Harold L. Smith, ed. *War and Social Change, British Society in the Second World War* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1986), pp.233-263.

CHAPTER THREE :

MONTAGE IN THE WORK OF ELIOT AND H.D.

1. Common Themes.

*remember these (you said)
who when the earth-quake shook their city,
when angry blast and fire*

*broke open their frail door,
did not forget
beauty.¹*

As outsiders to British society, H.D. and Eliot were permitted a privileged objectivity not available to other writers in Britain. Identification with British society was not automatic, but a matter of choice. Both writers also escaped imbrication within the British class system, at least in terms of education and early upbringing. They could therefore use a collective 'voice'

¹H.D., 'Ancient Wisdom Speaks', *Collected Poems* (New York: New Directions, 1983), p.482.

in their poetry without fear of writing from a particular class position: their voice could attain to a national universality where native writers were doomed, whatever their beliefs, to write with the voice of their class. Through the experience of living in Britain during the war and living through the Blitz, H.D. came to identify herself as a member of the community. Eliot had been naturalized into English society for longer than H.D., and in order to place the subtle shifts in his attitudes and poetic ambitions, these have to be traced back to at least the beginning of the Thirties. In his conclusion to *The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism*, written in 1933, he was already showing signs of a search for a poetry that would be socially useful by

cut[ting] across all the present stratifications of public taste - stratifications which are perhaps a sign of social disintegration. The ideal medium for poetry, to my mind, and the most direct means of social 'usefulness' for poetry, is the theatre.¹

Eliot's interest in social themes was not restricted to the theatre. The abandoned fragments from his attempt at a political poem, 'Coriolan', show him groping towards the construction of a politically directed long poem from the start of the decade. After the completion of 'Ash Wednesday' in 1930, he was looking for a different way forward in his poetry. A hint at an appropriate form for such a poem may have been given him by his translation of St. John Perse's *Anabasis*, in which Eliot notes, in the 'Preface', an 'abbreviation of method' in which a sequence of apparently unconnected images 'concentrates into one intense impression of

¹T.S.Eliot, *The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism* (London, 1933), p.146.

barbaric civilization'.¹ Using this method, Perse creates a successful modernist poem on the theme of ancient society. Eliot may have contemplated a similar work on modern society. For the next ten years, his poetry diverged into two strands: a subjective poetry of internal states and external impressions, such as the 'Landscapes' and *Burnt Norton*, and then his plays, an attempt to make poetry 'socially useful'. The unfulfilled project of 'Coriolan' occupies a position between them: poetry with a social theme. In its incompleteness, it stands as a marker of what he wanted to achieve. Although social analysis and polemic concerned him increasingly throughout the decade in his essays and ephemeral writings, it was not until the outbreak of the war that he was able to successfully integrate social themes into his poetry itself, as opposed to the drama.

In setting and structure, Eliot's plays show a gradual development from the non-naturalistically formalized to the more conventionally dramatic: the pageantry of *The Rock*, through the classic drama of *Murder in the Cathedral*, to the drawing-room setting of *The Family Reunion*. Interestingly, all three plays also show an engagement with forms of popular culture: the music-hall for *The Rock*, murder fiction for *Murder in the Cathedral* (Eliot toyed with calling the play 'The Archbishop Murder Case')², and the conventional country-house drama for *The Family Reunion*. This engagement works through an ironic

¹T.S.Eliot, *Anabasis, a Poem by St-J Perse* (London: Faber, 1930), p.10.

²E.Martin Browne, *The Making of T.S.Eliot's Plays* (Cambridge: CUP, 1970). Letter from Eliot to Browne, 21 February 1935, quoted p.351.

displacement of the audience's expectations, an irony that works on a number of levels. Firstly, the audience would be aware of Eliot's reputation as a 'difficult' modern poet. These expectations he deflated by the use of Cockney dialogue and after-dinner-speech type jokes in *The Rock*.¹ The Knight's use of modern reference and prose in *Murder in the Cathedral*, as well as the mundane worldly dialogue of the Chorus members in *The Family Reunion*, are other examples. Another layer of irony is imposed in the establishment and defeat of genre expectations. Thus music-hall patter was usually expected to be continuously irreverent and generally to express working-class aspirations. In *The Rock* the cockney dialogue - unmistakably in the tone of the music-hall tradition - expresses firm religious faith and the pious aspiration of building churches in the middle-class suburbs of North London. In *Murder in the Cathedral* Eliot hoped to build up the atmosphere of a murder story, only to have the Knights reveal themselves by name to the audience, and launch into a defence of their actions. In *The Family Reunion* the trick is to build up the conventional atmosphere of the country-house play, only to have the protagonist Harry irrupt into the drama trailing behind him the supernatural Eumenides, from an entirely different theatrical tradition, while also turning some of the less important family members into a chorus. The plays 'cut across... the present stratifications of public taste' and thus attain to a social usefulness, in Eliot's programmatic view of 1933. His plays of

¹eg 'Here were decent godless people:
Their only monument the asphalt road
And a thousand lost golf-balls'

T.S.Eliot, *The Complete Poems and Plays* (London: Faber, 1969), p.155.

this period attempt to bridge the divide between modernism and popular culture, but they can only do so by depending on this very division. *The Rock* is virtually meaningless for an audience unacquainted with music-hall. The title of *Murder in the Cathedral* loses its penny-dreadful resonance for the modern ear. The setting of *The Family Reunion* merely seems quaintly old-fashioned, now that the theatrical genre it attempts to subvert has disappeared. All of these effects would have worked better at the time; it is a mark of the strength of Eliot's attempt to cross the 'great divide' between modernism and mass culture, that his plays were so inscribed in the times in which they were written. After *The Family Reunion* he stopped work on plays for a period, giving as a reason the outbreak of war.

During the war, as observed in the first chapter of this thesis, the 'stratifications of public taste' were no longer so visible, as, for instance, film was made to broaden its appeal to all classes. Classical modernism constitutively differentiates itself from the mass culture upon which it is dependent. When this division becomes invisible, modernism mutates. This mutation can be traced in the development of the *Four Quartets* from *Burnt Norton*. Where Eliot's plays in the Thirties depend upon cutting across 'the stratifications of public taste', *Burnt Norton* remains firmly within the bounds of high modernism. Even before the start of the poem, the fragments in Greek from Heraklitos proclaim, as with *The Waste Land*, a certain inaccessibility to those without a classical education. With an irony that may have been intended by Eliot, the first fragment states: 'Though the

word belongs to all in common, the masses live as though they had a wisdom of their own'. Heraklitos's statement is clearly intended by Eliot to provide a comment on the neglect of Christianity. However, the division between 'the word' and the masses also replicates the high art/mass-cultural division typical of modernism, which is perhaps closer to the meaning of Heraklitos's original comment on the division between the written word and common-sense. The change can be traced on the level of style. There is a directness of appeal to common experience in his wartime *Quartets*, and a wide range of accessible cultural reference, which contrasts with the linguistic obscurity and violent juxtapositioning of images in much of his pre-war poetry. Unlike *Burnt Norton*, the wartime *Quartets* bear no inscriptions from the Greek. In Eliot's *Paris Review* interview, he described this difference in the later *Quartets* as 'speaking in a way which is more like conversing with your reader'.¹ This is one of the things that he learned from his earlier attempt to engage with popular culture: his plays.

The rose-garden is the site of the visionary moment in *Burnt Norton*. This location is contrasted to the false vision of section III, which is usually taken as a description of tube passengers, although there is little internal evidence for this in the first paragraph. However the 'flickering' quality of the light,

¹'Interview with T.S.Eliot', in George Plimpton, ed., *The Paris Review Interviews: Writers at Work* 2nd Series (London: Secker and Warburg, 1977), pp.104-5.

and the emphasis on 'distraction' and meaningless fantasies strongly suggests Eliot's attitude to the cinema:

Here is a place of disaffection
 Time before and time after
 In a dim light....
 Neither plenitude nor vacancy. Only a flicker
 Over the strained time-ridden faces
 Distracted from distraction by distraction
 Filled with fancies and empty of meaning
 Tumid apathy with no concentration...
 in this twittering world

If there is any doubt that this is passage could also be a description of the audience at a cinema, one need only compare it to a statement that Eliot made in a lecture delivered in 1937, counterposing the cinema to 'all serious drama':

the cinema comes near... to distraction, to "taking our minds off..." the things they ought to be on as well as the things they need at times to be taken off from... the film... is always at a further remove from some deeper reality; and to see a moving picture is nearer to merely participating in a common and impersonal dream.¹

Eliot argues that the seeming vision of the cinema - the ghosts on the screen - are false. Other comments also demonstrate his antipathy towards the cinema, especially when defined against the visionary verse drama that he was trying to construct in this period. 'The cinema', he says, in an article from 1936, 'gives an

¹T.S.Eliot, *Religious Drama: Medieval and Modern*, (New York, 1954) [p.15]

illusion not of the stage but of life itself'.¹ While the music-hall comedian builds up an active rapport with his or her audience, film depends on the audience believing the illusion to be real. Eliot portrays his own plays as a reaction against the pervasive influence of film techniques on the stage: verse drama is intended to build up a rapport with the audience like that achieved in music-hall, in which the audience must be constantly aware 'that what they are hearing is verse'.² His plays are an attempt to 'take the opposite direction'³ from film by using elements from other forms of popular culture, such as music-hall, the popular novel, and the provincial stage. 'Popular' culture, with a perceived aesthetic value and tradition as opposed to the new mass culture of film, was used in his attempt to construct a more populist aesthetic. For Eliot in the Thirties, film was a distraction from the 'deeper reality' which he wished his audience to comprehend; it is the 'common and impersonal dream' that distracts the 'time-ridden faces' of the audience in *Burnt Norton* from the hidden, deeper reality of the moment in the rose-garden. His work in the Thirties can be seen as a dialogue with this new mass culture, which can only be traced in his work by its absence, as he conscientiously took his work in 'the opposite direction'.

Eliot's portrayal of the cinema audience in *Burnt Norton* should be seen not only as part of his reaction against film as a

¹T.S.Eliot, 'The Need for Poetic Drama', *The Listener* xvi (25 November 1938), pp.994-5.

²Ibid.

³Ibid.

medium of popular entertainment. It also sets up an opposition that continues through the other Quartets, between the site of the visionary experience, that is the place of the title of each poem, and the 'place of disaffection', an urban location, presumably always London. London for Eliot is 'the timekept city',¹ a place of 'time-ridden faces' and of the 'usual / Pastimes and drugs, and features of the press'.² The exterior locations are the ones in which time ceases and the visionary moment is allowed to exist, 'At the still point of the turning world'.³ This opposition is active until the moment in *Little Gidding* in which a vision is afforded on the streets of London itself.

The formal pattern established in *Burnt Norton* remains the same in the three wartime Quartets, but there is a striking change of emphasis which radically questions the assumptions built into the earlier poem. *Burnt Norton* opens with a notoriously abstract philosophical diagesis on the nature of time. The opening of *East Coker* immediately and specifically situates the poem within the materiality of human time:

In my beginning is my end. In succession
Houses rise and fall, crumble, are extended,
Are removed, destroyed, restored, or in their place
Is an open field, or a factory, or a by-pass.⁴

¹T.S.Eliot *The Rock* (London, 1934), p.50.

²T.S.Eliot, *The Dry Salvages* V.

³T.S.Eliot, *Little Gidding* IV. The line had previously been used by Eliot in the 'Triumphal March' section of 'Coriolan'.

⁴T.S.Eliot, *East Coker* I.

In *Burnt Norton* the opening is followed by the entry into a walled ornamental rose-garden: an image of aesthetic reclusion, contemplation and shelter from the external world. In *East Coker* the entry is into a village. Again, the materiality is emphasised not just by the location in a lane by an open field, but by the passing van, forcing 'you' to 'lean against a bank'. The van brings to mind the very bustle of the world that the garden of Burnt Norton - penetrable only through a door and then a gate - seeks to exclude. The garden at Burnt Norton is timeless: only the isolated mention of 'dried concrete' is used to emphasise the timelessness of the vision. At East Coker, the factory, the by-pass and the van insist on the contemporaneity of the village. In *Burnt Norton* the garden is only inhabited by ethereal, child-like ghosts, half-seen in reflection. There are ghosts in *Little Gidding* but they are described with such specificity as to leave no doubt that they are seen. Unlike the evanescent spiritual children at Burnt Norton, who seem to have only a personal meaning, these apparitions are clearly depictions of the social and the non-spiritual. The description of the rustic dance gradually transforms into a contemplation of the agricultural function of this farmland ('The time of milking and the time of harvest') and then the gross materiality of earthly existence:

The time of the coupling of man and woman
And that of beasts. Feet rising and falling.
Eating and drinking. Dung and death.

Whereas the unpeopled rose-garden at Burnt Norton is part of the aesthetic world (the roses 'Had the look of flowers that were

looked at'), the fields around East Coker are resolutely part of the world of commerce, labour and agriculture. Similarly, in *The Dry Salvages*, Eliot simultaneously dwells on the god-like aspect of the river, and its use as 'a conveyor of commerce'.¹

In *Burnt Norton*, he maintains a literary tradition in which the ornamental garden (and country house to which it belongs) is the place of beauty and contemplation. In *East Coker*, the literary tradition of village pastoral is invoked only to be radically interrogated by the insistence on the materiality and mortality of life in the country.

It seems clear that Eliot was building up a new set of oppositions: not just between visionary and time-ridden, but within the visionary moment, a new division between ethereal and earthly. *Burnt Norton* builds up an opposition between timeless vision and the distraction of being in time. This division is not one of dissension or debate: it is part of a 'the form, the pattern' that has the stillness of 'a Chinese jar'. The oppositions in *East Coker* are of a different nature: dynamic, unresolved, even mutually clashing and incompatible. The opening points to the violent 'succession' of very different landscapes and buildings. The rustic dancing is clumsily mirthful and corporeal: a rustic burlesque that carnivalises the classical stillness of *Burnt Norton's*:

Neither flesh nor fleshless;

¹T.S.Eliot, *Dry Salvages* I.

Neither from nor towards; at the still point, there the dance is,
But neither arrest nor movement.

The predominant tone of *East Coker* (and the *Quartets* that followed) is questioning, avoiding the unequivocal statement. Section II opens:

What is the late November doing
With the disturbance of the spring...?

Although that paragraph ends with the surety of 'shall', it is undermined by the opening of the following paragraph:

That was a way of putting it - not very satisfactory:
A periphrastic study in worn-out poetical fashion.

This is followed by a discussion of the deceptiveness of lived experience. This is an imposed pattern, and false

For the pattern is new in every moment
And every moment is a new and shocking
Valuation of all we have been.

This statement could not have applied to the poetics of *Little Gidding*, constructed in one voice that does not contradict, dominated by the image of stillness within a dance, as if the pattern is fixed. It is no coincidence that of the four poems this is the one most dominated by aesthetic themes and objects: the rose-garden, the bowl of rose-leaves, the flowers, the kingfisher, the music, the Chinese jar, the violin, the 'figure of the ten stairs'.

In classical art the aesthetic can be defined; it fits a set of rules. 'Words' may be unsatisfactory, they may not 'stay still', but they surround a stable and unequivocal meaning, the Word. This is significantly different from the 'intolerable wrestle / With words and meanings' in *East Coker*, in which it is recognized that no final meaning will ever be achieved. In the poetics outlined in Section V of *East Coker*, Eliot explicitly looks back at his work over the previous twenty years of *entre deux guerres*, rejecting the illusion that there is an attainable meaning, admitting instead that there is only the recurrent 'fight to recover' some eternally unattainable meaning, with no sense of an eventual resolution. Instead, there is a 'pattern more complicated' of the irresolvable holding together of contradictions, accumulating throughout the poem. The end of the poem explicitly rejects the hope for a single piercing visionary moment expressed in *Burnt Norton*:

Not the intense moment
Isolated, with no before and after,
But a lifetime burning in every moment.

The circularity and endlessness of the process is emphasized by the poems' beginning and end, encouraging an endlessly repetitive reading of the poem: a radically different timelessness from the 'out of time' moment of *Burnt Norton*. The aesthetic of *Burnt Norton* is an austere and classical one. *East Coker* can be better

understood by seeing it as an organic artwork. According to Bürger, these are

constructed according to the syntagmatic pattern; individual parts and the whole form a dialectical unity. An adequate reading is described by the hermeneutic circle: the parts can be understood only through the whole, the whole only through the parts.¹

As the word 'circle' implies, the process of interpretation is endless. The brilliance of Eliot's conception is that *Burnt Norton* becomes incorporated into the larger more fluid pattern of the *Quartets* as a whole, the pattern established by *East Coker*. Only at the end of the writing of 'East Coker' did he envision the writing of four poems, each with an element, in which *East Coker* would have earth, and *Burnt Norton*, air. While writing *East Coker*, he seems to have thought in terms of writing a trilogy, in which, presumably, the third poem would have provided a resolution of the contradictions between the aesthetic-subjective and the material-social worlds explored in the previous two poems. Whether trilogy or quartet, *East Coker* sets up the idea of a larger pattern, a dance of endless reading, which enables a retrospective placement of *Burnt Norton* not as an individual poem, but as the first of four *Quartets*, incorporating the fixity of the earlier poem within the 'pattern more complicated'.

The reasons for the radical change in Eliot's poetics between *Burnt Norton* and *East Coker* can be found in his social

¹Peter Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, p. 79.

and critical writings of the period. As early as August 1940, a few months after the formation of Churchill's coalition government, writing for the conservative audience of the *Christian News-Letter*, he wrote that

people want from their statesmen... not... the values of a class to which they do not themselves belong, or even merely those of the class to which they do belong, but of the nation as a whole.¹

This wish for manifestations of the nation as united (if not classless) is seen even more strongly in his writings on poetry. In a lecture delivered in 1942, Eliot warned that 'poetry must not stray too far from the ordinary everyday language which we use and hear.... it cannot afford to lose its contact with the changing language of common intercourse'.² A lecture delivered a year later elaborated on the same theme. Eliot's uncharacteristic repetition of the word 'common' with positive connotations, here as elsewhere in this period, is notable:

Emotion and feeling, then, are best expressed in the common language of the people - that is, in the language common to all classes: the structure, the rhythm, the sound, the idiom of a language, express the personality of the people which speak it... in a homogeneous people the feelings of the most refined and complex have something in common with those of the most crude and simple... when a civilisation is healthy, the great poet will have something to say to his fellow countrymen at every level of education.³

¹T.S.Eliot, Quoted in Roger Kojecky, *T.S.Eliot's Social Criticism* (London: Faber, 1971), p.179.

²T.S.Eliot, *The Music of Poetry The Third W.P.Ker Memorial Lecture delivered in the University of Glasgow, 24th February 1942* (Glasgow: Jackson, 1942), p.13.

³T.S.Eliot, 'The Social Function of Poetry', *The Adelphi* xxi no.4 (July-September 1945), 152 (originally delivered as a lecture in May 1943). Published in *On Poetry and Poets* (London: Faber, 1957), pp.19-20.

A poet, he argued, would have to live ideas 'communally' in order to 'express the culture in which he lives'. This almost egalitarian stress on national unity and common-ness is usually absent from Eliot's pre-war writings, and indicates that he was eager to ally himself with the national collectivity. In his wartime postscript to *The Idea of a Christian Society* he allies himself with 'the common struggle'; and in Little Gidding, one of the first communes, 'All [are] touched by a common genius'.¹ The surprising consummation of this tendency is given in his decision to vote 'the labor ticket' in the elections of 1945.²

It is true that Eliot had wished to make his work more accessible to those outside the narrow section of society that read his poems, from at least the early Thirties. The first serious attempt to do so was with *The Rock*, his pageant play about the building of churches in some of London's new suburbs. It is in fact given to the Cockney bricklayer Ethelbert, the first expression of the notion that provided the opening of *Burnt Norton*:

There's some new notion about time, what says that the past - what's behind you - is what's goin' to 'appen in the future, bein' as the future 'as already 'appened.³

¹T.S.Eliot, *Little Gidding*, section iii.

²Allen Tate et.al., 'The New Criticism', *The American Scholar* xx no.1 (Winter 1950-51), 87.

³T.S.Eliot, *The Rock*, pp.15-16

Eliot later put a less colloquial version of this speech into the mouth of one of the priests in *Murder in the Cathedral*, although later rejecting it. Whether in Cockney or normal speech, it is hard to credit this as good dramatic writing, its metaphysicality being alien to the stage, in which speech must bear a tangible relation to action or at least character. It was perhaps in sensing how uneasily such notions worked on the stage that Eliot later transferred it to his poem: yet its presence in *The Rock*, and its almost unedited transference from *Murder in the Cathedral* to *Burnt Norton*, shows that for Eliot, the drama was a continuation of his poetic themes by other means. He was not writing for an audience, he was addressing one, attempting to transfer the themes that preoccupied him in his poetry to a more popular audience. Eliot openly admitted to 'the task of evangelisation' in his plays.¹ The didactic elements in *The Rock* and *Murder in the Cathedral* are not hidden, both being written expressly for a predisposed and specifically Anglican audience. His rhetoric of the time, however, suggests something other:

We need not assume that the possible audiences represent one class rather than another, or one political tendency rather than another. So far as the dramatic artist is concerned "the people" is everybody except the present occupants of the stalls at the more expensive theatres.²

¹T.S.Eliot, *Religious Drama: Medieval and Modern*, p.19

²T.S.Eliot, 'Audiences, Producers, Plays, Poets' *New Verse* 18 Dec 1935, pp.3-4.

Perhaps Eliot was writing in a tone he expected readers of the left-wing *New Verse* would accept, but he certainly implies that he is aiming to address more than the willing churchgoers and attenders of religious festivals that *The Rock* and *Murder in the Cathedral* were aimed at. One would thus expect that when he came to write his first play intended for the theatre itself, he would aim away from the occupants of 'the more expensive theatres'. However, *The Family Reunion* played to just such audiences at the Westminster Theatre when it opened in 1939. The play portrays life among the upper-class 'foxhunting society' which he was unsure enough about to write to E.Martin Browne asking if he had got the minor details of this lifestyle correct.¹ Eliot reveals his true notion of the audience for this play when he later writes that the play portrays 'the world in which the audience lives and to which it returns when it leaves the theatre'.² At some time in the Thirties Eliot must have abandoned the idea of writing a play for 'the people'. The crux of the problem was that it was impossible even for a consummate dramatist to write an evangelising verse drama that would be significantly popular. This was particularly true in the Thirties, when any social message could not avoid reference to the polarised political situation in Europe. One either had to take sides, or explain why one was not taking sides. Eliot chose the latter path, most obviously in *The Rock*, in which rival factions of

¹E.Martin Browne, *The Making of T.S.Eliot's Plays* p.102.

²T.S.Eliot 'Poetry and Drama' *On Poetry and Poets* (London, 1957), p.82.

Blackshirts and Redshirts come on to the stage, but also in *Murder in the Cathedral*, in which the secular power of the Knights, satirising the rationalisations of political expediency, could either be fascistic or Stalinistic. The social and political divide was matched by the divide between cultures, the 'stratifications of taste' that Eliot was unable to overcome.

In *The Family Reunion* he turns away from direct political concerns. The only explicit political reference comes after the urbane Gerald hears the scandalizing newspaper report of his drunken nephew Arthur's traffic accident: 'This is what the communists make capital out of'.¹ A scandal is a public disclosure of what had been repressed. When the behaviour of the nephew, repressed by the family, is made public, it is immediately seen as a political threat. Repression is the theme of *The Family Reunion*; thus perhaps it is not improbable to see the political as the repressed background of the play. The dullness of most members of the family suggests a measure of satire of the upper-class family, as well as of the country-house drama that traditionally portrays it. The Eumenides, peering through the window of the country house, are a potent image of the exclusion and repression of what the ruling class do not want to see, but what nevertheless pursued them with increasing ferocity in the

¹T.S.Eliot, *Complete Poems and Plays*, p.328.

Thirties. Harry, the returned exile, can see them at Wishwood, his ancestral home, when the others cannot; and he only sees them while he is at Wishwood. Harry believes that he is being pursued for pushing his wife off a ship. But it is not clear that he did so, and the 'crime' seems more ambiguous than this. Agatha, endowed with greater perception than the other characters, suggests that 'You are the consciousness of your unhappy family'. The play ends with Harry deciding to leave in order to seek 'reconciliation'. Eliot later suggested to an actor that this was in fact to the East End; but the sarcasm may have concealed a deeper truth. A reconciliation implies a division, and at the back of many minds of the period must have been the knowledge that the deepest divisions were social and political.

With the outbreak of war, Eliot tells us that he no longer felt the need to write plays. His return to the form of *Burnt Norton* in order to write a sequence of similarly patterned poems coincides with the new emphasis in his social writings, noted above, to a valorisation of commonness and nationality. He was tempted to describe the *Four Quartets* in his essay 'The Three Voices of Poetry' as a patriotic poem, although he eventually decided against using this loaded term.¹ Writing an introductory essay on Kipling, for a selection of his verse which came out in

¹Peter Ackroyd, *T.S.Eliot* (London, 1984), p.264.

1941, Eliot said 'There are perhaps those who will admit to expression in poetry patriotism on the defensive.... patriotism itself is expected to be inarticulate'.¹ Eliot's poems do express the feelings of a nation 'on the defensive', so he must have felt that, in this situation, patriotism would be seen as a permissible theme. His project in the wartime *Quartets* is in many ways a struggle to 'mak[e] articulate' these previously unstated feelings, as he goes on to say of Kipling: 'he was aiming to communicate the awareness of something in existence of which he felt that most people were very imperfectly aware'. With Kipling, it was the burden of responsibility that went with the Empire. For Eliot, it was the collectivity of an England 'on the defensive'.

H.D. had never been anti-democratic, but often seemed distant from pre-war social realities, at least until her experience of the rise of Fascism. She was in sympathy with Bryher's actions as, based in Switzerland, she aided the smuggling of Jews out of Germany, including the ill-fated Walter Benjamin.² She supported the war, despite her sufferings in the First World War, because she found it impossible, living in Europe, 'to bear what we have had to see here of the persecution of all intellectual thought by Fascism, unmoved'.³ Also, like many

¹T.S.Eliot, 'Rudyard Kipling', the introduction to *A Choice of Kipling's Verse* (London: Faber, 1941), p.24.

²Bryher, *The Heart to Artemis, A Writer's Memoirs* (London: Collins, 1963), p.278.

³H.D., 'A Letter From England', *Bryn Mawr Alumni Bulletin*, p.22.

in the late Thirties who wished to participate in a mass movement that would put one in touch with the feelings of all classes in Britain, she joined the Mass Observation movement.¹ H.D. observed in a letter to her old university magazine, describing the effects of the Blitz on people in London: 'It is a whole people and I think as united as any nation can ever hope to be.'² This attitude is also shown in some of her poetry. During the Blitz

the great take precedence of none,
where widow, wife
and maid are one....³

H.D.'s evaluation would appear to be positive; but at the same time, disengaged. 'It is a whole people'; addressing her American co-alumni, she does not claim to be a part of it, although living in London at the time, she explores the possibilities of membership of the collective throughout *Trilogy*, eventually embracing it.

Like Eliot, her experience of the political atmosphere of the late Thirties, and the arrival of war, gave her a concern with writing in a more accessible manner. In a letter written in May 1941, she told a friend that she wanted to write of the experience in a way that was 'not high-brow'.⁴ The first three

¹See Diana Collecott, 'H.D. and Mass Observation', *Line* no.13 (Spring 1989), 153-169.

²H.D., 'A Letter From England' *Bryn Mawr Alumni Bulletin* (July 1941), 22.

³H.D., 'Ecce Sponsus', *Collected Poems*, p.481.

⁴H.D., letter to May Sarton, 6 May [1941], filed under Aldington, H.D., in Berg Collection, New York Public Library.

lines of *Trilogy* show something relatively unusual in her previous poetry: a direct appeal to immediate contemporary experience:

An incident here and there,
and rails gone (for guns)
from your (and my) old town square....

Angus Calder, social historian of the Second World War, is illuminating on the exact significance of these missing railings to Londoners as the war progressed:

they had maintained the privacy and amenity of shady lawns and bright flower beds for those householders whose property had entitled them to a key. To the privileged, their removal was another tormenting sign that the days of gracious living were over. But for those who preached human equality, it was not only prudent but delightful. The gardens belonged to everyone now.¹

¹Angus Calder, *The People's War*, p.347.

2. The Uses of Form

Each episode in the symphony is linked in my imagination with a specific cinematographic impression of the war.¹

Appropriately, for a period in which the cinema was the pervasive cultural medium, and a great force of social bonding, the relations in the poems between the different sections is perhaps most closely analogous to the cinematic device of montage, in which the rapid succession of different visual images conveys a message that the individual shot would not have expressed alone. As Eisenstein stated the classic definition of filmic montage,

two film pieces of any kind, placed together, inevitably combine into a new concept, a new quality, arising out of that juxtaposition.... For example, take a grave, juxtaposed with a woman in mourning weeping beside it, and scarcely anyone will fail to jump to the conclusion: a widow.²

H.D. had been intimately associated with the production and criticism of avant-garde film, acting and writing reviews, and in her association with Kenneth MacPherson, throughout the Twenties and Thirties. She was at the centre of one of the major European filmic avant-gardes, Pool Films, which was funded by

¹Stravinsky, Record Notes for 'Symphony in Three Movements'. Quoted in Jeffrey M. Perl, *Skepticism and Modern Enmity / Before and After Eliot* (London: John Hopkins University Press, 1989), p.117.

²Sergei Eisenstein, *The Film Sense* trans. Jay Leda (London: Faber, 1943), p.16.

Bryher to support MacPherson's interest in film. Her biographer recounts how H.D. and Bryher performed the editing on the most famous of Pool Film's productions, *Borderline*.¹ Bryher had actually written a serious and ground-breaking cinematographic study, *Film Problems of Soviet Russia*. H.D. also contributed a series of essays to the seminal English language film journal, *Close-Up*. Between the first issue, in July 1927, and December 1929, she contributed thirteen articles, poems, and reviews. This included an article on 'Russian Films', and the breadth of film knowledge she shows through each of the articles demonstrates a good knowledge of film technique. Her description of cinematic method is similar to Eisenstein's statements on montage, and can also be applied to her method of composing *Trilogy*:

Images, our dolls, our masks, our gods, Love and Hate and Man and Woman. All these attributes have their more or less crude, easily recognized individual complements.... Bits of chiffon became radiantly significant, tiny simple and utterly trivial attributes meant so much.²

Also like Eisenstein, she saw the cinema as providing 'a universal language, a universal art open alike to the pleb and the initiate'.³ In wartime, as she was striving to write in a way that would be more universal, the idea of film technique must have come to seem an increasingly attractive form to use for her long poem about the Blitz. Writing about *The Gift*, her prose account of her childhood, she describes (in third person) her form of composition

¹Barbara Guest, *Herself Defined: The Poet H.D. and Her World* (London: Collins, 1985), pp. 189-202.

²H.D., 'The Cinema and the Classics III', *Close-Up* no.5 (November 1927), pp.18-31.

³H.D., 'Conrad Veidt', *Close-Up* no.3 (September 1927), pp.34-44.

as an actual return 'to that world, [H.D.] lives actually in these reconstructed scenes, or she watches them like a moving-picture'.¹

Another poet of the war period, who bears many resemblances to H.D., was similarly influenced by film technique. Lynnette Roberts' 'Heroic Poem', *Gods With Stainless Ears*, was written from 1941 to 1943. In her Preface, she explained, 'when I wrote this poem, the scenes and visions ran before me like a newsreel.... the poem was written for filming, especially Part V, where the soldier and his girl walk in fourth dimension among the clouds'.² For Roberts, the newsreel and the cinema are seen as the only adequate means of expressing the events of the war, events at which words fail, but the photographic image and the allegorical effects that its montage produces can succeed.

Eliot kept in touch with trends in European culture, especially through his editorship of *Criterion*, and must have been aware of the growing importance of the aesthetics of film in other forms of cultural production. Eisenstein's *The Film Sense* was first published in Britain in 1943 by the company Eliot worked for, Faber & Faber. As a regular attender at the Faber committee meetings, it is likely that Eliot, if not actually

¹H.D., "'H.D. by Delia Alton" (Notes on Recent Writing)', *Iowa Review* xvi no.3 (1986), 174-222.

²Lynnette Roberts, 'Preface' to *Gods With Stainless Ears: A Heroic Poem* (London: Faber, 1951), p.11.

involved in the planning stages of the book's publication, would have been involved in discussions about it, and, by conjecture, may have read it.¹ A significant portion of the book is taken up with a discussion of perceived montage techniques in Eliot's own poetry, as Eisenstein ambitiously attempts to extend the notion of montage into the literary domain, making it in effect into an aesthetic principle. For him, montage

is not in the least a circumstance peculiar to the cinema, but is a phenomenon invariably met with in all cases where we have to deal with juxtaposition of two facts, two phenomena, two objects. We are accustomed to make, almost automatically, a definite and obvious deductive generalization when any separate objects are placed before us side by side.²

Eliot may have been receptive to this book not only because it referred to his work, but because of his own connection with cinematic theory that goes back to the Twenties, and his reading of the work of Jean Epstein, who argued that 'the modern world was best expressed in the medium of film, and that the best modern writers assimilated the principles of cinema into their work'.³ During the Thirties, as shown above, he wrote articles describing his verse drama as a reaction against film, and condemning the cinema as a distraction, a 'common and impersonal dream'. Classical modernism constitutes itself

¹I am grateful for correspondence with the Faber archivist on this matter. Although Eliot was not 'in any way involved in the choice or production of this book, he would normally have been present at the weekly Book Committee when it was discussed'. Letter from Mrs. Cruickshank, 31 May 1989.

²Sergei Eisenstein *The Film Sense*, p.16.

³Jean Epstein, *La Poesie d'Aujourd'hui* (Paris, 1921), quoted in Jacqueline Doyle, 'Renaming Things Seen: Edgar Allen Poe and American Modernist Poetry', unpublished doctoral thesis, Cornell University, 1986, p.266.

against mass culture. Yet at a time of national-popular consensus, a division between cultures was no longer tenable. *The Film Sense* provided exactly the argument needed to provide a reconciliation between the techniques of film and poetry.

For Walter Benjamin, an allegorical work is composed of fragments pulled out of the life context: 'In the field of allegorical intuition, the image is a fragment, a rune.... The false appearance of totality is extinguished.'¹ Bürger elaborates that 'The allegorist joins the isolated reality fragments and thereby creates meaning. This is posited meaning; it does not derive from the original context of the fragments.'² Bürger's interpretation of Benjamin, although valuable, is taken on an unhistorical route that unquestioningly validates the avant-garde's own belief, that there was a radical split between the art institution and society, leaving art, at the end of the last century, in aestheticist isolation from reality. Bürger sees the avant-garde as an attempt to break this gap down; but this division was merely a perceptual one, and the attempt itself should be seen as historically determined.

Filmic montage is a wholly different material practice from collage, or even from painterly montage. Film,

¹Walter Benjamin, quoted in Peter Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde* trans. Michael Shaw (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984), p.69.

²Ibid.

even when produced in a revolutionary society or by an avant-garde movement, generally has a social function which depends upon developing and elaborating context through montage, in order to convey meaning. Painting in the avant-garde, as Bürger knew, had a different social intention, oppositional even to the extent of using collage to bring context and representation into question. By conflating the two praxes, Bürger commits an error that seriously affects the development of his argument. There is always a good possibility of strong relations between the two radically different media of film and works produced within the art institution, but these relations must not be sought out and discussed in terms of differing formal elements, as Bürger does, but in terms of cross-influences of theories and inter-relations of practice. Because Bürger devotes little space to discussing the theorisations of the avant-gardistes themselves, tracing these connections falls outside the scope of his book. Despite the value of the distinctions he makes in defining the avant-garde and its distinguishing qualities, Bürger's concept of the 'art-institution' (repeating a distinction that motivated the avant-gardists themselves), banishes this aspect of cultural production to a realm impossibly distanced from social reality. Aestheticism had given the art institution the appearance of a non-relation to and disinterest in civil society, but in reality, even in the era of high romanticism, the bonds were there, and could never be broken as radically as the aestheticians had desired. Thus, in this area, Bürger's formulation remains unhistorical.

A more satisfactory exploration is given by Anton Kaes in an article for *New German Critique*, in which he explores 'the incursion of film into the literary domain between 1909 and 1929'. Drawing on a selection of contemporary journalism, and the observations of writers concerning film, he finds that 'both authors and readers use film as the standard for a new aesthetic'. Possibly referring to elements of Bürger's thought, Kaes concludes:

Filmic montage consisted of arranging snippets of reality; dominant normative criteria of an organicist conception of writing, such as wholeness, harmony and closure, seemed to have been deposed. The journalistic and emphatically effect-orientated nature of the technical medium displaced the creative artwork born of experience - the artwork expressive of the personality; montage took the place of inspiration.¹

Similarly, Andreas Huyssen describes how the new technologies of the early twentieth century

not only fuelled the artists' imagination... but penetrated to the core of the work itself. The invasion of the very fabric of the art object by technology and what we may loosely call the technological imagination can best be grasped in such artistic practices as collage, assemblage, montage and photomontage.²

¹Anton Kaes, 'The Debate About Cinema: Charting a Controversy (1909-1929)', *New German Critique* 40 (1987), 7-33.

²Andreas Huyssen, *After the Great Divide Modernism, Mass Culture, and Post-Modernism* (London: Macmillan, 1986), p.9.

Bürger, less historically, starts by seeming to assert that artistic collage and filmic montage are born as twin siblings, even though they manifestly spring from different parents: technological practice for film, the avant-garde for art. For Bürger, filmic montage is the bastard brother, and so he dismisses it as 'the basic technical procedure'¹ of film. This is a misleading statement, as it is possible to produce a film with no montage, as in commercial 'Hollywood' film, and even film with no apparent editing at all, as in Hitchcock's *Rope*. It was only in the specific material conditions of early Soviet cinematography, with the fundamental and urgent need to convey political messages that could be understood rapidly and among audiences with diverse language and literacy, that montage became a 'basic technical procedure', and from this a theory of the editing of shots as a means of conveying meaning was established. Painterly montage, as in collage and some kinds of surrealism, is a non-discursive and only tangentially allegoric medium, concerned with exposing the latent aspects of reality. It is in filmic montage that Benjamin's concept of allegory is most clearly and fully realised in modernist cultural production. Bürger is following Adorno when he reads Benjamin's notion of montage as painterly. According to Adorno, montage 'rapidly declined when film got a hold of it'.² However, Adorno finds that even the surrealist (pre-filmic) use of montage technique could

¹Peter Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, p. 73.

² Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, p.83.

'awaken [the] latent language' that lies within everyday perceived reality.¹ In so far as montage is linguistic, it must come from the cinematographic antecedents, and not the painterly.

The two forms of montage coincide and undergo mutual influence throughout the modernist period, but they remain different material practices determined by the differing technical materials of film and paint. During the Second World War cultural producers were striving to find new formal means, new structures, that would be adequate to the circumstances of total war. The mode of montage that derives from cinematic (itself used productively for perhaps the first time in British film of the period) rather than painterly practice was able to provide a new model for modernist poetry of the period.

Both Eliot and H.D. were familiar with at least the principles of montage. Things are increased by their relations to other things, and visual images can produce abstract concepts, in a non-verbal manner, according to the way they are arranged. H.D. expressed a similar idea in the book she wrote during the war on Freud:

¹Ibid.

Thoughts were things, to be collected, collated, analysed, shelved or resolved. Fragmentary ideas, apparently unrelated, were often found to be part of a special layer or stratum of thought and memory, therefore to belong together.¹

The eclectic symbolism, the constant shifts of viewpoint and subject, is clearly related to this subliminal building of messages by how thoughts or images 'belong together'. In these poems it is not only the images that are in a montage sequence, but the micro-structures of each section, the lyric message, the metaphysical argument, the spatial and temporal location, the use of first- or third-person singular or plural, and the form of address to the reader. The sectional arrangement allows these to vary considerably in each new passage: the effect is one of conceptual montage, in which unified meanings can be achieved only through the mental fusing of these micro-structures.² As one reads the poems,

the pattern is new in every moment
And every moment is a new and shocking
Valuation of all we have been.³

However, by abandoning a referential, linguistic universe, such artistic forms are uniquely capable of manipulating an audience's attitudes conceptually. As Eisenstein saw, 'The

¹H.D., *Tribute To Freud* (New York, 1956), p.12.

²Dennis Brown writes that '*Four Quartets* is probably the most sophisticated meditation on self-time in modern English [it] constructs self-time as a montage of frozen moments . . . not as the flow of a Hollywood movie, but as the cumulative "collisions" of an Eisenstein film'. Dennis Brown, *The Modernist Self in Twentieth-Century English Literature / A Study in Self-Fragmentation* (London: Macmillan, 1989), pp.154-155.

³T.S.Eliot, *East Coker*, section II.

spectator is compelled to proceed along the selfsame creative road that the author travelled in creating the image.'¹ This effectively by-passes reference to the realist's realm of experience, and instead creates a receptivity to ideas (the concept, not image, of a widow).

'The avant-gardiste,' Bürger states, 'joins fragments with the intent of positing meaning.... The work is no longer created as an organic whole but put together from fragments.' Whereas the organic work 'seeks to make unrecognizable the fact that it has been made', the avant-garde work 'proclaims itself as artificial construct, an artifact'.²

To this extent, montage may be considered the fundamental principle of avant-gardiste art. The 'fitted'... work calls attention to the fact that it is made up of reality fragments: it breaks through the appearance... of totality.³

Bürger locates the true origins of montage with cubism. However, he is tendentious in his description of how the cubist aesthetic functions. He states:

montage first emerges in connection with cubism.... In the papiers collés of Picasso and Braque that they created during the years before the First World War, we invariably find a contrast between two techniques: the 'illusionism' of the reality fragments that have been

¹Sergei Eisenstein, *The Film Sense*, p.16.

²Peter Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, p.70.

³Ibid., p.72.

glued on the canvas... and the 'abstraction' of cubist technique in which the portrayed objects are rendered.¹

Bürger is being less than careful with his artistic vocabulary here, since what he describes in cubist practice is more properly known as collage. The difference is significant. True, the objects of Picasso's and Braque's collages have been (literally) torn 'out of the life totality, isolate[d]... and turn[ed]... into a fragment'. It is debatable, however, whether cubism escapes from the traditional artistic intention 'of giving a living picture of the totality'. Are the fragments in a cubist collage joined together, as Bürger defines montage, 'with the intent of positing meaning'? The fact that the glued elements in such artworks always add up to a larger representation on the canvas, even if in the disjointed and semi-fragmented cubist style, would surely indicate that the use of collage is not primarily allegorical, in the Benjaminian sense, but still ultimately subscribes to an organicist conception of the wholeness of the artwork. The fragments are not 'put together' as a collection of fragments, but super-added onto a larger representation. Indeed, the purposive theory behind cubism was the aim of achieving a fuller and more whole representation of the object through shifts in perspective, jolting the viewer's preconceptions of the object through such shifts, as well as through the techniques of collage. As Bürger does concede, 'the reality fragments remain largely

¹Ibid.

subordinate to the aesthetic composition.... The intent can best be defined as tentative:... art itself is not being called into question'.¹ These collage techniques should be seen as an intermediate stage that enabled a use of montage when the material conditions were right, which in most of Europe was after the huge cultural shock of World War One.

Once the boat of artistic production has cast off from the secure shores of representation, the audience is prone to be taken on a course it might not agree with, could it only get a solid bearing of its position from the misty seascape surrounding it. Film theorists and historians have noted the relationship between this filmic structure and techniques of subliminal appeal to the audience: 'Russian theories of montage share the underlying assumption of propaganda films: that by manipulating the cinematic image of reality one can also manipulate the spectator's concept of reality.'² In the conditions of the Second World War, in which the British establishment had to be careful of aggravating working-class opinion by a too obvious and patronising use of propaganda, and had consequently abandoned forms of direct exhortation, some form of montage that would involve the participant in thinking the message through was the obvious alternative structural prototype. Use of modernist montage techniques in contemporary advertising still shows the

¹Ibid., p.74.

²Leif Furhammer and Folke Isaksson, *Politics and Film* translated by Kersti French (London: Studio Vista, 1971), p.152.

persuasive power of messages that have to be worked out not visually, but conceptually.

Abandoning realist representation however, any 'global structure' in the text must supply its own totality as a structuring force, as Eisenstein recognised, affirming that a poetics of montage had to take account of the artwork as a totality, with a 'unifying principle':

each montage piece exists no more as something unrelated, but as a given *particular representation* of the general theme that in equal measure penetrates *all* the shot pieces. The juxtaposition of these partial details in a given montage construction calls to life and forces into the light that *general* quality in which each detail has participated and which binds together all the details into a *whole*, namely, into that generalised *image*, wherein the creator, followed by the spectator, experiences the theme.¹

Eisenstein is here recognizing an aesthetic principle, which Adorno also acknowledges as central to the modernist artform that 'negate[s] meaning': such works, according to Adorno, must 'be able to articulate discontinuity', and this, for him, is the role of montage. It 'disavows unity by stressing the disparity of parts while at the same time reaffirming unity as a principle of form'.² It is this 'unifying principle' which distinguishes the kind of poetic sequencing we find in *Trilogy* and the *Four Quartets* from the juxtapositions of *The Waste Land*, which are characterised

¹Sergei Eisenstein, *The Film Sense*, pp.20-21.

²T.W.Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, p.223.

not so much by connections between sections, but the paratactical lack of rational connections: one section does not augment another, but if anything they wrench at each other and undermine the solidity and authority that the individual sections fragmentarily express. By contrast, in the *Quartets* there is a host of different (possibly unsatisfactory) approaches to the same meaning, one approach perhaps building on the other. After the shock-effect collage of *The Waste Land*, Eliot had begun to explore the potential effects obtainable from other montage-like techniques than simple disjunction. In his 'Preface' to St. John Perse's *Anabasis*, which Eliot had translated, he wrote that the reader of the poem 'has to allow the images to fall into his memory successively without questioning the reasonableness of each at the moment; so that, at the end, a total effect is produced'.¹ Perhaps following Herbert Read, he explicitly places long poems such as the *Four Quartets* within this totalised organicist framework when he writes that

Dissonance, even cacophony, has its place; just as, in a poem of any length, there must be transitions between passages of greater and lesser intensity, to give a rhythm of fluctuating emotion to the musical structure of the whole.²

Thus dissonance is contained within the overarching whole of the poem, becoming a part of the 'rhythm', a word that did not only apply to music: many film theorists of the time picked up on the word as a way to describe the structuring and pacing effects

¹T.S.Eliot, 'Preface' to St.John Perse, *Anabasis* trans. T.S.Eliot (London: Faber, 1931), p.10.

²T.S.Eliot, 'The Music of Poetry', p.18.

achieved by editing and montage in a film. Eliot's own use of the term 'musical structure' to describe his work is carefully distinguished from any crude formal analogy with the architecture of a musical piece. In discussing his plays, he separates the action, which is 'perfectly intelligible', from the 'deeper and less articulate level' of the musical pattern which says things 'that cannot be said in speech'.¹ A piece of music only has the deeper level, without the 'perfectly intelligible' discursive content of the play. In the plays, the musical structure is 'underneath the action', performing a subsidiary function 'which intensifies [the audience's] excitement'. This way of saying something by using pattern rather than language is in fact identical to the form of cinematic montage discussed above. Eliot imported from his plays this notion of musical structure as something that intensifies the intelligible discursive content 'at a deeper and less articulate level' than that of the discursive content. It is important to make this distinction, because commentators have often believed that Eliot imposed the explicit musical structure of a Quartet on the poems, which loses the point that he employed musical structure as a technique to contribute to the discourse of the poems without using language. When discussing the naming of the *Four Quartets*, in an important passage in a letter to his friend John Hayward, Eliot explicitly rejects any 'too musical' title such as 'sonata':

these poems are all in a particular set form which I have elaborated, and the word 'quartet'... start[s] people on the right track for understanding them.... It suggests to me the notion of making a poem by weaving in

¹T.S.Eliot 'The Need for Poetic Drama' *The Listener* 25 November 1936.

together three or four superficially unrelated themes: the 'poem' being the degree of success in making a new whole out of them.¹

Thus the word quartet is used without intending musical connotations, but the 'weaving in' of unrelated themes to make a 'new whole'. The term 'musical structure', for Eliot, does not mean that the poem necessarily repeats the outward form of a piece of music; it refers to the achievement of organic totality in an artwork with disparate materials.

This paradoxically puts these works in line with Bürger's definition of the organic artwork, even though they employ the allegorical effects that Bürger attempted to confine to the avant-garde work. They both have a deliberate sectional arrangement, first into their constituent poems. Although originally published as single poems and supplied with individual titles, when put in a volume with two or three other similarly structured poems, they each become more than the sum of their sections: the association increases them, but at the same time makes it difficult to conceive of them any more as 'individual' poems apart from the architectonics of the whole. Significantly, the titles of both poems when in one volume refer to the number of the constituent poems. Further, these constituent poems are all divided into numbered sections which follow a consistent pattern: for Eliot, the five parts of each *Quartet*, for H.D., the 43 sections of each part of the *Trilogy*. Sometimes also, especially in Eliot's work,

¹Helen Gardner, *The Composition of Four Quartets*, p.26, letter dated 3 September.

there is a further division into paragraphs and occasionally more formal stanzas. H.D. fairly consistently divided the sections of her poem into groups of two (sometimes three) lines. The numbering itself, whether in Roman or Arabic numerals, seems to have a similar fetishism of the power of accounting and registering, amplifying and repeating the small pattern in the large. So for Eliot the constituent poems are called 'Quartets', interweaving 'three or four' separate thematic elements, and the whole poem comprises four. For H.D. the number 43 represents (by addition of four and three) the mystical number seven, also a representation of the seven daemons that recur through the whole poem, while the 'Trilogy' of the poem is thematised in the constant 'triplings' noted by DuPlessis.¹ The organicity of these poems can also be demonstrated on a stylistic level. Linkages throughout both texts of image, theme, and word are easy to demonstrate. Particularly, there is Eliot's care with exactly when to use a word he has used elsewhere in the poem. Gardner noted 'Eliot was not... averse to deliberate, immediate repetitions but was sensitive to later and accidental occurrences of a word.'² In H.D.'s poem there are the mythical and Biblical figures that appear and reappear if only as names in all three parts, and symbols, such as 'the rod', which are mentioned briefly in one section and then taken up and given new significance later on. Such repetitions, of course, are common in any long poem, but here they are important in indicating the intended unity of the constituent poems, which were published separately and in both

¹Rachel Blau DuPlessis, *H.D., The Career of That Struggle* (Brighton: Harvester, 1986), p.86.

²Helen Gardner, *The Composition of Four Quartets*, p.165.

cases, originally with no apparent intention of producing a series of similarly patterned poems.

The *Four Quartets* can be read as a cumulative pattern of affirmation and denial, in which individual phrases and sections have little meaning outside of the periphrastic sentences, the wandering narrative, and the constantly deferred search for meaning, in which 'Every phrase is an end and a beginning', leading from the previous to the next phrase or section. The predominant image is of a path or lane which may lead

Behind the pigsty to the dull facade
And the tombstone,

but will not stop there (the dead speak). Similarly, H.D.'s work of this period can be characterised by the reiterated image of 'constant circling'. Both poems also present images of the sea-shore, the most mutable of environments, prone to rhythmical change with the tides. Eliot turns to a consideration of a similar environment in the third of his *Quartets*. His treatment can be compared to the manner in which the seashore took on great significance in the more obviously propagandist works of documentary film in the war, in which shots of the coast were almost always a reference to the national borders threatened by invasion, the inviolable shores of, in Arthur Bryant's and Winston Churchill's words, 'this island fortress'. The seashore was

also put to a significant rhetorical effect in the films of Humphrey Jennings and Stuart Eldridge (see Chapter 5). The Dry Salvages are a group of rocks off the coast of Massachusetts that never get totally submerged by the sea. We are told that

the sea is all about us;
The sea is the land's edge also, the granite
Into which it reaches, the beaches where it tosses
Its hints of earlier and other creation¹

The sudden transition from the strong opening 'I' of the poem to the inclusive 'us' of these lines (an effect analyzed in greater detail in the next section) leads one to suspect that Eliot is referring not only to the individual consciousness, but also to the nation. The sea then is the site of otherness and potential danger, tossing up 'the gear of foreign dead men'. It has 'many voices', the opposite of the unity and solidity of the island identity that it encloses. With H.D., the fact that the sea-shore image seems to symbolize aspects of threatened identity leads to a similar supposition that it is not only a subjective individuality that is under threat, but the identity of the externally threatened national collective.

Stylistically, each section of these poems has more in common with forms of short lyric or imagist poetry than with the

¹T.S.Eliot, *Dry Salvages* l.

traditional narrative of the long poem. The sectional augmentation of superficially imagistic lyrics, however, produces a poetry that is qualitatively different from that of Imagism. The major innovation of these poems in the modernist tradition was in the sectional arrangement. Thus the second tercet of *Trilogy* wrenches us away from contemporary London to an Egyptian ruin:

mist and mist-grey, no colour,
still the Luxor bee, chick and hare
pursue unalterable purpose.

The change in location signals also a change in emphasis, away from the immediate and contemporary to the timeless and non-human. But after another tercet of Egyptian description, the two locations are synthesised:

there, as here, ruin opens
the tomb, the temple; enter,
there as here, there are no doors.

the effect is disquieting, with the immediacy of the best cinematic montage. The mythical and 'distant' becomes the contemporary and real. In a letter H.D. wrote in the same period as the composition of the poems, she described how, in the Blitz atmosphere, the 'fissure between truth and half-truth, or myth and reality seems to begin to silt up'.¹ Perhaps more clearly, she addresses the same idea in *The Gift*, which again was written in the specific context of the Blitz:

¹H.D., Letter to May Sarton, July 29 1942 (New York Public Library).

We have been face to face with the final realities, we have been shaken out of our ordinary dimension in time and we have crossed the chasm that divides time from time-out-of-time or from what they call eternity.¹

The images of traversing a chasm or filling in a fissure both indicate that, for H.D., the war brought things together that had previously occupied rigidly separate mental spaces, perhaps with geological force, and she expressed this by similarly bringing such things together in her poem. Eliot also hints at this closeness between two separate spheres when, in 'Little Gidding', the ghost describes how 'the passage now presents no hindrance'. In a poem dated 1940, 'Body and Soul', H.D. again uses geological terms to describe the addressed person:

spread at will
your limbs, your feet, your hands,
peninsulas and islands
to your body's continent.

With the size of a 'world [or] a planet', the addressed figure is able to

pass from history
and the day's event
to myth and phantasy.²

¹H.D., *The Gift*, p.141.

²H.D., 'Body and Soul' *Collected Poems* p.477.

Thus the poems, in their easy transitions between different worlds of reference, offer an insight into the 'peregrine' spirit of the fluid wartime subject.

Trilogy constantly shifts between different modes of narration, the semi-documentary and the mythic, the discursive and the descriptive. This is not the only montage that H.D. employs in the poem: there is an equally restless shifting of narrative subject. The structure of *Trilogy* can perhaps be summarised by the two phrases in this first section, 'your (and my)' and 'there, as here'. H.D. was originally going to use a similar phrase in *The Flowering of the Rod*, 'their (our) Creator',¹ in a context that will become significant later in this study. The transition between this, and her post-war epic poem *Helen In Egypt*, is significant: this time, the bracketed figure at the opening of the poem is the first person singular:

Do not despair, the hosts
surging beneath the Walls,
(no more than I) are ghosts.²

In a similar gesture to this, the first phrase of *East Coker* is 'In my beginning is my end'. Coming at the start, with the lack of any indication of the identity of the speaker, it is tempting to read the possessive pronoun self-referentially, as issuing from

¹H.D.'s notebook for *The Flowering of the Rod*, Beinecke Library, Yale.

²H.D., *Helen in Egypt* (New York: Grove Press, 1961), 'Pallinode', Book 1.

the poem itself: in the poem's beginning is its end. *East Coker* ends with the phrase 'In my end is my beginning'. We are invited to turn back to the start and examine the interplay between the first and last section, and what comes between. The first two paragraphs of the first section are an inversion of the opening of *Trilogy*. First, general and timeless Biblical-sounding description, and then a paragraph specifically in the present, at a precisely delineated time, 'Now'. The link between the timeless and the temporal is taken up thematically in *The Dry Salvages* and *Burnt Norton*, but the transitions in *East Coker* introduce the theme into the form of the poem. When Eliot explicitly discusses the theme, the 'point of intersection' tends to be the Christian Incarnation or its analogues in other religions, achievable through 'prayer, observance, discipline'. This would seem to be belied in the poem by the swift and effortless transitions from the quotidian and unsatisfactory to the apparently spontaneous and beautiful moments of vision. Unlike H.D., Eliot does not so much swing from a past of mythical but real-seeming characters and situations and the present, as from a general, Biblical or even prophetic mode to the reality and immediacy of the present. It becomes more of an alternation between the general and the specific, but also more than with H.D., an alternation of location: pastoral or uninhabited locations (which give each constituent poem its title) alternate in each poem with London, generally (until *Little Gidding*) a representation of the unsatisfactoriness of human community. The peripheral locations of the four individual titles were originally to be embraced by a general title designating centrality (both geographically, and for Eliot, biographically): 'Kensington Quartets'.

Eliot's meditations on place should be put alongside his thoughts on Kipling. In the wartime essay on the Indian-born author, which he wrote 'as a contribution to... his war effort',¹ he seems to identify strongly with Kipling's lack of roots in any one place:

the result was to give him a peculiar detachment and remoteness from all environment, a universal foreignness... a remoteness as of an alarmingly intelligent visitor from another planet.

However, this foreignness does not preclude a close identification with particular locations. Later in his life, Kipling settled in Sussex, which became the setting and subject for some of his later stories. Eliot singles out for praise, Kipling's sense of history in these stories:

The historical imagination may give us an awful awareness of the extent of time, or it may give us a dizzy sense of the nearness of the past. Kipling... aims I think to give at once a sense of the antiquity of England, of the number of generations and peoples who have laboured the soil and in turn have been buried beneath it, and of the contemporaneity of the past.... he is discovering and reclaiming a lost inheritance.

It is Kipling's position as outsider that allows him to perform this act of reclamation. Eliot's poem is autobiographical,

¹John Hayward, letter to Morley, August 1941, quoted in Gardner, *The Composition of Four Quartets*, p.20.

in the sense that it presents his American origins in *The Dry Salvages*, and his family roots, with the ancient Eliots of East Coker village. Eliot, like Kipling, foregrounds the antiquity of these locations. By his montage technique, the sudden switches to wartime London, he also approaches a sense of the contemporaneity of the past. Even when not named, one can sense, almost as an echo from *The Waste Land*, Eliot's London. The original title, 'Kensington Quartets', would have downgraded the disparate rural locations into a subsidiary relationship to the metropolitan centre. In *Four Quartets* the places outside London fulfil a similar role to the mythical past and the varying levels of narrative authority in *Trilogy*. They are the location of real values, banished from the centre or the present. In a similar fashion, the predominant tendency of wartime propaganda was also to 'draw on the rural myth to define the nation'.¹ For example, the film *The Young Mr Pitt* concludes with an expression of the need for a new English hero:

'Where,' quavered Addington, 'are we to find such a man?' while the camera answered by panning the sheepfold, elms and churchyard of the Conservative English rural idyll before finding Nelson in public-spirited prayer.²

As will be shown in relation to Dylan Thomas's films and poetry, there is not one 'rural myth' but many; although some texts may deploy pastoral for a conservative ideological effect, there is

¹Jeffrey Richards, 'National Identity in British Wartime Films', in Philip M. Taylor ed., *Britain and the Cinema in the Second World War*, p.44.

²Nigel Mace, 'British Historical Epics in the Second World War', in Philip M. Taylor, ed., *ibid.*, p.112.

room for negotiation. Herbert Read's pastoral hints at an anarchist utopian future. Eliot's use of country locations does not simply identify the rural with Britain. Nor are the rural locations used as a simple contrast to the present (as happened in much pre-war verse). By montage, the locations produce a sense of the invasion of different values from those of serial time. At the start of *Trilogy* or in the vision scene of *Little Gidding*, the two conditions or locations are made almost indistinguishable. As with contemporary film, the linking of town and country was an articulation of the nation as a whole, the latter supplying a feeling of spiritual meaning and justification for the former.

However, the seasonal narration, a traditional part of the literary pastoral evocation, is significantly distorted in the wartime *Quartets*. The seasons are shown to be deceptive in appearance and disrupted in their progression. In *East Coker*, the reader is presented with a question:

What is the late November doing
With the disturbance of the Spring
And creatures of the summer heat,
And snowdrops writhing under feet...
Late roses filled with early snow?¹

In *Little Gidding* there is a similar sense of puzzlement:

This is the Spring time
But not in time's covenant. Now the hedgerow

¹T.S.Eliot, *East Coker*, section II.

Is blanched for an hour with transitory blossom
 Of snow, a bloom more sudden
 Than that of summer, neither budding nor fading,
 Not in the scheme of generation.
 Where is the summer, the unimaginable
 Zero summer?

Both November and midwinter have the deceptive appearance of Spring. The Summer itself is so far away that in both poems it is 'unimaginable'. These passages should be seen in the context of the uncertain atmosphere of war, in which for a long period victory or defeat seemed in the balance. The summer is plainly an image of the possibility, and eventually the growing certainty, of victory: being in midwinter inevitably entails the approach of Spring. In the second section of *Little Gidding*, the interminable night presages an eventual dawn, and the ghost eventually fades because 'The day was breaking'. This scene, with the 'dead leaves' blown in the wind, and where 'the smoke arose' as from autumnal back-garden bonfires, is perhaps also placed at a definite time of year. Again, however, the details are deceptive. Four lines later, the leaves are 'metal', implying an unnatural fusion between nature and the man-made: perhaps they are not leaves at all? Shreds of radar-deceiving aluminium could be implied. And the smoke may not be the peaceful residue of bonfires, but the pall from the night's bombing raids. The elusive transitions between seasons is but one of the strategies that create a sense of uneasiness and unpredictability in the poems.

3. Montage of the Subject

The crisis referred to in the title I described as emotional and intellectual uncertainty centred round 'I' and 'we'. Contemporary criticism and aesthetic theory, as represented by T.S.Eliot and Herbert Read, regarded poetic creation as the activity, not of what people formerly meant by 'I', but of what transcended 'I'. But although 'I' was being abandoned as a category of criticism, there was also a distrust of 'we'.¹

Alick West, in the leading essay of his pioneering book of Marxist criticism and aesthetics, *Crisis and Criticism*, had already referred to the significance of Eliot's use or non-use of 'we'. He saw this as indicative of an endemic sense of crisis in which 'I' and 'we' had become problematical. Because of this 'conflict of feeling', the literary critics such as Herbert Read and T.S.Eliot 'no longer project... the old "I" to make it the creator of poetry and literature'.² He relates the use that Eliot makes of 'we' in the opening of *The Waste Land* to the common 'discovery... of a deeper, elemental "we"':

These uneasy stirrings in the bourgeois social world are the power underlying the changes in critical theory. When I do not know any longer who are the "we" to whom I belong, I do not know any longer

¹Alick West, *One Man In His Time An Autobiography* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1969), p.171.

²Alick West, "'We" and "I"', *Crisis and Criticism* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1937), p.4.

who "I" am either. "I" can no longer be projected into a poem as the source of the creative energy felt in it.¹

For West this greater whole is 'the material, productive aspect of society'. Read and Eliot cannot quite manage to transcend the bourgeois parameters of their thinking, so they still associate 'we' with mystical and religious ideas. West opens his book with this paradigm because it shows the possibility of a marxist aesthetics, by re-materialising many aspects of bourgeois criticism back into the social totality. However, it was not until the arrival of the historical crisis of the Second World War that Eliot began to experiment seriously and consistently with different grammatical subjects. In this new crisis, 'we' took on even more significance than it had done for West in the Thirties. The war was to provide for Eliot and others a powerful but temporary answer to the question, 'who are the "we" to whom I belong', and it was an answer that did not appear to involve taking on a marxist belief in society. After all, Britain in Total War was, in name, a totality; what suddenly became self-evident appeared to have no relation to society before (or after) this period.

A detailed concordance of Eliot's poetry would surely find the vast majority of 'we's concentrated in the *Quartets*. To take narrative in the broadest sense, as any language concerning an animate subject, in both of these poems (with the exception of

¹Ibid., p.6.

the last sections of *The Flowering of the Rod*), the narrative seems to alternately concern 'we' and 'I', with the occasional 'you' and 'one', 'he' and 'she'. The effect is again one of conceptual montage, drawing the reader into a relationship with the other stated or unstated subjects. We have already seen H.D.'s 'your (and my)' in the very first lines of the poem: she follows this seeming direct appeal to the reader when this section goes on to invite: 'enter, / there as here, there are no doors', an apparent echo of Eliot's earlier rose-garden: 'Shall we follow?'. The idea of entry is significant, as the reader would seem to be invited to enter not just the poetic ruin or rose-garden, but also to enter into a linguistic covenant, to allow him or her self to be included as 'we', and implicitly concede all that is said in this voice throughout the poem. Thus, entry is a covenant, a constraint for the writer as well: a reader cannot easily or effectively be 'invited' to enter a waste land or an unpeopled ocean shore. There has to be a reason for entry, by using 'we' the poet is forced to renege on any private, too subjective universe, and to create an illusion of community or common-ness.

Both Eliot and H.D. demonstrate a sensitivity to the nuances of the third-person pronoun, 'we', which was very specific to wartime ideological articulations of nationality. Such appeals were commonly also cast in the mode of pastoral. A good example of the way the two were combined is shown in one of the photographic features from *Picture Post* of June 1940, 'The Beauty of Britain'. There are four pastoral pictures of the English and Welsh countryside, with

the general inscription, 'Under the sunshine of a lovely summer, the fields and woods of Britain - the fields and woods we are all fighting to protect.' The feature is conspicuous for not foregrounding England. Instead the curiously archaic word 'Briton' is used to signify the intended referent 'we':

No single Briton wants fresh territory. We are not in this war for land, for money, for "imperialism." We are in this war to save our homes, our freedom and - if it turns out that way - our lives.¹

The rubric is interesting in that none of the pictures so much as attempt to depict anything like 'homes' or 'freedom', or even 'lives': the photographs are all of resolutely pastoral, unpeopled scenes. It is left to the reader to make the connection between these loose terms and the pictures presented with the text. Also curious is the way the text uses 'we' to state the feelings of the readers themselves. The simplicity of the appeal is disarming: readers were directly interpellated as 'we', contracted in to an agreement just as the reader is coaxed to do in *Burnt Norton*. As text alone, however, these words 'homes', 'freedom', and 'lives' would have meant little even to a contemporary reader. The 'we', like the vague appeal to home

¹'The Beauty of Britain', *Picture Post* vii no.12 (22 June 1940), 16-17. Even more clear cut was the 'Special Number' devoted to 'The Land of Britain', containing articles and features on Britain's threatened landscape, including C.Day Lewis on 'The English Village'. C.E.M.Joad's article 'The Land We're Fighting For' argues that the pre-war 'work of ruin and destruction' performed on 'the ancient beauty of the British countryside' should be halted 'in face of any private opposition', and 'on behalf of everybody'. *Picture Post* xiv no.1 (3 January 1942).

and freedom, only gains its strength from its contextual conjunction with the emotive pastoral images.

This is the kind of appeal which Eliot and H.D. could, in a more complex articulation, foreground and question through their use of 'we', and their toying with the idea of national subjectivity and its images, such as pastoral. H.D. in particular found herself constantly questioning the notion of subjectivity, including her own authorial subjectivity as narrator or persona, in the earlier poems that comprise *Trilogy*. In a letter to May Sarton she wrote that, reading over *The Walls Do Not Fall*, she was led to ask herself

"...who wrote it?" It is not the H.D. you know, I hardly recognize myself in them... result of the bombs and the real facing of that peril, night after night; it sort of blasted things out of me.¹

Even more revealingly, she told May Sarton about how she felt the poems had been composed:

Do not think me "coy" about the poems, I really, truthfully do not think I wrote them, or only wrote them in part.... I do not want you to look for "H.D." in them. One got so broken by the blitz-nights, maybe something from "outside" did get through - I almost felt I was "automatic writing" at times, but that is a difficult and dangerous way to express things.²

¹H.D., Letter to May Sarton, Easter Monday [1942], New York Public Library.

²H.D., Letter to May Sarton, 10 May [1940], New York Public Library.

Clearly, she connected this troubled sense of her individuality as authoress with the experience of London during the Blitz. In her letter, she does not explore what the 'something from "outside"' might be. In her poems, however, she explores more fully the idea of trans-individuality, or membership in the community of praxis.

In *The Walls Do Not Fall* there is already a sense of uneasiness when, a few lines further on in the first section from the opening (already quoted), she inevitably merges 'your (and my)' into its grammatical equivalent:

so, through our desolation,
thoughts stir, inspiration stalks us
through gloom.

However, the consistent and unquestioned use of 'we' comes to be scrutinised. Such an untroubled and possibly authoritarian notion of 'contract' could not easily be sustained within the new community of the war. After two more tercets in which 'we' is used, the first-person form occurs in the fourth section of *The Walls Do Not Fall*, at a point in which she seems to draw back suddenly from this covenant:

I sense my own limit,
my shell-jaws snap shut

at invasion of the limitless.

As in some of Norman MacCaig's poems, the seaside imagery, particularly the image of small and shell-like crustaceanity providing protection from a threatening outside world, provides a retreat for the threatened individual subject. For both poets 'we' is limitless: it is also 'the vacant interstellar spaces' into which Eliot's rich and worldly disappear, until 'we all go with them', or, in the tube, 'you see behind every face the mental emptiness deepen', as limitlessness becomes the same as emptiness. A group of people, a homogeneous collective, is for Eliot inevitably a serial grouping, unless touched with the fire of Incarnation. H.D., with no such firm convictions, had to prove this: although the use of 'we' was immediately tempting at the start of the poem, the word implies uniformity in the collectivity, and hence threatens H.D.'s own structuring poetic power. So instead of immediate concession to the collective, to some metaphysical group will, she violently returns to 'herself', the first-person singular, and then is able to retrieve something dialectically from her first position.

Her return to the imperative as the passage progresses, along with Eliot's similar moral tone and frequent prescriptives in the wartime *Quartets*, should be seen as a response to a contemporary desire for spiritual advice: the moralising socialism of J.B.Priestley on the radio, the increase in observed religion and the common resort to spiritualism. Moral invective and the use of the imperative may now seem to fit uneasily in a long poem, but in the context of a widespread need to be told

what to do, it would not have jarred or impinged overly on the fluid sense of collectivity. She advises the reader:

be firm in your own small, static, limited

orbit and the shark-jaws
of outer circumstance

will spit you forth:
be indigestible, hard, ungiving,

so that, living within,
you beget, self-out-of-self,

selfless,
that pearl-of-great-price.

In a draft to one of her unpublished wartime prose works, she elaborates on the significance of this Biblical phrase. She describes a pebble being flung into a pool, with the resultant circles:

that pebble, our pearl-of-great-price. We would sell or give away all that we have, all our intellectual equipment and emotional experience, to possess this magic pearl, this seed of grain that is the open-sesame to the outer world.¹

Thus the key to a mystic experience of 'otherness', of the manifold exterior world, can be gained by retreating into a stone-like subjectivity. In the period of national-collective will acting

¹H.D., 'Majic Ring - Second Typed Draft [?]', Typescript, pp.111-112, in Beinecke Library, Yale.

for yourself is acting for the group. Even in this retreat to individuality there is an element of such 'selfless' self-interest.

H.D. continues to use the first-person singular for a few more sections until a new 'we' is again constructed, in a remarkable interchange between a critic ('you'), representing the utilitarian and instrumental as against 'the scribe', representing poetry and ancient mystical knowledge. In this dialogue, the first-person subject is described as:

we, authentic relic,

bearers of the secret wisdom,
living remnant....¹

H.D.'s 'we' also coincides with her mythical past with its antique but still living symbols, the 'authentic relic' under attack by 'you', the critical contemporary individual. Grammar itself, tense and person, and thus the actual form of the poem, enters into the struggle she presents.

So we reveal our status
with twin-horns, disk, erect serpent,

though these or the double plume or lotus
are, you now tell us, trivial

intellectual adornment;
poets are useless....

¹H.D., *The Walls Do Not Fall*, section 8.

The reader of the poem, of course, is unlikely to align him or her self with the 'you' who says this, and thus by apparent personal choice follows the 'we' of the scribe, who becomes the voice of the following sections, up to section fourteen. Here the nature of the collective feeling in the Blitz is taken up thematically, and 'you' now appears to become the reader who was not actually involved in the experience, so that at first the implicit covenant between subject and reader is broken:

my old self, wrapped round me,

was shroud (I speak of myself individually
but I was surrounded by companions

in this mystery);
do you wonder we are proud,

aloof,
indifferent to your good and evil?

It is impossible for those who were not there to enter the ruin. The collective explicitly becomes the inhabitants of London, the group constituted by the Blitz. Yet at the moment of group membership, the poet's own individuality is split, her 'old self' is a shroud, just as in *Little Gidding*, the narrator is forced to assume 'a double part'. As H.D.'s collective subject wanders through a contemporary urban landscape,

we know our Name,

we nameless initiates,

born of one mother,

companions
of the flame.

Yet, as with the anti-poetic critic of the previous section, the nature of the poem does not allow the non-Blitzed reader to feel more than momentarily excluded. The montage effect, the 'constant circling' of contradictory grammatical forms, continues: listing the person-subjects of the following sections of *The Walls Do Not Fall*, we get: we/you/we; we; 'Ra, Osiris, *Amen*'/I; we; I; He/I; It (the Holy Ghost); 'the Lord *Amen*'/I; I/*Amen*; *Amen*/I; we; I; we; we; I; we/I; I; -; you/we; we; we; we; we; we; I; you/I/you ('my mind (yours)'); we/I; I; *Sirius* (you); 'Sire'; I/our. The effect becomes one of fluidity moving towards fusion, and any notion of a unified individual subject has to be abandoned, if the poem is not to be read only according to the apartness of each individual section. There is no 'contract' between reader and poem-subject and author, but a type of merging and re-merging motivated by apparent choice and according to common feelings.

Eliot similarly problematises the use of the grammatical subject in his wartime *Quartets*. He was fairly consistent in using 'we' with no sense of it as problematic in *Burnt Norton*. Like H.D., however, his wartime poetry shows wide divergence, not just from section to section but frequently within the same paragraph and even line, over which form to use. A look at the developing drafts reproduced in Helen Gardner's *The Composition of Four Quartets* shows exactly how much the question of the

grammatical subject concerned him. For instance in *East Coker*, 'In my beginning' was in earlier drafts 'In the Beginning'. The direct appeal to the reader:

You say I am repeating
Something I have said before¹

is not in the earlier drafts. 'As we grow older' was originally 'as one grows older'. 'Old men ought to be explorers' is a later addition, which alters the sense of line 204, 'We must be still and still moving.' The final line, 'In my end is my beginning', is a later addition. In *The Dry Salvages*, line 90, 'not the sense' was originally 'I don't mean the sense'. Line 93 'we had' was originally 'one had'. Line 104, 'Now, we come to discover', was previously 'Now, the point is', and before that, 'Now I would say'. Line 108 'we appreciate' had been 'one appreciates'. The repeated 'our's' of the next few lines had all been 'one's'. The instability of grammatical position can even be seen in his use of sources: the quotation from Dante had originally, erroneously, read '*figlia del suo figlio*', before being emended to the correct form, '*tuo*'. This re-positioning of the subject continues similarly through *Little Gidding*. Generally (but not always), 'I's were made less frequent, and the impersonal 'one' was replaced by the more communal 'we'. Despite the many corrections these texts underwent, no attempt seems to have been made to introduce consistency for more than a paragraph, even faced with the marginal complaints of some of those who read his rough drafts: John Hayward 'drew Eliot's

¹T.S.Eliot, *East Coker*, section iii.

attention to the uneasy alternation of pronouns... by writing "I - one - we".¹

Section II of *The Dry Salvages*, and a roughly parallel passage in *East Coker*, will provide some examples of Eliot's montage of the subject. The first paragraph of this section of *The Dry Salvages* is all one 'rhetorical' and unanswerable question, which merges into an impersonal lament over a destruction that we may or may not choose to locate in the context of war. Except in so far as the interrogative voice implies addresser and addressee, it is impossible to 'locate' this voice in any dramatic or imagined way:

Where is there an end of it, the soundless wailing,
The silent withering of autumn flowers
Dropping their petals and remaining motionless;
Where is there an end to the drifting wreckage,
The prayer of the bone on the beach, the unprayerable
Prayer at the calamitous annunciation?

Under the definition I have adopted, there is no narrative, no active subject in this part. The second paragraph offers an immediate change of tone, implying at least a self-referential consciousness, which refers critically to the previous paragraph and thus transforms it, telling us that there is in fact no answer to the question:

There is no end, but addition: the trailing

¹Helen Gardner, *The Composition of Four Quartets* p.133.

consequence of further days and hours,
 While emotion takes to itself the emotionless
 Years of living among the breakage
 Of what was believed in as the most reliable -
 And therefore the fittest for renunciation.

As such, these two paragraphs would seem to present an interchange of two voices. This is first constructed in the deliberately impersonal passive voice ('what was believed in'), so not necessarily meaning Eliot, or even the poem's persona, but more an impersonal standard of judgement: 'believed in', ambiguously, by some person or some group. It is possible to read into this phrase an anticipation of the disillusioned *entre deux guerres* passage of section v, but at this stage Eliot keeps the temporal, as with the geographical location, as indefinite as he can possibly get away with. The third paragraph once more presents a contradiction of the preceding paragraph (there *is* an end to it: 'the *final* addition'), and so may conjecturally belong to the 'voice' of the first paragraph. Again the grammar deliberately avoids any placing of the subject as first or third person, singular or plural:

There is the final addition, the failing
 Pride or resentment at failing powers,
 The unattached devotion which might pass for devotionless,
 In a drifting boat with a slow leakage,
 The silent listening to the undeniable
 Clamour of the bell of the last annunciation.

Gradually, the section admits of a greater specificity, both in the growing focus of the oceanic description, and with the

introduction of a 'we' as a method of interpellating the reader into the poem's system of relating location to argument:

We cannot think of a time that is oceanless
Or of an ocean not littered with wastage....

We have to think of them as forever bailing,
Setting and hauling, while the North East lowers....

The more colloquial rhythm of the final long paragraph of the section decisively brings the reader in to the discursive crux of the argument. First, the modest, chatty line, gently pulling on the authority of age (an authority that in the similar passage in *East Coker* he denigrates):

It seems, as one becomes older,
That the past has another pattern, and ceases to be a mere sequence -
Or even development.

As with his prose polemics, Eliot carefully manoeuvres the reader into an alliance with the voice (we would all agree with 'one'), and then, in a way so unstated that it is easy to miss, he introduces a 'they': the 'superficial notions' entertained by the 'popular mind'. The rest of the paragraph alternates 'we' with 'I', counterposing 'our' experience with the near experience of

the torment of others....
People change, and smile: but the agony abides.

Eliot relates how this agony, paradoxically, may be felt more strongly by 'us' than the other, because of the 'Unqualified', unmeliorated way in which, as outsiders, we regard it. It has not

often been noted how much this contradicts Eliot's past stated beliefs. The experience of otherness is accessible to us because we are different: the reader is constructed as part of a collective audience in order to be shown that the Bradleyan bubbles of individual consciousness, so firmly embedded in *The Waste Land*, can be broken through.

The second section of *East Coker* is similarly structured, opening with an unlocated question that is partly answered by a passage of impersonal description, that leads into the passive voice: 'Leaving one still with the intolerable wrestle'. With no apparent connection, there is then another question, which leads into another:

Had they deceived us
Or deceived themselves, the quiet-voiced elders... ?

'Us' here would seem to be the generation of old people who came immediately after the unspecified 'quiet-voiced elders'. As with the parallel passage in *The Dry Salvages*, the most satisfactory reading is the political one, seeing 'the elders' as those responsible for the inter-war years of appeasement and 'hebetude':

Useless in the darkness into which they peered
Or from which they turned their eyes.

However, it is hard to judge whether by line 81 the same group subject as the deceived 'us' is intended, with the more

individually subjective and presumptuous 'it seems to us'. Further down the paragraph it becomes clear that 'old men' are still being considered, but at a moment which brings forth a different subject:

Do not let me hear
Of the wisdom of old men, but rather of their folly.

The 'voice' paradoxically breaks off from inclusion in the collective subject in order to castigate this group, old men, for their fear of 'belonging to another, or to others'. The resumption of the plural in the last two lines offers no clue as to its identity:

The only wisdom we can hope to acquire
Is the wisdom of humility: humility is endless.

Each sentence reverberates back and forth, questioning and rearranging the others. Is this the same voice that un-humbly accused other old men of folly? Do these lines include only 'old men' (a phrase re-introduced in *Little Gidding*), or everyone? Parallel with the slippage of grammatical subject, the notion of subjectivity itself becomes a matter of thematic interrogation.

As with H.D., the whole question of the subject as individual or group, and its relation to the authority of the writer, is radically problematized by such effects, which continue also between sections of the poems. Attempts to unravel and extricate any specific and consistent speaker or subject in these poems are

bound to fail, although Eliot would surely applaud the attempt. There is no end, but addition. This unpredictability and indeterminacy of appeal in the work of Eliot and H.D. in this period, reproduces an uncertainty about the true nature of subjectivity at a time of national-popular will such as this. Neither the group nor the individual: both poems waver between the two states, not resolving the conflict until both poems present a moment of crisis in the last constitutive poem.

CHAPTER FOUR :

H.D., ELIOT, AND ORGANIC FORM

1. Moments of Vision

the life of a soul does not consist in the contemplation of one consistent world but in the painful task of unifying... incompatible ones, and passing, where possible, from two or more discordant viewpoints to a higher which shall somehow include and transmute them.¹

If montage is the structural principle which informs these texts of H.D. and Eliot, it may seem paradoxical to propose that the poems are both also formally indebted to a concept of organic unity. However, as we have seen, in the aesthetics developed particularly by Herbert Read in the late Thirties and the war years, rupture could be admitted as the principle of a modernist organic poetics. The writings of Eisenstein at the time and, later, Adorno could be cited in support of this. Although the separate sections of these two poems are arranged against each other in

¹T.S.Eliot, *Knowledge and Experience in the Philosophy of F.H.Bradley* (London: Faber, 1964), pp.147-148.

this juxtapositional manner, the organic principle links the poems on an over-arching level, in which they are viewed as totalities. Both works also contain, in the last constituent poem, a vision that gives a glimpse of being outside serial time, and of a transformed, unified city or group or tribe. This is the British nation seen through the optic of visionary experience, and gives a clue to the nature of the shifting, elusive voice - 'we' or 'I' - of the previous sections.

The title H.D. originally suggested to her publisher seems to have been not the symbolically significant *The Flowering of the Rod*, but 'We Rise Again', a phrase which, containing the third person pronoun which might so easily refer to the nation, could have come from some Churchillian speech. The change of title indicates a hesitancy over the content of her culminating poem. She struggled to find a suitable form in which to express her theme. Her notebook for *The Flowering of the Rod* shows several sections of a narrative that she completed but then deleted, a re-telling of the Biblical parable about the group of people divergent from the social whole because of their aristocratic idleness, who come to the vineyard late in the day but, to their surprise, are paid the same wages as the regular workers and are accepted as valuable subjects by 'the master'. It is easy to see how a parable of forgiveness towards people who did not contribute to the social good might have seemed inappropriate in the atmosphere of total war, even in a 'premature peace poem'.¹ Although H.D.'s

¹H.D., quoted in Guest, *Herself Defined*, p.269.

account shows many creative divergences from the account in St. Matthew's gospel, she appears to have abandoned this story in order to construct a freer narrative, more suited to the structure of the poem as a whole, and one that would bring Biblical accounts into a more direct juxtaposition with other types of narrative. The nature of the story is first indicated by its absence:

but it is not on record
exactly where and how she found the alabaster jar....¹

The phrase 'on record' implies an official account, a text to be referred to in order to find 'exact' information. It is interesting to follow the transition in the poem, from the absence of a story to its production:

In any case, she struck an uncanny bargain
(or so some say) with an Arab,

a stranger in the market-place;
actually, he had a little booth of a house....²

The account is conjured from nothing, or at least nothing substantial, no 'record'; instead, it issues from the insubstantial authority, first of public hearsay, and then of the poet, who can assert 'actually' and cause the reader to enter once more a symbolic doorway into the narrative:

¹H.D., *The Flowering of the Rod* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1946), section 12.

²Ibid., section 13.

... set to the left, back of the market
as you pass through the lower gate.

It is here that the crowning narrative of *Trilogy* starts, reaching to the end of the poem. From now on the subjects of the narrative are consistently 'he' and 'she' (unlike in her aborted parable of the group of idle people), and they are conspicuously decked out as a wealthy Arabic 'heathen' merchant and a gipsy-like 'disreputable woman', in a manner strikingly similar to the immensely popular wartime 'costume fiction'.¹ The focus on costume, jewellery, hair, and beauty, along with the emphasis on Kaspar's foreignness and nobility, the frisson of breaking social codes, and the romantic interplay of male and female point to a field of reference outside the modernist canon. H.D. here subverts one of the central elements of modernist style by bringing these elements in from romantic fiction. Andreas Huyssen points out that 'the gendering of an inferior mass culture as feminine goes hand in hand with the emergence of a male mystique in modernism'.² By bringing the two sundered fields together, she re-unites culturally encoded male and female literary elements, suggesting their possible fusion. However, this turn to the idioms of popular modes of representation does not make the narrative itself particularly more linear or conventional. For instance, in section 15, as Mary is about to leave the Arab's booth, 'her scarf slipped to the floor'. In section 18, Kaspar picks it up and hands it to her. In section 19,

¹Sue Harper, 'Costume Fiction in World War Two' *Red Letters* 14 (Winter 1982-3), pp.14-24.

²Andreas Huyssen, *After the Great Divide*, p.50.

demurely, she knotted her scarf
and turned to unfasten the door.

In the next section, H.D. appears to relinquish her narrative authority once more, reverting to the 'hearsay' of section 13:

Some say she slipped out and got away,
some say he followed her and found her

some say he never found her
but sent a messenger after her

with the alabaster jar....

The section that follows in the text seems to come sequentially after this episode, letting us suppose the meeting with Kaspar is a closed incident, and we return to the authority of records:

Anyhow, it is exactly written,
the house was filled with the odour of the ointment,

that was a little later and this was not such a small house.

With this re-introduction to the closed authority of records, a different narrative continues for a few sections, in the Biblical account of the sinning woman who came to Jesus at Simon's house and anointed his feet with oil from 'an alabaster box'.¹ This passage follows Biblical authority more overtly, to the extent of using direct quotations from the Gospels of Luke and John. Italics in *Trilogy*, as here, usually signify and emphasize a direct

¹Luke 7: 37.

Biblical quotation. However, no sooner has the text been quoted, than a different form of authority is again referred to:

Simon did not know but Balthasar
or Melchior could have told him,

or better still, Gaspar or Kaspar,
who, they say, brought the myrrh.

As in *The Walls Do Not Fall*, there is a 'constant circling' in the narrative between different modes of address; but this time it is not the subject that is in a state of flux, but the nature of the story: hearsay or textual? authoritative or provisional? H.D. undermines notions of the text (a word originally used in Biblical scholarship) as having a necessary representational relationship to reality.

This conflict is also seen on the level of the narrative. Kaspar or Gaspar (the non-Biblical variant is significant) represents a different tradition from Simon, one that is only conjecturally based on Biblical authority, and in H.D.'s belief, part of a line that reaches back to the Pagan gods she frequently lists in *Trilogy*: 'for technically / Kaspar was a heathen'. Simon and Kaspar represent different ways of perceiving Mary: Simon the Pharisaic, the cynical instrumental individuality already shown, in *The Walls Do Not Fall*, as being in conflict with the mystic and scribe, here represented by Kaspar. Simon's view is judgemental and condemning, using text and letter to criticize Mary. Kaspar's

view is fluid, ambiguous, and eventually shares with Mary a moment of apocalyptic vision.

The narrative now reverts to the scene in the merchant's shop, where the reader is in more of a position to view the significance of the same events, just as Kaspar is given more awareness, to the extent of the narrative being the same sequence of events, but from his point of view.

Kaspar did not recognise her
until her scarf slipped to the floor,

and then, not only did he recognise Mary
as the stars had told...

but when he saw the light on her hair
like moonlight on a lost river,

Kaspar
remembered.¹

The visionary moment opens up as he registers her hair and the jewels he sees on it, and recalls the 'old traditions'. The renewed sequence continues:

As he stooped for the scarf, he saw this,
and as he straightened, in that half-second,

he saw the fleck of light...

¹H.D., *The Flowering of the Rod*, section 27.

and in that point or shadow,
was the whole secret of the mystery...

the speck, fleck, grain or seed
opened like a flower.¹

As the vision expands, 'before he was lost, / out-of-time completely', he sees the island of Atlantis. This mythical island has been introduced earlier in *The Flowering of the Rod*, where migratory flocks of geese

still (they say) hover
over the lost island, Atlantis;

seeking what we once knew,
we know ultimately we will find....²

By an interesting narrative inversion, Kaspar now appears to become one of these geese, circling over the Paradisal island, in a kind of gyre that has come to be associated with the Yeatsian view of history. H.D.'s earlier description of these circling geese (sections 3 to 6 of the final text) is one of the most revised sections of her notebook. Her evocation of the strenuous, unending effort of survival in this circling brings to mind not only the Blitz, but also Eliot's treatment of love, with a similar background, as a punishing and redeeming power, in *Little Gidding*. She first described the circling of the geese as 'the round & round of history', and then emended 'history' to 'this "reality"', before, in the final version, abandoning any such description of the bird's

¹Ibid., section 30.

²Ibid., section 3.

movements. In all projected versions of this section it ends, significantly, in a transformation of the flock of geese into an image of love:

that turns and turns and turns about one centre,
reckless, regardless, blind to reality,

that knows the Islands of the Blest are there,
for *many waters cannot quench love's fire*.¹

This is fundamentally different, as we shall see, from Eliot's treatment of the destructive effects of war as connected to divine love. Kaspar's vision in Mary's presence is shown to expand to encompass the 'lands of the blest', and 'the promised lands', and also

the whole scope and plan

of our and his civilisation on this,
his and our earth, before Adam.²

In the next section, it becomes the vision of a mythified, ideal city, described as if viewed from above, by the geese, while Kaspar hears a voice from this city in a foreign language, which he mysteriously understands:

through spiral upon spiral of the shell
of memory that yet connects us

with the drowned cities of pre-history.

¹Ibid., section 6.

²Ibid., section 31.

This image of communion through time makes a telling comparison with Eliot's negative

backward look behind the assurance
Of recorded history...
towards the primitive terror¹

in which the distant past offers no haven for Golden Age speculation. For Eliot, the 'primitive terror' represents man's basic nature, remaining relatively unchanged by modern civilisation. H.D. by contrast saw the circling 'mythical birds' as a reminder, as she wrote, in somewhat Churchillian tones, in her Notebook,

that this Atlantis our planet
this island inundated with War
need not utterly despair.²

Kaspar's vision begins to fade. He now sees Mary knotting her scarf, and we return once more to Biblical authority (or the foregrounded lack of it):

we do not know whether or not
he himself followed her

with the alabaster jar; all we know is,
the myrrh or the *spikenard*, *very costly*, was Kaspar's.

¹T.S.Eliot, *Dry Salvages*, section II.

²H.D., Notebook for The Flowering of the Rod, p.43.

By this circular route, the poem ultimately leads back into the concluding Biblical story, which had been touched on in the previous poems. H.D. later wrote that 'The Trilogy... seemed to project itself in time and out of time together'.¹ The moment in which Mary drops her scarf and Kaspar picks it up is approached and backed away from through many sections of the poem. Indeed, this short moment of serial time is also the main part of the narrative of *The Flowering of the Rod*, opened, itself like a flower, into the Apocalyptic moment.

Eliot's central vision gives a hint of the unity and the totalising 'whole scope and plan' presented in Kaspar's vision, in this case not of Atlantis but a London transformed or 'disfigured' by the war, and which also offers a prospect of the kind of unity that Eliot saw as given by history to the protagonists of the English Civil War:

All touched by a common genius,
United in the strife which divided them....²

This valorisation of the 'common', as we have seen in the previous chapter, is a new attitude for Eliot: one not to be found in his pre-war writings. During the politically divisive Twenties and Thirties, he unhesitatingly located his position on the Anglican and Tory right. His political attitude is replicated in his cultural

¹"H.D. by Delia Alton" (Notes on Recent Writing)', *Iowa Review* (March 1986) 174-222.

²T.S.Eliot, *Little Gidding*, section III.

essays, in which the emphasis is on a particular and exclusive tradition and genius. Even when during the Thirties he attempted to reach a more popular audience, and to engage with popular-cultural forms, he was doomed to failure by the divisiveness of the times, which were bound to reject his politico-religious message. His contempt for the common in culture at this period is shown in his description of the cinema as 'a common and impersonal dream'. With the war, political division became subdued, and an alliance was formed not just on the parliamentary level; as the nation was threatened with invasion, there was an objective if temporary consensus between classes. The intellectuals had an important function in 'cementing' this alliance in ideological forms. Thus Eliot's suspicion of the common was transformed. In a lecture of 1943, as we have seen, he talked about 'the language common to all classes' as the best vehicle for poetry. In *East Coker* he had already expressed the sense of a desire to move

Into another intensity
For a further union, a deeper communion....¹

The theme of communion is clearly a very important part of Eliot's design. In a jotting for "the first notes for the conclusion", reprinted in Gardner's book, he shows how he did not mean 'communion' in a purely ritualistic Anglo-Catholic sense, but also intended it to signify a reunification with the common people, using the same geographical terms as H.D. had done:

¹T.S.Eliot, *East Coker*, section V.

Alone - the ice cap
 Separated from
 the surfaces of
 human beings
 To be reunited and
 the communion.¹

Thus in *Little Gidding* those people in the Civil War with 'a common genius' find themselves 'folded in a single party'. In his final poem, Eliot resolves the formal disunities of the poem sequence by making the theme that of the attainment of an organic completeness. This can be seen especially in section II of *Little Gidding*, which describes the encounter with the ghost.

It is significant that Eliot chooses to set this meeting in London, and not in one of his rural or childhood locations. Although London had been frequently touched on in his previous *Quartets*, this is the only description that makes it recognisably wartime London. Section ii of *Little Gidding* is the most revised section of the *Quartets*, and the trouble Eliot took with the particular vocabulary shows how he was trying to make each word fit into the pattern he wanted. He agonised, for instance, over

that precise degree of light at that precise time of day. I want something more universal than black-out... something holding good for the past also.... It must therefore be a country image or a general one.²

¹T.S.Eliot, Quoted in Gardner, *The Composition of Four Quartets*, p.190.

²T.S.Eliot, Quoted in Gardner, *ibid*, p.178.

The equation Eliot makes between the 'country' and the universal and general perhaps betrays some resistance to the explicit use of London as the setting for the central visionary moment of the poem. Other of Eliot's writings of the time show how he saw the duality between country and city as an essential element of a nation's culture, while the two are simultaneously rigidly separated:

Without great cities... the culture of a nation will never rise above a rustic level; without the life of the soil from which to draw its strength, the urban culture must lose its source of strength and rejuvenescence.¹

The duality in the *Four Quartets* between a country location that nurtures, and a civic culture capable, through this mediation, of rising above, informs the wavering structure of the poem up to this point. At this meeting point, the moment of rejuvenescence, of rising above, occurs. In the central scene of the poem, the encounter on the street, the two elements are, as near as possible, synthesised. The fact of a dramatised meeting itself is significant in a poem in which there have up to this point been no narrativised or individualized characters. The meeting of strangers is an emblematic moment in other poems of the period. Richard Church's *Twentieth Century Psalter* has an encounter that matches the one in *Little Gidding*. In the evening, on a 'ruined street' (Eliot has a 'disfigured street'), Church's persona hails a stranger whom he yet knows, a stranger who comes 'out of the

¹T.S.Eliot, 'The Man of Letters and the Future of Europe', *Horizon* x no.60 (December 1944), pp.382-389.

void'. The passage concludes with the persona and the stranger linking together:

The lurching universe where you have stumbled
Was my world too. My brother, guard the lamp.
We will explore still further, side by side.¹

Such meetings portrays the spontaneous dissolution of barriers between people. One could talk with any person one met. In London, all were, in H.D.'s phrase, 'companions of the flame'.

Eliot's care with the exact connotations of words is also seen in his characterisation of the 'dead master'. As with the mixed grammatical subjects of the *Four Quartets*, and section 13 of *The Walls Do Not Fall*, he is 'Both one and many', and forces the narrator ('I') to assume

a double part, and cried
And heard another's voice cry: 'What! are *you* here?'
Although we were not. I was still the same,
Knowing myself yet being someone other....

The 'double part' can be interpreted as the 'we' and 'I', the split self forced to recognise a collective identity because of the exigencies of wartime.² It calls to mind Rimbaud's famous statement of modernistic alienation, 'je est un autre'. However, Rimbaud's alienation is qualitatively transformed by the fact that

¹Richard Church, *Twentieth Century Psalter* (London: J.M.Dent, 1943), p.42.

²Gregory Jay comments that 'This "I" is neither Eliot nor Dante nor any other poet, but an intertextual compound.' *T.S.Eliot and the Poetics of Literary History* (London: Louisiana State University Press, 1983), p.238.

this is a meeting, a moment of recognition and reconciliation. To be self-conscious is to be conscious of the group, 'someone other'. In a surprising collocation of phrases that imply community, the ghost ('a face still forming') is in part a representation of this collective subject: he is not only 'both one and many', he is 'compound', 'compliant to the common wind' and 'In concord' with the narrator. Eliot's use of 'common' brings to mind once more the way that he introduced the concept of common-ness into his politico-religious system in the same period. The time also is similar, by its timelessness, to Kaspar's vision, 'meeting nowhere, no before and after'. In the manuscript version, he was not 'some dead master' but 'the dead masters',¹ the plural being more difficult to picture, but easier to conceptualize. The motive which now unites him with the ghost-like embodiment of the collective subject is one of cultural unity:

Since our concern was speech, and speech impelled us
To purify the dialect of the tribe
And urge the mind to aftersight and foresight,
Let me disclose the gifts reserved for age
To set a crown upon your lifetime's effort.

Another name for a tribe is a 'homogeneous people',² as in his lecture of 1943, in which tradition is shown to be the unified culture of a people. Thus the ghost is reminiscent also of Eliot's Tradition, a whole series of 'dead masters' who are 'Both intimate and unidentifiable'. As we had been warned in the first part of *Little Gidding*,

¹T.S.Eliot, Quoted in Gardner, *ibid.*, p.174.

²T.S.Eliot, 'The Social Function of Poetry', *On Poetry and Poets*, pp.19-20.

the communication

Of the dead is tongued with fire beyond the language of the living.¹

The Tradition, like the ghost, is dead, but still capable of communication. Like the ghost, the Tradition defies final categorisation: it is always being re-defined, always modified, but never totalized. The invocation of an aesthetic Tradition represented by the dead masters recalls the preoccupations of *Burnt Norton*, but this time invoked not in the rose-garden, but in the streets of London. The search for artistic excellence is a contribution to the 'common struggle' of the nation as a whole. Eliot's project in writing the wartime *Quartets* was not a simple exercise in patriotism: he considered and rejected this label for his work. In a short essay on 'Poetry in Wartime', he discusses, in terms remarkably similar to those of the ghost in *Little Gidding*, how 'the first duty' of a poet is 'towards his native language, to preserve and to develop that language'.² As a poet, his duty was therefore not to write directly patriotic poetry, but to 'write the best poetry he can, and thereby incidentally create something in which his people can take pride.' Thus the ghost's urging is in fact a patriotic one, at once embodying Tradition but dissolving its constitutive barriers with the popular, making it 'compliant to the common wind', and enriching not only the national culture, but his own poetic oeuvre as well. The recollection of *Burnt Norton* is thus not a coincidence: it reminds us of the process of

¹T.S.Eliot, *Little Gidding*, section i.

²T.S.Eliot on Poetry in Wartime', *Common Sense* xi no.10 (1942), 351.

readjustment and incorporation, which causes a 'subtle shift' to the Tradition with each new canonical artwork.

2. Dove and Dive-Bomber

I hear the drone of the metal bird
 That is covered with silver wings....
 Creature of death, creature of joy
 Reincarnate, born of the virgin
 Mind of man; Christ of the sky
 Whose latest coming we have heard.¹

The ghost's speech tends to betray Eliot's own Anglo-Catholic bias, which also tends to make itself evident in his notion of the Tradition. To purify implies to make homogeneous, but also to cast out impurities, as in the liquidation of supposedly racially impure elements, at the time Eliot was writing, on the Continent. Medieval Spanish Catholicism had called this casting-out '*pureza de sangre*', blood purity. 'Impel' and 'urge' are similar verbs of coercion. For Eliot, unity (or indeed, victory) still remains only a perpetual possibility, through a rigorous devotional effort. Within a few days of the start of the war, he had written a letter to the *New English Weekly* in which he stresses the necessity for Britain ('we') to 'make a further effort towards rectitude and intelligence', part of which would be 'to understand ourselves, and our own weaknesses and sins'.² However, for Eliot, victory in the war was only a step: salvation ultimately relied on the hinted-at Christian Apocalypse.

¹Richard Church, *Twentieth-Century Psalter*, p.29.

²T.S.Eliot, 'Truth and Propaganda', *New English Weekly* xv no.22 (14 September 1939), p.291.

H.D. was herself conscious of this term, and indeed she drew much of her imagery for *Trilogy* from the Biblical Apocalypse of St. John, as Eliot did in describing the Blitz; it was the clear Biblical reference to draw on at such a time. In *Tribute to Freud*, she described the Blitz as 'the full apocryphal terror of fire and brimstone, of whirlwind and flood and tempest, of the Biblical Day of Judgement and the Last Trump'.¹ However, the Blitz in her poem is portrayed as a demonstration of inner regeneration, coming from within the individual and group, and the visionary moment springs from the bombing only very incidentally and obliquely. By contrast, Eliot centres this experience on the external effects of the Blitz, and even hints that the destruction is a form (not an image) of divine visitation.

He attempted to construct a fittingly chastising religious message from the apocalyptic experience, as is shown by his preliminary sketch for *Little Gidding*:

They vanish, the individuals, and our feeling for them sinks into the flame which refines. They emerge in another pattern & recreated & reconciled redeemed, having their meaning together not apart, in a union which is beams from the central fire.²

It is interesting to see how, at this early stage of composition, he had already worked out the idea of collective fusion in explicit terms, although this unity can only be attained through suffering.

¹H.D., *Tribute to Freud*, p.142.

²T.S.Eliot, quoted in Helen Gardner, p.157.

The final clause of Eliot's sketch seems to be a prototype of the concluding line of the whole poem, 'And the fire and the rose are one'. For H.D., too, the 'Flowering' that the rod or bomb-blasted apple-tree undergoes, is a moment of fusion, a moment which opens up like a flower into a vision of Mary, dressed in white, a colour that is

all-colour;
where the flames mingle

and the wings meet, when we gain
the arc of perfection....¹

Read's major war poem also culminates in the image of the self as a flower, which grows organically

petal by petal
exfoliated from an infinite centre
the outer layers bursting and withering
the inner pressure increasing.²

If the organic image of flowering animates H.D.'s culminating poem, and gives a clue to its bud-like structure that opens up into a beautiful vision, Eliot's animating image is significantly different. When describing the Blitz in *Little Gidding*, he pictures how

The dove descending breaks the air

¹H.D., *Tribute to the Angels* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1945), section 43.

²Herbert Read, 'Ode Written During the Battle of Dunkirk', *Collected Poems*, p.163.

With flame of incandescent terror
 Of which the tongues declare
 The one discharge from sin and error.¹

The dove, from the Apocalypse, is a suitably Biblical representation of God's ministration, a paradoxical symbol of peace. Stephen Spender uses the same image in a similar way, but less successfully when, apparently without ambivalence, in one war poem he asks:

Why cannot the one good
 Benevolent feasible
 Final dove descend?²

As a figure for the dive-bomber, the bird, or some similar organic form, seems to have intrigued many other interpreters of the Blitz. Paul Nash wrote that 'When the war came, suddenly the sky was upon us all like a huge hawk hovering, threatening.' His paintings of this period are a record of his fascination with the war in the air, the battle of what he termed his '*aerial creatures*'. His oxymoronic description of the appeal he felt for 'the diverse, distinct personalities of those enchanting monsters'³ brings to mind Eliot's ambivalent dove. In another article, Nash is more explicit in giving zoomorphic applications to different types of allied bombers. The Wellington has 'its proud fin and strong level flight, like that of an avenging angel'. The Whitley is

¹T.S.Eliot, *Little Gidding*, section IV.

²Stephen Spender, 'The War God', *Ruins and Visions* (London: Faber, 1942), p. 29.

³Paul Nash, 'A Painter's Preoccupations', *Little Reviews Anthology* (1946), 146-152.

cerebral and deadly.... Yet, with all this, it is a queer bird-like creature, reminding me of a dove! Look at its head and lovely bird-like wings. As it sails through the low clouds at sunset, it might be the dove returning to the Ark on Mount Ararat. But it is more than this. If it is a dove, it is a dove of death.¹

For George Barker, the plane image takes the organically aesthetic form of a moth:

Thus in the stage of time the minor moth is small
But prophesies the Fokker with marvellous wings
Mottled with my sun's gold and your son's blood.²

Edith Sitwell's 'Lullaby' describes an ambiguous but monstrous 'steel bird' which lays waste to

earth's low bed -
(The Pterodactyl fouls its nest):
But steel wings fan thee to thy rest.³

Virginia Woolf saw the planes as 'little silver insect[s]' that 'may at any time sting you to death'.⁴ H.D. also, writing about 'the whirr and distant roar' of the German V1s and V2s in her poem 'Christmas 1944', seems to describe them as like avenging angels,

strange visitations

¹Paul Nash, 'The Personality of Planes', *Vogue* (March 1942), 43, 76. A part of this passage is also quoted in Sebastian D.G.Knowles, *A Purgatorial Flame / Seven British Writers in the Second World War* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1989), p.111.

²George Barker, 'Munich Elegy No.1', *Collected Poems* ed. Robert Fraser (London: Faber, 1987), p.104.

³Edith Sitwell, 'Lullaby', *Street Songs* (London: Macmillan, 1942), p.3.

⁴Virginia Woolf, 'Thoughts on Peace in an Air-Raid', *The Death of the Moth and Other Essays* (London: Hogarth press, 1942), pp.154-157.

from the stratosphere.¹

The ambiguity between angel or bomber is similar to Eliot's metaphor. The fusion of the two is something more, a conjuncture that is absolutely emblematic for the nature of specific wartime aesthetics. At the same period, Herbert Read was praising the abstract sculpture of Naum Gabo, because of its presentation of organic form in its purest, non-representational form. Singled out especially is Gabo's 'Spiral Theme' which is like a 'still but vibrating falcon', located somewhere 'between the visible and the invisible, the material and the immaterial... the crystallisation of the purest sensibility'.² For Read, Gabo's constructivist sculpture, like the descending falchion³ in his own poem, and the numerous such images in other poems of the Blitz, fuses the mechanical with the organic. The word 'crystallisation' here is significant, a word that perfectly expresses the marriage between natural and geometric form that, as Read wrote in his poem, would form the reconstructed future 'crystal city'. Like Eliot's 'metal leaves' and disrupted seasons, the dove stands for the war as a point of intersection between the natural and divine (God as nature) on the one hand, and the human and mechanical (mankind as artificial) on the other.

This image had been a part of European modernist sensibility from earlier on, and is irrevocably linked to the

¹H.D., *Collected Poems*, p.504.

²Herbert Read, 'Vulgarity and Impotence', *Horizon*, *ibid.*

³Herbert Read, 'A World Within s War', *Collected Poems*, pp.172-173.

experience of war. It is best fulfilled in Paul Klee's painting, 'Angelus Novus', which, according to Adorno, had its origin 'During the First World War or shortly after, [when] Klee drew cartoons of Kaiser Wilhelm as an inhuman iron-eater.' A continuity can already be noted in the reference to metals in what is usually organic: Metal leaves, metal bird, steel wings, silver insect. Adorno continues:

these became - the development can be shown quite clearly - the *Angelus Novus*, the angel of the machine, who, though he no longer bears any emblem of caricature or commitment, flies far beyond both. The machine angel's enigmatic eyes force the onlooker to try to decide whether he is announcing the culmination of disaster or salvation hidden within it.¹

The image of mechanical warfare, which developed in Klee's work into a figuration of the destruction of the organic life-world through technology, was translated back once more into the imagery of modern warfare as the dive-bomber. It is, of course, this same painting that Walter Benjamin considers in his famous Thesis ix on the Philosophy of History:

His face is turned towards the past. Where we perceive a chain of events, he sees one single catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage and hurls it in front of his feet. The angel would like to stay, awaken the dead, and make whole what has been smashed. But a storm is blowing from Paradise; it has got caught in his wings with such violence that the angel can no longer close them. This storm irresistibly propels him into the future to which his back is turned,

¹Theodor W. Adorno, 'Commitment', in *Aesthetics and Politics*, pp.194-195. The painting is reproduced in O.K.Werckmeister, *The Making of Paul Klee's Career, 1914-1920* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), p.240. In discussing the painting, the author quotes Klee: it is 'a "flying man" with artificial, mechanical limbs' (ibid., p.241).

while the pile of debris before him grows skyward. This storm is what we call progress.¹

¹Walter Benjamin, 'Theses on the Philosophy of History', *Illuminations* ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken, 1969), pp.257-258.

3. Retribution

[T]o be restored, our sickness must grow worse.¹

With Eliot, the oxymoronic theme of the machine of death as a symbol of peace continues in exploring the notion of God's love.

Who then devised the torment? Love.
 Love is the unfamiliar Name
 Behind the hands that wove
 The intolerable shirt of flame
 Which human power cannot remove.

The admixture of human love (hands weaving a shirt of Nessus) and intense pain is suggestive of masochism, or at least of the sense of pain as a deserved punishment. In an earlier manuscript, the dove is revealingly described as '*The culmination of desire*'.² H.D. in her notebook shows a similar sense of the paradoxical connection between the particular suffering of wartime existence, and divine love:

who knows the merciless Mercy
 of their (our) Creator
 who permits this till they
 drop numb
 & yet do not pity for they fall
 blind, exhausted,
 in a certain ecstasy.³

¹T.S.Eliot, *East Coker*, section IV.

²T.S.Eliot, quoted in Gardner, p.213.

³H.D., Notebook for *The Flowering of the Rod*, p.8.

Cecil Day Lewis is even more explicit in his use of sexual metaphors of penetration, and his direct description of pain as pleasure, for the punishment of the Blitz:

Whatever grotesque scuffle and piercing
Indignant orgasm of pain took them,
All that enforced activity of death
Did answer and compensate
some voluntary inaction, soft option, dream retreat.
Each man died for the whole world.¹

Even for a writer as humanistic as Louis MacNeice, the experience of aerial bombardment in Spain leads him to use, in this most socialist of struggles, the imagery of religion: 'the human values remain, purged in the fire'.² If the fire is a purgation, a previous impurity is implied. Similarly with Eliot, the explicit argument would be, as with Day Lewis, that 'some voluntary inaction' on the part of society led to the destruction:

Water and fire deride
The sacrifice that we denied.
Water and fire shall rot
The marred foundations we forgot,
Of sanctuary and choir.
This is the death of water and fire.

This is a pregnant and association-laden passage, plainly not intended simply as an unambiguous description of the Blitz. A couplet which he excised would have made this more obvious:

¹Cecil Day Lewis, 'The Dead', *Word Over All* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1943), p.36.

²Louis MacNeice, section xxiii, *Autumn Journal* (London: Faber, 1939), p.89.[Alan Heuser, ed., *Selected Prose of Louis MacNeice* OUP 1990]

Fire without and fire within
 Shall purge the unidentified sin.¹

For Eliot, the idea of purgation was central to his redemptive scheme. This was not a new theme in his poetry. What was new was the emphasis on social and collective, as opposed to individual, guilt and redemption.

'Ash Wednesday' provides a representative instance of Eliot's earlier emphasis on individual redemption. It is relatively certain that the pronouns indicate a consistent individual narrator or persona. However, even the individual is prone to break down into smaller constituent parts, and in its dissembled bones becoming an image of fragmentation: 'We are glad to be scattered, we did little good to each other'. Although the plural pronoun is occasionally used, there is almost no image of the social in the poem. The plural appears to be delimited to 'us sinners'² and is a universalisation of the narrator's voice. Other people only appear in a reference to 'those who walk among noise and deny the voice'.³ These people are an undifferentiated 'other' whose function in the poem is to particularize the narrativized 'I' or 'we' who, although sinners, are capable of redemption. The poem represents a turning away from this 'other', the 'vanished power of the usual reign' of the temporal world. In this period Eliot was beginning to formulate his political ideas of a Christian

¹T.S.Eliot, Quoted in Gardner, p.168.

²T.S.Eliot 'Ash Wednesday' Section I.

³Ibid, section V.

elect constructed in opposition to 'The World'. The repetition of the phrase repeated in 'Ash Wednesday', 'redeem the time', in an essay from the period is significant:

The World is trying the experiment of attempting to form a civilized non-Christian mentality. The experiment will fail; but we must be very patient in awaiting its collapse; meanwhile redeeming the time: so that the Faith may be preserved alive through the dark ages before us...¹

It is taken for granted that the redeemed will only ever be a small proportion of the population. The limitations of this attitude when it comes to addressing the World in anything but polemical terms are obvious. For all its value, 'Ash Wednesday' also signifies Eliot's arrival at an aesthetic impasse in his poetic output. After this point he gradually turned to the writing of drama. If redemption is an individual matter, an obvious dramatic form was to present a character on stage in the process of redemption. This was perhaps easier in dealing with a recognised medieval Saint, as in *Murder in the Cathedral*, than in presenting the theme of redemption in contemporary terms, as Eliot attempted in *The Family Reunion*.

The main character, Harry, has been fleeing from the horror of his own sinfulness: a horror represented by the Eumenides that chase him back to his ancestral home. As the play progresses, he comes to the recognition that he must turn back and let the sin 'come to consciousness' because 'the knowledge of it must

¹T.S.Eliot, *Thoughts After Lambeth* (London, 1931)

precede the expiation'.¹ Although he is still 'befouled', he now recognizes that 'there is only one way out of defilement'.² The Eumenides turn from horrors into 'bright angels' that he must now follow on his obscure journey in the search for redemption. This is the same stage that has been reached by the narrator of 'Ash Wednesday': not redeemed, but wishing for redemption, and starting on the journey towards it; and it is the same stage that also differentiates the narrator or hero from the masses who do not recognize the need for redemption. The play ends soon after Harry's departure in search of 'reconciliation'.

Although *The Family Reunion* perhaps succeeds in putting into a dramatic situation the individual's need for redemption expressed in 'Ash Wednesday', the play represents no real thematic advance on the earlier poem. Only one other character, Agatha, seems to fully recognize where Harry is going, and she pushes the responsibility for redemption on him, as the 'consciousness of your unhappy family'. The other characters lack intelligence, sympathy and perceptiveness beyond the bounds of credibility. Perhaps because of this, the social background of the play is not just restricted but stilted. The details that make the play actually belong to the modern world are not only mostly class-specific, but incidental: chauffeurs, cruises, car crashes, and telephones. Add to this the vagueness of Harry's original sin: he thought he had pushed his wife off a ship, but then suspects he

¹T.S.Eliot *The Family Reunion Collected Poetry and Plays* p.332.

²Ibid. p.337.

only dreamt it; and the total obscurity of Harry's journey following his recognition; and the play clearly fails to integrate the redemptive theme with any larger, social or even familial issues.

In *Burnt Norton*, Eliot attempts once more to integrate the social into his redemptive scheme. As we have seen, his presentation of the social is still loaded with the opposition between an urban mass culture and the high cultural aesthetic moment. The inscription from Heraclitus replicates the division operative within the redemptive scheme of 'Ash Wednesday'. The difference is that the social is now an object of concern, not dismissal. The division is not concealed, but brought to the surface, becoming the structural principle of the poem as a whole, in its alternations between stillness and movement, time and timelessness, the rose garden and London, the 'time-kept city'. This opposition is epitomized in the image of 'The Word in the desert' being 'attacked by the voices of temptation'.

In Eliot's writings, the notion of sacrifice, always a preoccupation for him, becomes intensely social in nature, from the moment of the national experience of the Munich crisis. In his 'Last Words', in the last issue of the *Criterion*, he ominously explained his reasons for closing the magazine down:

Literary symptoms of decline... are only symptoms... the demoralization of society goes very much deeper.... It will perhaps

need more severe affliction than anything we have yet experienced, before life can be renewed.¹

The mythic system of redemption had been set up in Eliot's mind even before the war: affliction was not just foreseen, but perceived as 'needed' in order for there to be a possibility of renewal. In 1939, before the start of war, he was already looking forward to the post-war reconstruction. The previous neglect of the *entre deux guerres* period had led up to this climactic moment of sacrifice and purgation. As he wrote in *The Idea of a Christian Society*, upon the outbreak of war: 'If I share the guilt of my generation in time of "peace", I do not see how I can absolve myself from it in time of war'.² Eliot's feelings as they developed echo to a profound extent the rhetorical calls that Churchill made, as the war was starting and a cold eye was cast at Britain's previous policies:

to suppose that we are not involved in what is happening is a profound mistake. Although we can do nothing to stop it, we shall be sufferers on a very great scale. We shall have to make all kinds of sacrifices for our own defence that would have been unnecessary if a firm resolve had been taken at an earlier stage. We shall have to make sacrifices not only of money, but of personal service in order to make up for what we have lost.³

With the arrival of the Blitz, Churchill tactfully toned down in his speeches the extensive references to sacrifice that distinguish this passage, although in 1941 he not only refers to the Blitz as a

¹T.S.Eliot, 'Last Words', *Criterion* xviii no.71 (January 1939), pp.273-274.

²T.S.Eliot, *The Idea of a Christian Society*, p.108.

³Winston Churchill's 'The Fruits of Munich' speech, 14 March 1939, in Robert Rhodes James, ed. *Churchill Speaks / Winston S. Churchill in Peace and War / Collected Speeches, 1897-1963* (Leicester: Windward, 1981), p.677.

'proof' and a 'test', but an 'ordeal by fire' that 'even in a certain sense exhilarated the manhood and womanhood of Britain'.¹

Upon the outbreak of war, Eliot stated his position more clearly. As one of the country's 'best minds', he saw his role as giving 'a deal of hard thinking' to the question of the 'clear formulation of our own aims', if this 'expense of spirit, body, and natural resources' is not to 'lead to another uneasy interim *entre deux guerres*'.² These aims would, of course, be towards the Christian 'positive society' he discussed in *The Idea of a Christian Society*. In the wartime *Quartets*, there is more of a sense of a perceived role for his poetry. As we have seen, the social contradictions of the Thirties were inscribed in all of Eliot's writings, in which redemption is opposed to 'the usual reign', aesthetic experience opposed to mass culture, and incarnate religious time to serial time or history. In Eliot's wartime writings, these oppositions are dissolved and replaced by an apprehension of the Incarnation as a real and transforming experience. Redemption is no longer an individual, but a social project, as is shown by the draft outline of *Little Gidding*:

They vanish, the individuals, and our feeling for them sinks into the flame which refines. They emerge in another pattern & recreated & reconciled redeemed, having their meaning together not apart.³

¹Winston Churchill, 'Westward, Look', 27 April, 1941, *ibid.*, p.749.

²T.S.Eliot 'Truth and Propaganda'. Note his use of 'our' to mean 'the country's'.

³

This is very different from the projected redemption of Harry's individual quest in *The Family Reunion*, or the dispersed individual bones of 'Ash Wednesday'.

H.D. also partly shared this structure of feeling towards the Second World War as a moment of purgation and potential redemption. In *The Gift*, she wrote in terms similar to Eliot's:

There was a promise and there was a gift, but the promise it seems was broken and the gift it seems was lost. That is why, now, at this minute, there is the roar outside that will, perhaps this time, shatter my head.¹

Breaking a promise is a breach of covenant similar to the denial of sacrifice that Eliot thought had led to the war. Losing a gift also perhaps indicates neglect, but is presented as a more tragic, undeserving cause of war than the 'demoralization of society' that Eliot wrote about. H.D.'s tone, using the passive voice, suggests something that was not any person's responsibility, but was outside human control. In a letter she confessed that it was this that impelled her to continue to compose her poetry: 'I have to go on writing, a sort of philosophy of war and the escape... into a real realm of appreciation of the sacrifice.'² Her imagery of sacrifice and deserved suffering is more muted than Eliot's, but can still be found. In 'Ancient Wisdom Speaks' she uses much of the appropriate clerical imagery to put the dead of this

¹H.D., *The Gift*, p.134.

²H.D., Letter to May Sarton, 2 March 1941 (New York Public Library).

destruction, and that of Nineveh and Tyre, into a devotional context:

O do not weep, she says,
but let the fire burn out;
for having dared the flame,
endured the pyre,
your ashes...
still serve
to praise my name.¹

Much of the fourth section of *Little Gidding*, including the interchangeable use of 'we', leads one back to his feelings of a pre-war malaise, as expressed in *The Idea of a Christian Society*:

The feeling which was new and unexpected was a feeling of humiliation, which seemed to demand an act of personal contrition, of humility, repentance and amendment; what had happened was something in which one was deeply implicated and responsible. It was not, I repeat, a criticism of the government, but a doubt of the validity of a civilisation. We could not match conviction with conviction, we had no ideas with which we could either meet or oppose the ideas opposed to us.²

Munich was the occasion which impelled him to write this, but the situation, as Eliot analyzes it here, did not change as the war started. There was no repentance or amendment, and sacrifice, in his terms, was denied. In a note appended at the end of the book, dated 'September 6th 1939', he adds 'we cannot afford to defer

¹H.D., *Collected Poems*, p.484. Poem dated 14 April, 1943.

²T.S.Eliot, *The Idea of a Christian Society*, p.64.

our constructive thinking to the conclusion of hostilities'. Insofar as the war was constructed as a 'People's War', appealing to popular sentiment and seeming to pull down class barriers, it could hardly have been further from the nobly led Christian crusade which Eliot seems to have envisioned in *The Idea of a Christian Society*. The ghost's concern with purifying the 'dialect of the tribe' also has its echoes on his political writings. In *The Idea of a Christian Society* he places himself with a high sense of mission in the struggle against a debased language 'that only operate[s] to deceive and stupefy us'.¹ Hence the war was undertaken, for him, with 'marred foundations', in other words, without the faith as an end of society that he argued was the only way for Britain to combat continental Fascism. Eliot's reaction was not unique: the Blitz evinced a common searching for some kind of guilt lying within the nation. Stephen Spender, in a poem written before the start of the Blitz, characteristically wrote of 'an endless empty need to atone'.²

Unlike Eliot, some did criticize the government. The book *Guilty Men*, written by Michael Foot, Peter Howard, and Frank Owen, which first pointed the finger of blame to virtually the entire Chamberlain Government, was immensely popular in the early Forties. It is a short step from blaming one's whole government as a group of villains, to blaming by implication the whole ruling class, the whole directive element of society.

¹T.S.Eliot, *ibid*, p.9.

²Stephen Spender, 'June 1940', *Ruins and Visions*, pp.40-43.

Sociologists have found the idea of 'communal guilt' can be a widespread reaction: 'the feeling that a whole community is infected by the moral derelictions of some of its members makes for a greater readiness to interpret a comprehensive disaster as a punishment.'¹ A writer on psychological problems relating to the war found a similar phenomenon, following bombing raids:

In Germany... many religious people regarded the air attacks as a divine retribution for Germany's sins; others felt that Germany was being punished for having initiated the bombing of civilians.... Many of the rituals and avoidances which occurred among the British seem to be attempts to deal with the threat of external danger as if it were a threat of punishment for wrongdoing.²

Another psychologist who wrote on the Second World War found among Londoners 'a tendency to renounce pleasure and convenience as a sort of sacrifice', which she felt was an attempt to 'mitigate their unconscious guilt'. One of her patients had the feeling that 'the planes were God's eye watching her personally'. Perhaps more dubiously psychologically, but revealing in its symbolism, she wrote that the sound of sirens 'symbolized the angry or scolding voices of their parents, the raids the punishment which followed'. In a note appended to this, she observes, 'since punishment followed, there must have been a crime; therefore guilt and submission were appropriate reactions'.³ However dubious the psychology here, this structure

¹Marthe Wolfenstein, *Disaster, A Psychological Essay* (London: Routledge, 1957), p.201.

²Irving L. Janis, *Air War and Emotional Stress / Psychological Studies of Bombing and Civil Defense* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1951), p.169.

³Melitta Schmideberg, 'Some Observations on Individual Reactions to Air-Raids', *The International Journal of Psycho-Analysis* xxiii (1942), 146-176. The author, incidentally, was an old friend and correspondent of H.D.'s.

of feeling involving notions of guilt (personal or communal) and redemption, was characteristic of the interpretations that many of the participants put on the Blitz.

Edith Sitwell's biographer wrote that during the war she 'took on an exaggerated feeling of responsibility for "the sins of the world"'.¹ Observing in an article written in 1942 that 'We are living in the midst of chaos and darkness', she anticipated Eliot's divine love in describing poetry as 'hard and fiery love', and calling on the poet to 'bring fire to burn away the chaos, and a healing wisdom'.² Sitwell significantly places the role of the poet where Eliot places religion, but they both share the stress on the process of purgation, which, as always in poetry written in response to the Blitz, is a purgation through fire. Her most famous war-time poem focuses upon the martyrdom of Christ as an image of the raids in 1940. Again, there is an invocation of a collective subject, Christ's blood perhaps signifying the vapour trails and falling bombs of the raids:

See, see where Christ's blood streames in the firmament:
It flows from the brow we nailed upon the tree
Deep to the dying, to the thirsting heart
That holds the fires of the world, - dark-smirched with pain
As Caesar's laurel crown.³

¹Geoffrey Elborn, *Edith Sitwell a Biography* (London: Sheldon, 1981), p.149.

²Edith Sitwell, 'Some Notes on Poetry', *The Tribune* (October 16 1942), 18.

³Edith Sitwell, 'Still Falls the Rain', *Street Songs*, pp.1-2.

Eliot witnessed the destruction of 'sanctuary and choir' in London, places of religious contemplation and prayer that represented, for him, the convictions which he felt had been neglected during the inter-war period. Again, this was a common theme in reportage of the Blitz. A feature in *Picture Post* of January 1941, 'One Night of Fire', shows eighteen pictures of London churches, before and after their destruction.¹ Perhaps due to the Ministry of Information's imposed delays on the release of pictures of the bombed areas, this was the first *Picture Post* article to deal exclusively with the Blitz, despite the heavy bombings experienced since the previous September. Churches were highlighted above individual residences because of their symbolic content: like the pastoral images prevalent in the same magazine in this period, they were not 'England' in practical terms, yet they were its representatives more than actual physical residences could be.

For Eliot, the pre-war neglect was the 'marred foundation' upon which, without 'constructive thinking', it would be impossible to fight a truly Christian war. Its destruction is a form of retribution for the whole country's collective forgetting. One of the most rigorous clerical commentators on the *Four Quartets* sees 'explicit recognition here of war as an instrument of divine chastisement'.² The Blitz, the 'death of water and fire', is then literally a 'discharge from sin and error', a purgation, in

¹*Picture Post* x no.3 (18 January 1941), 14-15.

²Sister Mary Anthony Weinig, *Verbal Pattern in Four Quartets: A Close Reading of T.S.Eliot's Poem* (Troy, Michigan, 1982), p.83.

which the city is so disfigured that it, and the national collective it represents, can be loved anew. This is what differentiates the wartime *Quartets*, and *Little Gidding* in particular, from his earlier treatments of the themes of guilt and retribution: the apprehension, not just of its immanence, but its physical reality.

For Eliot, purgation is not only a literal theme, but informs the discourse of the text, in which purgation is a formal process of rejecting different modes of expression and narrative, as he constantly turns on his own style and criticizes it for not expressing what he wants to say. The 'intolerable wrestle / With words and meanings'¹ continues through each constituent poem, a process which, of course, produces neither gain nor loss: 'there is only the trying'.² In *The Dry Salvages* also it is the process of devoting an effort (sacrificial because pointless) that leaves an ambiguous 'us'

only undefeated
Because we have gone on trying.³

In context, it is almost inescapable to think of 'we' as the nation. Thus the effort to gain expression in the *Four Quartets* leads on a purgatorial journey, the winding path that characterizes the imagery of the whole poem, towards the 'purification of the motive'⁴ to the moment of vision and fusion in *Little Gidding*, in

¹T.S.Eliot, *East Coker*, section II.

²T.S.Eliot, *East Coker*, section V.

³T.S.Eliot, *The Dry Salvages*, section V.

⁴T.S.Eliot, *Little Gidding*, section III.

which all of the elements of the poem are shown to be merged in one subject.

H.D.'s attitude to the war, as reported by her biographer, was very different from this:

this was a war that removed that projected and unreal war guilt from her. This war, after all, hadn't been an act of wrath aimed at her personally for her sins. Here was another generation upon which the same vindictiveness could be enacted.¹

A certain temporal difference between the two poems should be acknowledged. For H.D., the actual experience of the Blitz is related in the first poem, and then transformed, mutating into the other images and structures which multiply from it, until it becomes the 'premature peace poem' of the last two poems of *Trilogy*. The slightly later dates of composition allow for a more positive resolution, culminating in the Nativity. Eliot, by contrast, does not approach the war thematically until *Little Gidding*, in which he seeks to find images to express the central experience that is never explicitly articulated as an event, but instead is fitted into a Christian system of punishment and redemption.

Whereas Eliot's structural approach to the Blitz can be characterised as a gaining of unity through a process of

¹Barbara Guest, *Herself Defined*, p.253.

purgation, for H.D. the process of achieving a unity is itself a major part of her poem's form. Her approach to religious systems throughout *Trilogy* is resolutely syncretist, attempting to find things in common between the different mythical systems through wordplay and constructed similarities and coincidences of narrative. The pagan Kaspar's role in the Nativity myth is a major example. She also attempts to achieve a synthesis from masculine and feminine sexual differences in her use of matriarchal deities such as Venus and Mary throughout the poem. Again, wordplay is used to connect Venus with 'veneration' and Mary with the sea. She also, centrally, re-tells the story of Mary Magdalene in positive terms, inserting into that most patriarchal of texts, the Bible, a possibility of feminine redemption.

Both poets wrote mostly in response to the impending threat of violence, which was fairly continuous throughout most of the war.¹ The actual occurrence of violence was approached more obliquely, for example in the thematisation of the Apocalypse or revelation, built, as we have seen, into the narrative structure of *Trilogy* itself. For H.D., the experience was not fitted into an essentially Christian schema: she abandoned the idea of simply reproducing a Biblical parable, and tried to express through her eclectic use of different mythical systems, a general mystical experience. She wrote of this feeling during the Blitz:

¹See e.g., R.M.Titmuss, *Problems of Social Policy* (London: HMSO, 1950), pp.321-4, for a description of the long wearying period of 2,019 days 'Between the first bomb on Britain and the last'. There may have been periods of less intense bombing, but there was always still an oppressive feeling in this period, throughout society, that the bombers might return.

'one is actually and poignantly more aware than one ever was - or perhaps hardly ever was - in moments of great ecstasy and great emotional tension'.¹

In terms of the way the experience is presented, however, it is interesting that she was apparently aware of the word 'Apocalypse' coming from the Greek, *apo* removal from a place, and *kalupto*, to conceal, that is 'the... uncovering of something by the expedient of obtaining a point of view from which it can be seen in its true significance'.² This is H.D.'s strategy in presenting the apparently simple actions of dropping a scarf and picking it up again, which through Kaspar's vision telescopes out to reveal Mary's true identity to him and much more, as he appears to float above, gaining a bird's (or plane's) eye view of the mythical city. Similarly, in the structure of the poem, the 'we' hero that was partly constituted in the first two poems is, in *The Flowering of the Rod*, split once more into the two figures, Mary and Kaspar, in order to allow the reader to stand apart, to step back out from the ruin, and view from a distance the real nature of the group or city or tribe, as we move into the unifying myth of Christ's birth.

¹H.D., letter to May Sarton, 26 July 1941 (kept in the Berg Collection, New York Public Library.)

²William Loftus Hare, in a book apparently known and read by H.D., as quoted in Susan Stanford Friedman, *Psyche Reborn: The Emergence of H.D.* (Bloomington, 1981), p.218.

CHAPTER FIVE :

THE CHANGING STRUCTURE OF DOCUMENTARY FILM

1. Background to British Documentary

[I]t would not be incorrect to describe the constitutive subject of film as a "we" in which the aesthetic and sociological aspects of the medium converge.¹

In order to discuss properly the role of documentary film and the nature of the formal changes that it underwent during the Second World War, it is important to describe at some length its institutional background as it developed from the late Twenties. My account will lay particular stress on two central points that have almost always been missed in previous accounts of the documentary movement: the nature and political significance of its use of Soviet film technique, and the connections between the movement and Britain's literary avant-garde. These two connections help to explain the relations of Humphrey Jennings to

¹Theodor W Adorno, 'Transparencies on Film', *ibid.*

the movement during the course of the war, and also expose an institutional framework in the manufacture of cultural productions that it is less easy to account for directly when discussing poetry, but which may still be present in a necessarily less visible form.

The documentary movement and the avant-garde matrix, with which both Jennings and Thomas were associated, share the same contextual background in developments in Britain and Europe during the Twenties. For the generation that had missed fighting in the First World War, but had grown up with its after-effects, the dominant mood was questioning and critical. While there was economic depression and unemployment at home, the example of the Soviet Union spoke of new hope abroad, achievable through social revolution. A large proportion of the British intelligentsia seemingly defected to support of this cause.

In this period of economic crisis and uncertainty, the British Government established the Empire Marketing Board, with the aim of publicising and advertising goods from the British Empire. Such a mandate inevitably stretched beyond the market place, necessitating the creation of a background of positive and patriotic association that would ensure the sale of Empire goods. For instance, one of their most popular products was a map of the world, with Britain in the centre, and the Empire shaded in, explaining the trade routes and interconnections between Britain and the colonies. These maps were widely used in schools to

teach history and geography. The case that the Empire Marketing Board had a larger ideological function is stated by Stephen Constantine, who describes how

The extension of the franchise in 1918, the impact of the Russian Revolution, trade union militancy in the 1920s and growing support for an ostensibly socialist Labour Party reinforced Amery in his view that only a Conservative Party which adopted a constructive imperialist policy with attendant ideas would be able to resist socialist advance in a period of high unemployment.¹

Leo Amery was Secretary of State for the Colonies from 1925 to 1929, and on the E.M.B. for its whole existence, even during the Labour government, and was, according to the Board Secretary, Sir Stephen Tallents, 'in spirit and in fact [its] only begetter'.² The Board had film on its list of functions, the lowest of 45 departments that included 'newspaper advertisements, posters, recipes, leaflets, lectures, broadcasts, exhibitions, shopping weeks, and trade meetings'.³ They were, however, willing to listen to the ideas of the young Scottish sociologist, John Grierson, back from a study of film and education in the United States, in 1928.

Sir Stephen Tallents proved especially receptive to Grierson's ideas, which coincided at many points with his own:

¹Stephen Constantine, "'Bringing the Empire Alive': The Empire Marketing Board and Imperial Propaganda, 1926-33", in John M. Mackenzie, ed., *Imperialism and Popular Culture* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1986), p.196.

²Sir Stephen Tallents, 'Empire Marketing Board, 1926-33', *United Empire* N.S. xxiv 8 (August 1933), 484-5.

³Forsyth Hardy, ed., *Grierson on Documentary* (London: Collins, 1946), p.97

even before meeting him he was, he later wrote, 'already convinced of the importance of the film in our work'.¹ In 1932 Tallents wrote a pamphlet, published by Faber, *The Projection of England*. The pamphlet represents the view of a liberal-minded and forward-looking civil servant, interested in discovering new ways to maintain British order and Empire. These views very significantly allowed for strategic concession, and the use of modern technological methods. He plainly saw the potential of the Empire Marketing Board as an organisation with the ability to sell more than goods. The pamphlet is an urgent and unequivocal call for Britain to use every method to publicise itself in the world by 'master[ing] every means and every art by which we can communicate with other peoples'.²

Notable in the writings of both Tallents and Grierson is the frankness with which they use the word 'propaganda' to describe their desired means of communication. The historian John Mackenzie notes that the word had an accepted definition as

a selection and slanting of the truth to a specific national end. Its ablest proponent of the day was Sir Stephen Tallents for him, education and propaganda were inseparably bound up with imperialism.³

¹Sir Stephen Tallents, 'The Birth of British Documentary' (in three parts), *Journal of the University Film Association of America* xx 1-3 (1968), 15-21; 27-33; 61-66.

²S.G.Tallents, *The Projection of England* (London: Faber, 1932), p.18.

³John M. Mackenzie, *Propaganda and Empire: The Manipulation of British Public Opinion, 1880-1960*, p.83.

Tallents included in the formulation that was the title of his pamphlet 'the need of a preliminary projection of England to herself'. Grierson was given the explicit directive to use film 'to change the connotation of the word "Empire"'.¹ Thus from the start there are clear affinities between the task Tallents saw as of prime necessity for the British Empire, and the developing documentary project: 'a continuous and sustained presentation of our industrial ability and our industrial ambitions, designed with the utmost artistry that we can achieve'.² Artistry, and the prestige it carried with it, was from the start made central to the project of propagandizing imperialism. This readiness to appropriate from the artistic sphere for instrumental ends was to characterize the British documentary movement through its whole history.

It was a commonplace of political debates at the time that film, especially from Hollywood, was a powerful force in the projection of values, the expression of nationality, and indirectly, in increasing international trade: Grierson imported from America the sentence 'A foot of film equals a dollar of trade'. Tallents's pamphlet was a contribution to this debate, asserting that 'The greatest agent of international communication at the moment is unquestionably the cinema The moral and emotional influence of the cinema is incalculable.'³ It was not only the example of commercial American films that influenced Grierson and Tallents.

¹Forsyth Hardy, ed., *Grierson on Documentary*, p.97

²S.G.Tallents, *The Projection of England*, p.19.

³Ibid., p.29.

Soviet cinema, and in particular the work of Eisenstein, was beginning to have an impact in Europe. The reaction of the British Government was to ban *Battleship Potemkin* and other Soviet films from public release in Britain. Tallents thought that Soviet films

have done more than all the studios of the world together to show us what an incomparable instrument of national expression the cinema might be [it] has established for Russia in the modern world a prestige comparable to that which her novels and her ballets won for her before the war.¹

The establishment of prestige was Tallents's main aim for England: if the *form* of the film, or other medium of propaganda, lies placed beyond attack, by locating itself within such regions as the high cultural or even, by the Soviet example, the avant-garde, it would not be perceived as propaganda, and the content of the film would be accepted even by the culturally educated and potentially oppositional audiences. Similarly, to avoid the taint of outré commercialism, the E.M.B. commissioned leading artists to design posters advertising Empire products. The 'cultural' or 'artistic' message commanded a respect where the educational or commercial would have been rejected. Prestige was deployed in the struggle for 'spontaneous consent' that Gramsci argued the modern non-coercive State had to win from its populace.² In this

¹Ibid., pp.30-31.

²The formation of the film unit, and its success, is perhaps as good an illustration as any of the Gramscian thesis on the function of the intellectuals in civil society: 'The intellectuals are the dominant group's "deputies" exercising the subaltern functions of social hegemony [Producing] the "spontaneous" consent given by the great masses of the population to the general direction imposed on social life by the dominant fundamental group In the modern world the category of intellectuals, understood in this sense, has undergone an unprecedented expansion.' Antonio

respect, the history of documentary film in the Thirties duplicates one of the major pressures on literary production in the war years. The aesthetic came to be seen by far-sighted elements of the British ruling class, as a major area of ideological contestation and control. The state began to influence areas of the art institution commonly perceived as 'above' propaganda.

Tallents's comments on specific Soviet films are worth recording. Of *Battleship Potemkin*, he asks, 'Can anyone who has seen it deny the moving power of the crowd scenes in Odessa?' Of the anti-imperialist *Storm Over Asia*: 'No story in itself could be more antipathetic to the English eye; yet I have heard an Englishman of wide cinematic experience describe it as the greatest film that he has seen.'¹ Comparing the Soviet Union with England, he writes that 'the life of England is rich in material for the making of films at least as remarkable as those which I have described'. Apparently without irony, he states that 'We have ready to hand all the material to outmatch *Storm Over Asia* by a film that should be entitled "Dawn Over Africa".' He continues: 'In the countryside and the country life, which have inspired so noble a body of English poetry and painting, we have films not less beautiful than that of *Earth*, and we are under no necessity, as

Gramsci, *Selections From Prison Notebooks* ed. Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1973), pp.12-13.

As my account will go on to show, the role of the deputies was not always unequivocal, and produced splits and fractions within the hegemony. The production of documentary films came to be a site of struggle within the hegemonic process.

¹S.G.Tallents, *The Projection of England*, p.31.

was Dovjenko, to disguise them under the appearance of political propaganda.'¹ Behind Tallents's liberalism there was clearly an unquestioned assumption of the rightness of Britain and her Empire, and a concomitantly high respect for English pastoral.

It is this conviction that allowed him, along with Grierson, to approach the films of Eisenstein and the other Soviet directors in such a clinical manner. Grierson was quick to acknowledge the similarities in organisation and technique between his factual and realist documentary, and Soviet intellectual cinema:

the E.M.B. at the time was the only organisation outside Russia that understood and had imagination enough to practice the principles of long-range propaganda. It was not unconscious of the example of Russia.²

But Grierson's admiration for Eisenstein was primarily technical: his interest was in appropriating the intellectual cinema and its methods to ends substantially different from those of Soviet communism. He admired the formal qualities of Soviet cinematography, but the purpose of the films he envisaged fell squarely into the American line of public relations and commercial sponsorship. Indeed, his technical mastery of Eisenstein had been learned in America:

he prepared the English titles for [Battleship Potemkin] and before he was finished he knew it foot by foot and reel by reel His close

¹Ibid., p.32.

²Forsyth Hardy, ed., *Grierson on Documentary* , p.98.

working familiarity with the film placed him in a unique position to analyse its techniques.¹

This technical knowledge of Eisenstein colours all Grierson's comments on him: 'It is his power of juxtaposition that counts, his amazing capacity for exploding two or three details into an idea'; 'We were all influenced by Eisenstein's montage, but by its poetic possibilities rather than its intellectual ambition.'² It is almost certain that Grierson and Tallents would have frequently discussed Soviet film together. Technical praise is combined with ideological reservations, but leading them both to the conclusion that a similar achievement could be produced in Britain. Any such film would inevitably have the same relations to the British state as Eisenstein's film did to the Soviet state: confirming and articulating its power. Britain, however, had no recent revolution to celebrate.

As Grierson well recognised, it was those who controlled the means of production who dictated the content of the product. Spurning the commercial cinema, he rigidly maintained the necessity of state funding. When the E.M.B. Film Unit was dissolved, the Gaumont British Company offered to buy it so they could move in to the educational film market. Grierson refused, despite a reputedly lucrative offer, 'preferring instead the government service under the aegis of the post office.'³ Public

¹Forsyth Hardy, *John Grierson, a Documentary Biography* (London: Faber, 1979), p.40.

²Forsyth Hardy, ed., *Grierson on Documentary*, pp. 53; 181-2.

³Obituary by Paul Rotha, *The Times*, quoted in Elizabeth Sussex, *The Rise and Fall of British Documentary* (California: University of California Press, 1975), p.3.

funding, he felt, was the only sure means of maintaining his educational, non-commercial documentary style. Sir Stephen Tallents made the jump to the GPO with him, becoming its first public relations officer.

The congruence between the ideas of Tallents and Grierson is at first startling. This may be because of Grierson's radical reputation, which seems in many ways a cover for complicity with the more far-sighted elements of the English Civil Service. Grierson frankly relates how he unquestioningly carried out the mandates of the E.M.B.:

In cinema we got the very brief commission "to bring the Empire alive." We were instructed, in effect, to use cinema ...to bring the day-to-day activities of the British Commonwealth and Empire at work into the common imagination.¹

Thus there was something inescapably and self-consciously ideological about the E.M.B. film unit from the start. It was

a department among other departments, and part of a very much larger scheme of educational and propaganda services. Whatever its pretensions in purely cinematic terms, it was dedicated and devoted to the usual cold-blooded ends of Government.²

¹Forsyth Hardy, ed., *Grierson on Documentary*, p.98. See Stephen Constantine, "'Bringing the Empire Alive': The Empire Marketing Board and Imperial Propaganda, 1926-33", in John M. Mackenzie, ed., *Imperialism and Popular Culture*, for further comment on the phrase 'Bringing the Empire alive'.

²Forsyth Hardy, ed., *Grierson on Documentary*, p.97.

Grierson replaced Eisenstein's subversive message with an ideology of educational aims, a training for 'civic duty', and his notion of 'realism' in subject and treatment. Film was to be a means of promulgating an education for modern, mass society. 'Behind the documentary film from the first was a purpose, and it was the educational purpose.'¹ Characteristically, he saw each documentary as 'a step in the attempt to understand the stubborn raw material of our modern citizenship and wake the heart and the will to their mastery.'² For this project, all that was needed was to present an uncomplicated, one-level picture of society, conforming to the tenets of realism simply by changing the emphasis from upper to lower class, from pastoral or genteel urban to industrial and metropolitan. Some of the relations of production in industry were glorified; others were disguised. Constantine argues that the ideological message of the E.M.B. was to

deny, at least implicitly, connections between Empire and exploitation. What was being encouraged was, apparently, the economic development of the Empire bringing benefits to all its citizens not merely profits to its businessmen. The beneficiaries of this enterprise were the heroic figures of labour.³

As a means of persuading the leading civil servants and cabinet members in charge of the E.M.B. of the validity of his

¹Ibid., p.221.

²Ibid., p.180.

³Stephen Constantine, "'Bringing the Empire Alive": The Empire Marketing Board and Imperial Propaganda, 1926-33', in John M. Mackenzie, ed., *Imperialism and Popular Culture*, p.217.

claims for the power of film, Grierson had shown them a programme of contemporary cinema, including not only Flaherty and Cavalcanti, but Pudovkin and Eisenstein. Tallents later wrote that 'it was [the] early Russian films ...that made the deepest impression on those small evening audiences'.¹ One of the programmes for these showings singled out for praise the way that such films 'dramatis[ed] work types and working gestures'.² Grierson was eventually commissioned to make a film on mackerel fishing, and the result, *Drifters*, was modelled on some of the montage techniques that Grierson had learnt from *Battleship Potemkin*. As Tallents commented, 'It differed from the work of the Russians in that it was harnessed to no political theme.'³ This attempt to foster and recreate in Britain a cinema equivalent to that of the Soviet intellectual cinema should be put into the context of the heated debate at the time over the banning from public release of the films of Eisenstein, owing to their subversive content.⁴ If Britain could also boast of a cinematic avant-garde presenting workers as heroes, much of the feared subversive impact on British audiences would immediately be removed from Soviet cinema.

Thus it would seem no coincidence that *Drifters* was shown on the same night as the British premiere of *Battleship Potemkin*, with the Soviet director present. Critical reaction to *Drifters*

¹Sir Stephen Tallents, 'The Birth of British Documentary', Part 1.

²Quoted, *ibid.*

³*Ibid.*, Part 2.

⁴Ivor Montagu, *The Political Censorship of Film* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1929), pp. 12-13.

was reputedly even more rapturous than to the Eisenstein film, and the establishment of a film unit at the E.M.B. under Grierson was secured. The film by Walter Creighton, commissioned in parallel with *Drifters*, a simple but expensive patriotic piece about procuring ingredients for the royal cake from across the Empire, conforming to some of the more fanciful conventions of fictional narrative, and based on an idea of Rudyard Kipling's, was released, critically panned, and scrapped. *Drifters* by contrast had something that Tallents knew was badly needed in the projection of Britain: prestige value.

Although not Grierson himself, many of the E.M.B. film unit staff and directors were allied to advanced forms of modernism of the time. Grierson's intake of staff for the new film unit was the artistic intellectual elite of the universities, especially Cambridge, who, in the late Twenties, were just becoming interested in film as an artistic medium. Grierson describes 'the fifteen hundred tyros who applied for jobs in the E.M.B. Film Unit, [of whom] fifteen hundred exactly expressed their enthusiasm for cinema, for art, for self-expression'.¹ Basil Wright's recollections are characteristic of this enthusiasm:

it was something new, coming as a revelation to kids like myself who were growing up at the time. The feeling of unlimited possibilities of discovery in this medium was very, very strong.²

¹Forsyth Hardy, ed., *Grierson on Documentary*, p. 97.

²"The Critical Issue"; a Discussion Between Paul Rotha, Basil Wright, Lindsay Anderson, and Penelope Houston', *Sight and Sound* vi no.27, (1958), 270-275; 330.

He adds, significantly, that artistic aspirations need no longer be literary. Film clubs and societies in Oxford and Cambridge were beginning to import continental work such as that of the German expressionists, as well as French and Soviet avant-garde films. Marxism and an interest in the Soviet revolution combined naturally with a desire to see the films of Eisenstein and the other Soviet directors. Wright recalls that 'We had to smuggle Russian films into Cambridge.' Both experimental film and socialism had the flavour of the oppositional: Eisenstein was received by these young intellectuals as a celebrant of revolution. Nothing could be more different than the technical praise combined with ideological condemnation bestowed on his work by Grierson and Tallents. Instead of disparaging his 'intellectual ambitions', Wright seems to give primacy to exactly this aspect: 'His theories of montage, as much as the actual examples of his own films, probably had more influence on documentary film-makers than anything else'.¹ It was exactly these people, interested in European avant-gardes, who flocked to join Grierson's film unit in the early Thirties.

Throughout the Thirties an interest in experimental techniques was maintained by the younger film unit personnel, alongside a parallel commitment to other avant-garde currents. There is a striking overlap between the film unit personnel, and those involved in the English surrealist group and their

¹Basil Wright, *The Long View* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1974), p.119.

publications. Humphrey Jennings and Len Lye were members together of the English surrealist group,¹ while Grierson's employment of Cavalcanti would have lent support to these surrealist leanings: coming from the Paris avant-garde, he described himself as 'a very great friend of the surrealists and ...one of the very few film-makers in Paris whom the surrealists would accept'.²

However, most important are the relations of the group with the little literary magazines of the period. Gerald Noxon, who later worked on the producing side of documentary, recalls how

In company with ...Stuart Legg, I started the Cambridge Film Guild which was, as I recall, the second film society to be formed in Britain Second, I was the publisher of an undergraduate little magazine called *Experiment*.³

Cavalcanti, along with Jennings, Arthur Elton, and Stuart Legg, submitted articles to the surrealist *London Gallery Bulletin*,⁴ while at the back the magazine mentions 'Collaboration offered' from Basil Wright, as well as Dylan Thomas.⁵ Jennings, Elton,

¹They were both signatories to the views expressed in Read's speech at the Surrealist Exhibition, *International Surrealist Bulletin*, 4 (1937), 7.

²Cavalcanti interview, *Screen* ii no.13, (1972), 33-53

³See Gerald Noxon, 'How Humphrey Jennings Came to Film', *Film Quarterly* xv 2 (Winter 1961-2), 19-29.

⁴*London Gallery Bulletin* 1, (April 1938). Legg's wife had been a 'living exhibit' at the 1936 London surrealist exhibition, organized by Jennings.

⁵Reference to Thomas's letters may explain why no contribution ever appeared. Replying to a letter from Roland Penrose, he agreed to send a poem or some prose to *Gallery Bulletin*, but adds: 'I don't, I suppose, get paid for a contribution?'. Letter to

Legg, and Wright had all studied together at Cambridge, and were involved to some degree with the avant-garde magazine *Experiment*.

Access to anything by Eisenstein in English up until 1942, when Faber published *The Film Sense*, could only be through such little magazines as *Close Up* and *Life and Letters*, a cinematic and a literary magazine respectively. Nine articles by him appeared in the former, three in the latter, and *Close Up* also reviewed and published articles about him in nine issues. *Transition* also published one article by him.¹ Other film journals such as *Film Art*, *New Cinema*, and *Cinema Quarterly* were also closely associated with literary modernism, publishing articles by a stream of modernist writers. The alliance of journals such as *Life and Letters To-Day* and *Transition* to film shows that the respect between the two fields was mutual. These linkages indicate a broad transference of ideas and cross-fertilisation of creative talent between the two cultural movements.²

Much of Grierson's intake of employees into the film unit indicates an interest in prestige figures: not only the importation

Penrose, 21 March, 1938. *Collected Letters* ed. Paul Ferris (London: Dent, 1985), p.277.

¹Marion Sader, *Comprehensive Index to Little Magazines, 1890-1970* (New York: Milwood, 1976).

²See Deke Dusinberre, 'The Avant-Garde Attitude in the Thirties', and the section on contemporary 'Avant-garde/Art/Criticism' in Don MacPherson, ed., *British Cinema: Traditions of Independence* (London: British Film Institute, 1980), pp.34-50; 165-186.

of Flaherty, and the acceptance of Cavalcanti, interested in experimenting with sound, but also the then unknown Len Lye. Grierson's use of Lye's independently produced *Colour Box* was characteristic: when Lye came in to the GPO Film Board with his very experimental, non-representational film animation, Grierson told Lye to put some extra frames in at the end, advertising the new postal rates. Such experimental and avant-garde types, with the exception of Cavalcanti, remained on the margins of Grierson's unit at this period. Their work could not be subsumed into the 'educational', but Grierson realised that other elements were necessary for the production of successful films. As Annette Kuhn comments, the Unit may have been restricted, because of the nature of the sponsorship of their films, in the film's content, but they were relatively free in terms of form, 'particularly if that work could be done in the rational name of experiment'.¹ This freedom of form was positively encouraged: Grierson wanted his unit to make films of originality and quality, because, like Tallents, he believed that 'half the value of propaganda is the prestige it commands'.²

As Lovell and Hillier point out, despite Grierson's denials of any primary aesthetic in his documentary work, the films he produced are in fact informed by an aestheticisation of work: he 'chose the narrative account of particular social processes as his

¹Annette Kuhn, "'Independent' Film-Making and the State in the 1930s", *Edinburgh '77 Magazine* 2 (1977), 45-55.

²Forsyth Hardy, ed., *Grierson on Documentary*, p.98.

basic method of dramatising the subject of a film'.¹ These social processes were in fact almost always some form of labour: fishing, postal work, engineering, mining, even accountancy. As such, the films are a very important contribution to the general documentary 'democratisation of the subject'.² They are similar to the photography of ordinary working people in *Picture Post*, and the 'Into Unknown England' school of social reportage. In that work had seldom previously featured in British art, this was a step forward. But the aestheticisation of labour presents problems in the context of state-funded film production.

The films in all cases circumscribe one narrative based on a work process: getting in the fish, delivering the mail, hewing the coal, producing tea in Ceylon. The tone of these films is celebratory and romantic, showing each work process as having a value based in its portrayal in narrative and drama. However, the restriction to one process tends not only to soften but to narrow the focus to what is essentially the conditions of production, without any view of the relations of production. For all that these films of industrial Britain say about the context of labour, they could equally well be taking place in a non-Capitalist system. The irony of celebrating work at a period of depression and unemployment has often been mentioned by commentators on the documentary movement. This is only part of a much deeper

¹Alan Lovell and Jim Hillier, *Studies in Documentary* (London: Secker and Warburg / British Film Institute, 1972), p.28.

²The phrase is Stuart Hall's, from 'The Social Eye of Picture Post', *Working Papers in Cultural Studies* (Spring 1972), 71-120.

concealment: labour is allowed on to the artistic stage for the first time in British film, but only at the cost of being shorn of all but positive associations, and of all references to the economic frame that contains the labour. *Song of Ceylon*, for instance, switches uneasily between passages on the happy Ceylonese workers and shots of the offices of the international tea trade, without showing any relationship between them. The constraints of the conditions of production would have prevented any such connection: the film was sponsored by the Ceylon Tea Propaganda Board. In *Housing Problems*, the framing of the interviewed working-class slum dwellers between commentators offering expertise, or in some cases redundant comment on the living conditions, makes clear that despite the working-class participants, the film is packaged for a middle-class audience. Commentators have noted how the establishing shots in this film 'move the viewer into the film from outside'.¹ Swann writes that 'The primary intention behind the films was to associate the gas industry with social progressivism in the eyes of the planners responsible for slum clearance and new housing estates.'²

¹Robert Colls and Philip Dodd, 'Representing the Nation: British Documentary Film, 1930-45', *Screen* xxvi no.1 (Jan-Feb 1988) 21-33.

²Paul Swann, *The British Documentary Film Movement, 1926-1949* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), p.103.

2. The Evolution of the Documentary Movement.

In 1937 ...there was a split.¹

The more experimental elements in the film unit tend to be associated with a growing disaffection with some of Grierson's techniques. Rotha mentions Watt, Jennings, Holmes, Shaw, and himself as the tendency within the movement opposed to merely using drama gleaned from 'the unvarnished facts themselves'.² Cavalcanti in interview recalls 'People in the group who were close to me and had a similar impulse ...Basil Wright of course, Harry Watt, Humphrey Jennings, Robert Hamer and Len Lye.'³ Harry Watt mentions those opposed to Grierson's policy of aiming productions for non-theatrical release: 'Cavalcanti and I, together with Humphrey Jennings, Pat Jackson, Jack Lee and some others, disagreed';⁴ 'We believed that their type of film - the educational film - would never influence cinema'.⁵

Accounts of the nature of the split vary, but it seems clear that those associated with Jennings, Cavalcanti, and Watt were generally more experimental, sometimes interested in bringing

¹Quoted in Eva Orbanz, *Journey to a Legend and Back: The British Realistic Film* trans. Stuart Hood (Berlin: Volker Spiess, 1977), p.80.

²Paul Rotha, *Documentary Diary, an Informal History of British Documentary Film, 1928-39* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1973), p.275

³Cavalcanti interviewed in Elizabeth Sussex, 'Cavalcanti in England', *Sight and Sound* vol no.4, (Autumn 1975), 205-211.

⁴Harry Watt, 'NFT Programme Notes on Cavalcanti', appended to Cavalcanti interview, *Screen*, ibid., pp.33-53.

⁵Harry Watt, quoted in Eva Orbanz, *Documentary Diary*, p.81.

fictionalised story and narrative into the films, and hoping for increased popularity within the theatrical mainstream. In interview, Cavalcanti gives an account of his disagreements with Grierson:

The only fundamental difference was that I thought films are the same, either fictional or otherwise, and ...that films ought to go into cinemas. Grierson ...started creating the theory that they should be put in a different ...non-theatrical circuit.¹

Watt gives an account compatible with this:

Around the middle of the '30s there was an amicable split in the documentary movement. Grierson became convinced that the enormous non-cinema going audience was the one to go after, and that a non-theatrical circuit with an assured public was better than our sporadic and fleeting showings in news-reel cinemas Our solution was the story-documentary, taking actual true events, using real people, but also using 'dramatic licence' to heighten the tension and the story-line.²

Wright relates the nature of the split to the different personalities of Grierson and Cavalcanti: 'I think Cavalcanti's temperament had a greater appeal to some people in documentary than did Grierson's. Humphrey Jennings would be an example, Harry Watt I think also'.³

¹Cavalcanti interview, *Screen*, ibid.

²Harry Watt, 'NFT Programme Notes', appended to Cavalcanti interview, *Screen*, ibid.

³Basil Wright, quoted in Eva Orbanz, *Documentary Diary*, p.131.

Paul Swann, in the most authoritative account of the movement's vagaries, recounts how, after Grierson's resignation, Holmes, Cavalcanti, and Watt

controlled production at the Film Unit until it was taken over by the Ministry of Information Under their guidance, there was a complete break with the rest of the documentary movement.¹

From Swann's view, the split was inevitable because of Grierson's inability to deal with the minutiae of paperwork and accounting expected by the Treasury, leading to the creation of enemies, and eventually forcing him to resign from the GPO Film Unit. Swann's account is written very much from the point of view of his archival sources in Treasury and Civil Service minutes. Useful as such an account is as a corrective to the previous mainly anecdotal histories of the movement, it might tend to exaggerate the role of minor civil servants, and obscure another reason for the split, perhaps not inconsistent with his account, but internal to the group. Nicholas Pronay's radical and iconoclastic re-evaluation of Grierson's personality and biography, in the light of new historical evidence, shows how important the role of the high-level bureaucrats in the civil service was, in freezing Grierson out, in what amounted to a conspiracy of exclusion. Thus the two interpretations are compatible: the split occurred both because of predispositions already latent within the movement, and because of Grierson's lack of competence as an administrator: 'Those who did not stick with him prospered at the GPO film unit

¹Paul Swann, *The British Documentary Film Movement*, pp.24-25.

after he left, and so his movement was ...split'.¹ Ironically, the civil service was left with a documentary unit personnel that was far more radical in artistic aim than Grierson had been. If the war had not broken out shortly afterwards, the unit would probably soon have been disbanded.

To further the aims of prestige for Britain, and to recreate in Britain the equivalent of the Soviet film school, Grierson had invited to the Film Unit many of the most radical of the available avant-garde. The avant-garde, however, is fundamentally an oppositional social grouping, and no alliance with the state interests of a capitalist country like Britain could be sustained for long. Directors such as Basil Wright assumed a far more outspoken and oppositional political position than Grierson:

We were agin' the government - a government which we now know ...was doing everything we said it was doing. We wrote political articles, the whole tendency of our films was against the regime.²

The aesthetics of Griersonian documentary were based, as we have seen, on 'the narrative account of particular social processes'. These narratives tended to obscure as much as they revealed. Those in the documentary movement who came from the avant-garde, especially those associated with the surrealist movement, had a different aesthetic. The avant-garde artwork

¹Nicholas Pronay, 'John Grierson and the Documentary - 60 Years On', *Historical Journal of Film Radio and Television* ix no.3 (1989), pp.227-246.

²Basil Wright in "'The Critical Issue": a Discussion Between Paul Rotha, Basil Wright, Lindsay Anderson, and Penelope Houston', *ibid.*

tended to make visible the obscured links that operate throughout society, exposing to common view the operations of ideology in language, everyday life, and in the relations of production.

This difference can be elucidated with reference to a comment by Brecht. A documentary-type photograph of a factory 'yields practically nothing about these institutions. The genuine reality has slipped into the functional.'¹ Such a picture disguises the reification of human relations that such factories produce. Brecht concludes: 'Hence it is in fact "something to construct", something "artificial", "posited". Hence in fact art is necessary.' Thus instead of a documentary realist photograph, an avant-garde presentation of a factory would require a John Heartfield-type photomontage or construction of the factory, making clear the obscured social links of ownership and surplus labour. Montage was the ideal method within the film medium of exposing such relations.

Such alternative aesthetics could never hope to be produced directly within the peacetime documentary units: but it was incipient within the 'prestige' experimental forms that Grierson had fostered in the hope of producing a British Eisenstein. Grierson failed to see that 'experiment', at that historical juncture, would tend to oppose the dominant ideology. The

¹Bertold Brecht, 'The Threepenny Trial', quoted in Ben Brewster, 'From Shklovsky to Brecht: A Reply', *Screen* xv no.2 (Summer 1974) 93.

eventual failure of the British documentary movement as Grierson had envisioned it was inscribed within it from its beginning, and only Grierson's persuasive gifts held it together so long. Alan Lovell and Jim Hillier write that Grierson 'succeeded in linking the film culture (film as art) which had grown up in the late 1920s, to an instrumental use of film (film as a medium for instruction, education, propaganda)'.¹ If the link was there, it was a yoke temporarily harnessing forces that were moving in two different directions.

In 1937 Grierson resigned from the GPO film unit, and formed the Film Centre with Elton, Legg, and J.P.R. Golightly. Tallents had left the GPO in 1935, and then became involved in similar work with the Imperial Relations Trust. Throughout 1937 and 1938 Grierson, sent by the Imperial Relations Trust, visited Canada, New Zealand, and Australia. In 1938 he accepted a position as head of the film board in Canada. With Grierson's resignation, Cavalcanti was put in charge of the GPO film unit. In Swann's account, the GPO from this moment was characterised by the production of 'story-documentaries'. However, one of the first films Cavalcanti produced was Humphrey Jennings's *Spare Time*, made on commission from Mass Observation. Like previous documentaries, it is centred around factories and places of work. But it was unlike those other films in a crucial respect. No break from Grierson's aesthetics could be more clear than a film not centred around work, but leisure. Significantly, the film is also

¹Alan Lovell and Jim Hillier, *Studies in Documentary*, p.16.

primarily non-narrative, dwelling impressionistically on various aspects, mainly musical, of people's entertainment. The film signalled a fundamental change in the documentary aesthetic, in which the montage practice, cultivated by *Mass Observation*, was re-inserted back into film.

As we have seen, many of the documentary workers were also involved with the English Surrealist Group. A major tenet of surrealist belief was that 'poetry should be made by all'. One means of achieving this was through 'automatic' composition, and this was the main manifestation of surrealism in literature in Europe. Although the idea of automatism was not explicitly rejected by the English surrealists, it was seldom mentioned or put into practice, until the Apocalyptic group were later to use a modified form of automatic text in their poetry. Most poetry produced by British surrealists in the Thirties shows an interest in the surrealist image, presented in a verbally clear way. André Breton had approvingly quoted from Pierre Reverdy, to the effect that 'The more the relationship between the two juxtaposed realities is distant and true, the stronger the image will be - the greater its emotional and poetic reality.'¹

It was this 'distance and truth' which the commonly acknowledged British surrealist poets such as David Gascoyne tried to achieve. Humphrey Jennings, along with Charles Madge,

¹Quoted in André Breton, *Manifestoes of Surrealism* *ibid.*, p.21.

developed the idea in a startling new direction: the Mass Observation movement was a unique putting into practice of the avant-garde dictum that 'poetry should be made by all'. Many of the people involved in MO were also part of the documentary movement, including not only Jennings, but Stuart Legg, Basil Wright, Arthur Elton, and the artist William Coldstream. There is a significant similarity between the aesthetics of the two movements, but MO was distinguished by a greater freedom from the imposed parameters of composition experienced within the system of government and big business sponsorship that, at least until the war, determined the content of most of the documentary films.

The anthropologist and ornithologist Tom Harrisson responded to a letter that Madge and Jennings had published in the *New Statesman*, and it was through a combination of Harrisson's anthropological observation of British working-class culture, and the production of texts by anonymous observers, that comprised the early history of MO.¹ Madge and Jennings 'developed the idea of setting up a nationwide panel of people who would write about themselves as a sort of "subjective literature", an idea almost

¹The best accounts of early Mass-Observation are:

Anthony W. Hodgkinson, 'Humphrey Jennings and Mass Observation: A Conversation with Tom Harrisson', *Journal of the University Film Association* xxvii no.4 (1975), pp.31-34;

Charles Madge, 'The Birth of Mass Observation', *Times Literary Supplement* (5 Nov 1976), 1395;

Penny Summerfield, 'Mass Observation: Social Research or Social Movement?', *Journal of Contemporary History* 20 (1985), 439-452;

and Tom Jeffery, *Mass-Observation - A Short History*, Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies Stencilled Occasional Papers S.P. no.55 (1978).

poetic in concept'.¹ Jennings' interest was in editing the texts - diaries or observations - sent in by the voluntary observers. The arrangement of these texts would be a new form of mass art, presenting the common images of the people back to them, and so fulfilling the surrealist dethronement of the enshrined or inspired artist. Many of Jennings's own poems bear the title 'Report', as do the Mass Observation articles and publications. These poems of Jennings, like some of those by Madge, are constructed by putting together fragments of different newspaper articles or advertisements, a method that is a direct descendant of collage techniques used in the paintings of Picasso, Braque, and some of the surrealists, in which pages from newspapers were pasted onto the canvas of their paintings:

The conditions for this race, the most important of the Classic races for three-year-old fillies, were ideal, for the weather was fine and cool. About one o'clock the Aurora again appeared over the hills in a south direction presenting a brilliant mass of light. Once again Captain Allison made a perfect start, for the field was sent away well for the first time that they approached the tapes. It was always evident that the most attenuated light of the Aurora sensibly dimmed the stars, like a thin veil drawn over them. We frequently listened for any sound proceeding from this phenomenon, but never heard any.²

Peter Bürger argues that such collages are attacks on the autonomy of the artwork, the 'institution of art', and part of the avant-garde attempt to change the place and function of art in

¹Anthony W. Hodgkinson, 'Humphrey Jennings and Mass Observation: A Conversation with Tom Harrisson', *Journal of the University Film Association*, pp.31-34.

²Humphrey Jennings, 'Three Reports', *Contemporary Poetry and Prose* i no.1(1936), 39. Some of Jennings's reports, and other poetry by him, is gathered in the posthumous *Poems* (New York, 1951).

society.¹ *May The Twelfth*, a book produced for popular consumption along the lines of the Left Book Club, went some way in making the audience become the artist. It was limited only by the fact that, to achieve popular sales, it must deal with a subject of national interest such as the Coronation.

Jennings's construction of the Mass-Observation books, particularly that of *May the Twelfth* goes back to the avant-garde theorisation and use of the image, not only in surrealism, but many other forms of artistic production in the Twenties and Thirties. Madge recalls

The sequence of extracts from the press with which the coronation book opens was the work of Humphrey Jennings, and both this and the extracts from observers' reports on the day itself which follow were a kind of collage of quotations, comparable to the "cutting" of a documentary film.²

The equation of collage with montage is very significant. From Picasso and the Cubists, collage had become a central element of the avant-garde aesthetic. Jennings, with Mass-Observation, developed it to produce an expression of national feeling on one particular day. His technique, in editing different 'realities' together, was to create relations across social distance, in, as one Mass Observation practitioner has called it, an 'imagery of precise and objective realism'.³ Unlike Griersonian documentary,

¹Peter Bürger, *Theory of the Avant Garde*.

²Charles Madge, *Times Literary Supplement*, *ibid*.

³Kathleen Raine, *Defending Ancient Springs* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967), pp.47-8.

which depicts a narrative centred on a process of work, Jennings' aesthetics bring to life the Reverdian dictum of the image as both 'distant and true' by bringing together fragments from different social processes. The account of the Coronation Day festivities subverts the officially sanctioned reports of the public event by suggesting that any number of perspectives from a mass of equally prioritized views are just as valid. Rather than producing a narrative, that would give priority, for instance, to the Royal Procession, and hence embody ideology in the process of giving an account, the book gives an impression of the event that avoids over-arching stories in favour of a collage of discrete parts.¹ The logic of such editing was always associative rather than narrative.² The royalty are thus dislodged from primacy in the account; instead, the general population, including those not in any way involved in the celebrations, are the real subjects of the book. It is no coincidence that the day they should have chosen for their first book was Coronation Day, enabling a common theme to link disparate people and activities across the nation. With the start of the war, another common 'national' theme was to be made available.

¹A sympathetic account of *May The Twelfth* as using 'primitive montage' techniques to subvert orthodox narratives of public events can be found in David Chaney, 'The Symbolic Form of Ritual in Mass Communication', in P. Golding et al., eds., *Communicating Politics* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1987), pp.115-132.

²Bjorn Sorensson, 'The Documentary Aesthetics of Humphrey Jennings', in John Corner, ed., *Documentary and the Mass Media* (London: Edward Arnold, 1986), pp.47-63.

Madge and many other commentators have noted how the way in which Jennings organised *May the 12th* corresponds to his use of montage in his film-editing work. It is assumed that somehow the limited cinematic experience he had already garnered in 1937 was enough to influence his editing of the book. It would seem chronologically more acceptable to suggest that the nature of editing in the films by Jennings and McAllister was influenced by Jennings's experience in editing documentary material for Mass Observation. Grierson said of the young documentarists, that they

[are all] masters of montage. They have all learned how to make ordinary things stand up in a new interest, and make free sequence out of what, on the face of it, was plain event.¹

The difference between this and the use of collage that Jennings developed through his editing of the Mass Observation material, was that, for Jennings, the material was subordinate to his overall scheme. The Griersonian documentary method was to present different images of one process, one narrative. The total of the different shots in Griersonian film would add up to an idea of a specific social process of production divorced from the social totality: as a narrative, what was emphasized was precisely that which made it a discrete process, rather than a contextual one. This is to use Eisenstein's method while casting away its ideological shell. Karel Reisz, in his influential book on film editing, noted that it was Jennings (along with Wright) who 'showed that Eisenstein's methods could be further developed in

¹Forsyth Hardy, ed., *Grierson on Documentary*, p.114.

the sound cinema'.¹ As with 'intellectual montage', the conjoined images create conceptual thought. The total of different collage elements in a Jennings construction adds up to a diffuse notion that strives, by making connections across class, region, and gender, to approach a national or mass feeling.

The importance of these constructions is their non-narrative, open-ended structure. This radically changes the notion of cultural producer as author or auteur. As with *Mass Observation*,

The whole project depended upon the subjectivity of individual perceptions being neutralized by the 'objectivity' of editorial compilation and integration. The role of author was therefore a form of science, a mode of production which is consistent with the potential democratization of art in mass communication.²

Unique among the British avant-gardes, MO set out to break the boundaries between artistic producer and consumer. In their own words, their aim was, like the surrealists, to 'de-value considerably the status of the "poet"'.³ Similarly with the war-time documentaries, despite the subsequent elevation of Jennings to the status of the great British auteur director, 'his' films are distinguished by the use of masses of other people's footage, by the team nature of the films' production, their presentation with

¹Karel Reisz, *The Technique of Film Editing* (London: Focal Point, 1953), p.66.

²David Chaney and Michael Pickering, 'Authorship in Documentary: Sociology as an Art Form in *Mass Observation*', in John Corner, ed., *Documentary and the Mass Media*, p.41.

³Charles Madge and Humphrey Jennings, 'Poetic Description and Mass-Observation' *New Verse* no.24 (February-March 1937), pp.[1]-6.

'introductions' by figures who were not involved in the production, confirming the films as anonymous national productions, as with *May The Twelfth*, a nation presenting itself to itself.

3. Documentary in Wartime.

The definition and subjectivisation of 'us' ...became the critical ideological strategy of the war.¹

Grierson's documentary school produced a democratisation of the subject. Jennings and McAllister, through editing masses of material by associative links, expunged the idea of work and (or as) narrative in their films, and so extended the democratisation, not just to the working subject, but to the whole of everyday life. Their most important films, however, question the notion of the 'everyday'. From the early wartime film, *The First Days*, what was highlighted was precisely the interruption of the everyday by wartime contingencies. It was these disrupted, crisis conditions that paradoxically enabled the most democratic form of cinema in British history.

The historian Arthur Marwick sums up one important change in wartime ideology, when he writes 'The anti-establishment of the thirties joined the wartime establishment'.² The arrival of the Second World War saw a fundamental transformation in the institutions that produced documentary film, that reached from the top ministers and civil servants down to the technicians

¹Malcolm Smith, 'Narrative and Ideology in *Listen to Britain*', in Jeremy Hawthorn ed., *Narrative from Malory to Motion Pictures* (London: Edward Arnold, 1985), pp.145-158.

²Arthur Marwick, 'People's War and Top People's Peace? British Society in the Second World War', in Alan Sked and Chris Cook, eds., *Crisis and Controversy* (London: Macmillan, 1976), p.154.

involved in making films. The creation of the Ministry of Information as a central body for propaganda and press control was rapidly followed by its taking charge of the GPO Film Unit (later Crown), while the Ministry also rapidly became the major customer for films from the other documentary production units. Already in the Summer of 1939, politicians had planned the establishment of the Ministry of Information with a Films Division based on the GPO film unit: film would be used 'for the purpose of steadying the national spirit during a state of emergency'.¹ Significantly, at this planning stage, Sir Stephen Tallents was the director-general of the shadow MOI. His work here, as with the formation of the original film unit, appears to have been central in laying a framework of discreet governmental control of cultural production. Philip M. Taylor describes him as 'laying the groundwork for propaganda in the next war', but his approach, like Grierson's, was too heavy-handed and undiplomatic for many of the conservative upper-echelon bureaucrats. Taylor continues, he 'had made too many enemies in the process to merit a significant role in the machinery which he had largely created'.² The foundations he had lain for the wartime Ministry of Information, however, were largely maintained.

Jack Beddington was appointed head of the MOI Films Division in April 1940. Formerly the sponsor of the Shell Film

¹Minutes of International Propaganda and Broadcasting Enquiry, quoted in Swann, *The British Documentary Film Movement*, p.151.

²Philip M. Taylor, *The Projection of Britain, British Overseas Publicity and Propaganda, 1919-39* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), p.291.

Unit, and closely involved with the Documentary movement, Beddington had been behind a very significant use of big business patronage, masterminding Shell Mex's articulation of British pastoral in the Thirties 'as an icon for advertising purposes'.¹ Again, prestige was central in the articulation of nationality for other ends - now, not commercial big business, but the winning of consent for the war. His new position meant that documentary was strongly placed during the war. He brought in Sydney Bernstein as his chief advisor, and Arthur Elton as films supervisor. During the war, Beddington again produced films which called on powerful images of pastoral, often with an ostensibly more radical message of nationality. Bernstein's role was also important in directing the way that wartime film was to go. As early as 1939, although refusing to join the Ministry while Chamberlain was in office, he had prepared a typed document on 'British Film Production and Propaganda by Film', in which he advised that effective propaganda should be 'completely concealed behind a screen of real entertainment'.²

British wartime documentary, much influenced by the school of Grierson, and with many of the same people working in it, was suddenly endowed with an almost limitless audience, as government-produced 'shorts' were routinely shown as part of an evening's programme. Documentaries, with unprecedented

¹David Mellor, 'British Art in the 1930s: Some Economic, Political and Cultural Structures', in Frank Gloversmith, ed., *Class, Culture and Social Change* (Sussex: Harvester, 1980), p.195.

²Quoted in Caroline Moorehead, *Sidney Bernstein a Biography* (London: Cape, 1984), p.113.

Government support, grew dramatically in importance in this period: 'Documentary film-makers became more influential than they were ever to be again.'¹

Nicholas Pronay asks 'How did Beddington and Bernstein get away with the fact that 74 percent of film production ...was in fact made by a committedly single-party and partisan group of film makers?'² 'Single party and partisan', a misleading description of the documentary school in the Thirties, was doubly so during the war. Grierson had known since the start that the best way to persuade was to place oneself 'a few inches to the left' of whoever was in power. The essence of political persuasion is accommodation to *some* of the wishes of the disempowered class, and the most convincing way to present such a case is to commission people with radical beliefs while controlling the content of what they produce so as to not let the message go too far beyond the intended accommodation. It is often written that during the war there was a broad left-wing political consensus, and documentary films are usually cited to support this. The notion of a socialist consensus on the level of political thought, however, was in many ways a creation of the propagandists, who saw depictions of popular unity as the best means of achieving their ends. Wright, for instance, sees no apparent contradiction between an instrumental use of

¹Margaret Dickinson and Sarah Street, *Cinema and the State* (London: British Film Institute, 1985), pp.113-114.

²Nicholas Pronay, "'The Land of Promise': The Projection of Peace Aims in Britain', in K.R.M.Short ed., *Film and Radio Propaganda in World War Two* (London: Croom Helm, 1983), p.60.

propaganda, apparently by the government, and aims that the war-time government would not conceivably have supported in reality:

I believe absolutely that the revolutionary technique is now the only technique we are undergoing a world social revolution here and now, and it is a revolution which must continue with increasing strength. For that is the only thing the people of Britain are fighting for. It is today the job of the documentary to integrate the immediate war effort with the facts and implications of radical social and economic changes which are part and parcel of it Our films must be the shock troops of propaganda.¹

Propaganda, of course, is only necessary if the perceived 'world social revolution' is still not achieved. Wright may have believed that his films were aiding the achievement of revolution: his sponsors in the Government would have curtailed any direct revolutionary commitment. Retrospectively, Wright recalls:

Our ideology during the war was rather different from that of the Government a lot of the time. And a great many of the films we made had to be compromises between what we were trying to say and what they would allow us to say. We were all fighting the same war; our argument was as to the method by which the ideological war was being fought.²

Wright and the others were left in effect with 'revolutionary technique', but without the revolution. The commissioning of film by the Ministry meant that their content was controlled from conception, into the process of production, so that revolutionary cinema was a clear impossibility: an expedient amount of

¹Basil Wright, quoted in Pronay, *ibid.*, p.63.

²Quoted in Eva Orbanz, *Journey to a Legend and Back*, p.138.

radicalism, however, was recognised as a necessary part of the construction of popular spontaneous consent to the war. Edgar Anstey, in interview, recalls the moment of this recognition, once Churchill's coalition had thrown all the Chamberlainites out of the Ministry: 'they started using films properly as part of the war effort, or to hold a mirror up to the country, to try and articulate some of the things that were happening'.¹ The desire to 'integrate' the facts and to 'articulate' or even 'hold a mirror up to' reality is, of course, a major tenet of realism, a position in which Wright and Anstey would probably have placed themselves. But, as their experience in the Thirties must have told them, any presentation of reality is selective. The articulations that the wartime documentarists achieved was often a structuring of images that defied realist categories.

Anstey and Wright inflate the role of documentary in this new historical situation as they saw the great new possibilities of film as a truly national device. Orbanz observes that 'The good intentions of the documentary film makers could actually blossom fully only at one historical moment - during the war.'² A shift had indeed occurred that allowed them to portray more: not just to present people working in industry, but to show how this work related to society as a whole, and to the workers' immediate futures. 'There was a good deal more openness in what could be and was said in wartime documentary.'³ There was a

¹Elizabeth Sussex *The Rise and Fall of British Documentary*, p.121

²Eva Orbanz, *Journey to al Legend and Back*, p.19.

³Forsyth Hardy, ed., *Grierson on Documentary*, p.195.

relaxation in the censorship standards applying to all pre-war British film.¹ Gone were the closed and concealing narratives of 'particular social practices', the hallmark of Grierson's days.² The aesthetic aspirations of the documentarists were tempered, however, by certain considerations. Although pre-war censorship conditions had been relaxed, there was still a form of pre-censorship that operated in all regions of wartime film production. The Ministry could influence production units through its control of supplies of rawstock, and the exemption of staff from military service.³ Much of this pre-censorship, however, would not even have been coercive. In the conditions of the war, it was, as we have seen, in everyone's self-interest to put the wartime interests of the nation first. In such conditions, a voluntary self-censorship operated, moderating the expressions of even the most revolutionary of artists and producers. An unstated agreement existed between controllers and producers as to what could be expressed in film: after all, the country was now one nation.

¹Nicholas Pronay and Jeremy Croft, 'British Film Censorship and Propaganda Policy during the Second World War', in James Curran and Vincent Porter, eds., *British Cinema History* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1983), p.146: 'The total ban on the use of "relations between capital and labour" as the "principal theme" of a film, or on the incidental portrayals of any manifestation of it in a film . . . was significantly relaxed.'

See also James C. Robertson, 'British Film Censorship Goes to War', in *Historical Journal of Film Radio and Television* ii no.1 (March 1982), 49-64.

²However, wartime conditions brought on new forms of concealment and censorship. The wartime instructions to the censor were that each panning shot 'must start from an undamaged building and must conclude on an undamaged building and it must not linger over damaged buildings.' (Quoted in Nicholas Pronay and Jeremy Croft, 'British Film Censorship and Propaganda Policy during the Second World War', *British Cinema History* , p.148).

³Michael Balfour, *Propaganda in War 1939-45 Organisations, Policies and Publics in Britain and Germany* (London: Routledge, 1979), p.71.

There was no necessity to obscure relations of production in these films, because it was in everyone's objective interests to have the relations function in the optimum possible way, which meant large-scale, unprecedented state involvement in most aspects of the country's economic production. The constitution of society during 'Total war' was close to socialism. Grierson, viewing the war from Canada, characteristically approved of such changes:

It will certainly take continuous teaching of the public mind before the new relationship between the individual and the State, which total effort involves, becomes a familiar and automatic one Total war may yet appear as the dreadful period of forced apprenticeship in which we learned ...how to order the vast new forces of human and material energies to decent human ends.¹

The real but limited social 'revolution' came mostly with the changes of relation wrought in the furnace of total war, and not with the anti-climactic Labour Government of 1945, which only consolidated some of these gains.

A view of these changes as a hegemonic strategy of the ruling class, building on the notion of a 'People's War' to ameliorate class divisions, would find support from analysis of wartime documentary, especially through Gramsci's notion of the 'national popular':

¹Forsyth Hardy, ed., *Grierson on Documentary*, p.195.

A successful hegemony is one which manages to create a 'collective national-popular will,' and for this to happen the dominant class must have been capable of articulating to its hegemonic principle all the national-popular ideological elements, since it is only if this happens that it (the class) appears as the representative of the general interest.¹

This articulation was often disposed in wartime documentary in the mythic narratives, with certain variations, of small groups (the bomber crew, village, or group of firemen), chains of command, the community coming together to meet specified threats, and the depiction of superiors (officer or local yeoman or middle-class fireman) learning from and conceding to their social subordinates, so that at the end of the narrative, when the threat is overcome, the chain of command is revived, and the social relations shift slightly to accommodate the renewed trust in the British working class. A handful of film productions, however, directly faced the question of British nationality in the war, and so, arguably, avoided the charge of national populism: the films of Jennings and MacAllister at Crown, and Eldridge and Thomas at Strand.

¹Chantal Mouffe, 'Hegemony and Ideology in Gramsci', in Mouffe, ed., *Gramsci and Marxist Theory*, p.194.

4. Films of Nationality

Popular cinema in the war ... was a site of negotiation and transaction: between on the one hand official needs and on the other the aspirations of all those groups and classes whose support for the war effort had to be won. Central to this process were the conflicting social and cultural values and preferences which different groups and classes brought to the idea of national unity Key terms such as 'the people', 'nation' and 'country' were the ideological discourses through which this transaction was conducted.¹

Without the war, Jennings would probably have remained on the side-lines of the documentary film movement. His work did not find favour with Grierson and, like Len Lye, he would have been tolerated on the periphery as a 'prestige' director of short sponsored films, a token artist. Grierson's departure, followed by the war, and the process of centralisation initiated with the formation of the Ministry of Information, caused some of the marginal avant-garde figures, like Jennings, to be drawn into the centre, where they were given responsibility for more and larger projects. Dylan Thomas was another, recruited to the expanding industry in the early Forties. We have seen how documentary workers like Jennings, Wright, and Watt were connected with the literary avant-garde. The interest worked the other way as well: the intake of staff and search for prestige figures that had earlier briefly drawn Auden into the industry, now enabled others with an attraction for film and its possibilities to enter.

¹Geoff Hurd, 'Notes on Hegemony, the War and Cinema' in Geoff Hurd ed., *National Fictions / World War Two in British Film and Television* (London: British Film Institute, 1984), pp.18-19.

The war years brought about a far closer collaboration between writers, musicians and film-makers ...During the war, Arthur Calder-Marshall, Montagu Slater, John Betjeman, Roger Burford and John Baines among others, joined the staff of the MOI films division, while many different writers were associated with individual productions.¹

The company Thomas worked for, Strand, was set up by Donald Taylor and Paul Rotha, who had both worked for a short time under Grierson, in 1935. Strand gained a noted, if unobtrusive, place in British film history. It was 'the first company to undertake the production of documentaries exclusively on a sponsored basis'.² During the war 'its output of films for the MOI was prodigious',³ it 'produced 52 films for the MOI, five of these over 3,000 feet, in addition to 12 trailers; and other films have been made for the British Council'.⁴ The standard book on documentary film lists Strand's three most significant wartime films; they are all ones on which Thomas worked: *These Are the Men* (1942), *New Towns for Old* (1942), and *Our Country* (1942). 'One of the projects undertaken by Strand was a region-by-region account of Britain during the war, the "*Pattern of Britain* " series for the MOI, two-reel regional studies which deservedly earned considerable non-theatrical reputation'.⁵ Dylan Thomas worked on the film in this series concerning Wales.

¹Paul Road, 'Britain', in Rotha, *Documentary Film* (London: Faber, 1952), p.249.

²Elizabeth Sussex, *The Rise and Fall of British Documentary*, p.80.

³Paul Road, *Documentary Film*, p.256.

⁴The Arts Enquiry, *The Factual Film* (London, 1947), p.99.

⁵Paul Road, *Documentary Film*, p.256.

His role in the production of films for Strand was not restricted to the writing of commentaries. Film credits for documentaries such as *CEMA*, *Balloon Site 568* (1942), *New Towns for Old*, *These Are the Men*, and *This is Colour* (n.d.) variously list him as deviser and compiler, producer, director, narrator, and scriptwriter. He was clearly involved in every stage of the film-making process apart from editing, and even in the case of editing, because many of the Strand films do not credit an editor, it is likely that as a scriptwriter or director he would have collaborated closely in bringing the film stock to its final form. His major collaboration in this period was with John Eldridge, who began film work in 1936 as assistant director to the director of patriotic costume dramas, Herbert Wilcox. Eldridge is credited as the director of *Our Country*, *New Towns for Old*, and *Wales - Green Mountain Black Mountain* (1943).

Most of the films commissioned by the MOI were obviously for specific purposes, the propagation of practical information to do with the war effort. The formal structure of such films was largely determined by the content. But other films were commissioned on the most general principles: to let the country see itself, as was the principle of Mass Observation. As Geoffrey Nowell-Smith commented,

the war liberated documentary from its need to find a purpose
Documentary no longer had any need to equate its purposes with the

requirement of finding an auteur or sponsor. The purpose became the war effort, for which there was no simple formula.¹

These films, which I shall call films of nationality, were those that Jennings was commissioned to do: *Listen to Britain*, *Words for Battle*, *A Diary for Timothy* are all concerned with defining and elaborating on the theme of Britain. Now almost forgotten, Strand's *Our Country* was made in a manner very similar to Jennings and MacAllister's films at Crown, as a prestige film, opening at the Empire on Leicester Square. *Wales - Green Mountain Black Mountain* is interesting as an exploration of specifically Welsh identity.

The ideological motivations in the production by ministerial patronage of such films with regional and national subjects are apparently quite simple. As Donald Taylor said, interviewed for a contemporary film paper about some of Strand's recent productions:

Scotsmen ...will be interested to see on the screen the fine part that their native land is playing in helping to win the war; and 'Oxford' and 'British Architecture' by showing the cultural centre of the world and the many historical buildings and beauty spots of Britain, will make people all over the world, as well as the inhabitants of this country, appreciate for what we are fighting.²

¹Geoffrey Nowell-Smith, 'Humphrey Jennings Surrealist Observer' in Charles Barr, ed., *All Our Yesterdays - 90 Years of British Cinema* (London, 1986) pp.321-333.

²Donald Taylor, in *Kine Week* (25 July 1940), 21.

This was the most common form of general propaganda, seen, not only in film, but across the range of cultural production. In journalism, *Picture Post* frequently contained features on the nature of Britain. In publishing, a good example is provided by the ambitious series of books produced by William Collins and edited by W.J. Turner, 'Britain in Pictures'. At least 31 of these titles came out, including *English Villages* by Edmund Blunden, *English Women* by Edith Sitwell, *British Dramatists* by Graham Greene, *English Country Houses* by V. Sackville-West, *The Story of Scotland* by F. Fraser Darling, *British Romantic Artists* by John Piper, *British Cities & Small Towns* by John Betjeman, *The Story of Ireland* by Sean O'Faolain, and *The English Church* by The Bishop of Chichester. Among titles announced as 'in preparation', but never materialized, was 'The Story of Wales' by Dylan Thomas. In the field of art, the Pilgrim Trust organized a series of exhibitions of the work of contemporary artists such as John Piper, called 'Recording Britain'.¹ These representations of Britain were a consciously democratic form of propaganda. They were distinguished by a concern with regionality and the placement of the individual subject within the group and the nation. As such, they share the same structuring concerns that motivate the modernist art of the period: the merging of the individual subject with the collective in times of crisis, and a questioning and occasional redefinition of the collective, the nation.

¹The Pilgrim Trust, originally an independent charity, was given a large government grant in January 1940, until the government took full responsibility for it in 1942, renaming it the 'Council for the Encouragement of Music and the Arts' (CEMA).

CHAPTER SIX :

DYLAN THOMAS'S POETRY AND FILM

1. Introduction

[a] mass poem... should be written by all the contributors to 'Wales'. That is, that each person should write a verse-report of his own particular town, village, or district, and that all the reports, gathered together, should be made, not by alteration but by arrangement, into one long poem. The poem would be called Wales, & would take a whole number of the paper.¹

It is in this context, of 'films of nationality', that I propose to discuss Thomas's two most important films, *Our Country* and *Wales - Green Mountain Black Mountain*, together with Jennings's *Words for Battle*, *Listen to Britain*, and *Diary for Timothy*. A contemporary reviewer described one of these films as as using

¹Dylan Thomas, letter to Meurig Walters, 28 March 1938, *Collected Letters* ed. Paul Ferris (London, 1985) (hereafter referred to as *Letters*), p.286.

film continuity in a specially exciting manner... it involves an absolute logic arising not from a definite story, but from a flow of visuals and sounds... which achieve logicity because they are purely and simply film.¹

The reviewer is not describing, as modern critical opinion might lead one to suspect, a film of Jennings, but Eldridge and Thomas's *Our Country*. Most contemporary reviewers of the film particularly comment on the fusion between commentary and text, as well as Alwyn's music. Basil Wright described it as

a remarkable experiment in a new kind of screen poetry.... The poetry came visually through exquisite camerawork and through Eldridge's sensitive direction and editing, and aurally through a fine score by William Alwyn allied to a commentary by Dylan Thomas in which he successfully wedded (and in part subordinated) his style to the needs of the medium.²

Another veteran of the documentary also lavished high praise on the film. Unconsciously echoing Tallents's phrase, 'the projection of Britain', Edgar Anstey described it as a

mixed cargo of pictures, words, music and unconvention. The material defied all known screen logic; it was countrywide in its geographical scope, it was often breathtakingly beautiful, it was an inchoate mass of exquisite emotion wrung from Britain at war.... an important film seeking new relationships between people, places, and humble things.... Continuity of time and place was thrown to the winds and the film moved instead in obedience to the moods of an improbably

¹Anon. reviewer, *Documentary News Letter* v no.49 (1945), 87.

²Basil Wright, *The Long View*, p.203.

motivated yet warmly human sailor who was a projection of the director's own wandering appraisal of the British scene.¹

Anstey's appraisal highlights the unconventional aspects of the film which put it in line with the work of Jennings. The associational editing and montage, and the attempt to express, through conjunctions of images, a definition of the nation, are all part of Jennings and MacAllister's project. There is also a clear similarity between this work, and the poems of Eliot and H.D., which also dispense with linear narrative, replacing it with a montage-based narrative of transformations of the subject and referent.

Critics and historians have largely neglected the work of Strand films, despite the large contemporary interest that the release of *Our Country* caused. The major platform of comment on documentary at the time, *Documentary News Letter*, devoted two reviews to *Our Country*, and printed part of the script.² Clearly, critical opinion at the time did not see Jennings as the only, or even the major, exponent of documentary films of nationality. Both directors are linked formally by the discursive, non-narrative nature of their films. Unlike the growing trend, from the mid-Thirties into the war years, for narrative documentaries which are characterised by continuity editing, these discursive films often use montage to convey points. Indeed, montage was

¹Edgar Anstey 'Development of Film Technique in Britain', in Roger Manvell, ed., *Experiment in the Film* (London: Grey Walls Press, 1949), pp.234-265.

²Reviewed: *Documentary News Letter* v no.4 (1944), p.46.

Excerpts from script: *Documentary News Letter* v no.2(1944), p.96.

central to the grammar of such texts, in which the nation could be invoked by juxtapositions of pastoral and urban, peaceful and war-orientated images. The often controversial receptions that both of Thomas's films received is an index of how far this conceptual image of (either) country strayed from the pre-war norms of national representation.

Thomas's correspondence with the head of Strand, Donald Taylor, over the film *Our Country*, illustrates some of the tensions that Thomas must have been feeling in his film work:

The cuts you made in the verse-commentary, which, from the point of the film, were essential, did destroy some of the continuity of the verse as verse. The words were written to be spoken & heard, & not to be read, but all the same there was in the original version - before your most necessary cuts - a literary thread, or, at least, a sense-thread, which is now broken.¹

The importance of this passage is not that Thomas saw the 'literary thread' of the film commentary as valuable: any craftsman involved in part of the production of a film or commodity is likely to over-value his or her own work. He is here reluctantly recognising that in films, criteria other than the simply literary are more 'necessary' and 'essential'. Later in his life, Thomas attended a symposium on 'Poetry and Film', in which he showed a development of this considered view. Of the scripts

¹Dylan Thomas, *Letters*, p.526, to Donald Taylor, October 1944.

of non-silent films, he felt that far from poetry being important, 'the right word might only be a grunt':

I'm not at all sure that I want such a thing... as a poetic film.... Just as a poem comes out... one image makes another in the ordinary dialectic process [...] in a film, it's really the visual image that breeds another - breeds and breathes it. If it's possible to combine a verbal image to a visual image in this sort of horizontal [*ie* narrative] way, I'd rather see horizontal films.¹

The literary thread must always be cut to fit the shape of the editorial warp, the sequence of scenes and images. *Our Country* was liked by contemporary critics for precisely this reason. The reviewer in *Documentary News Letter*, which had previously doubted the success of Thomas's scripts, now judged that: 'Thomas succeeds for the first time in wedding (and subordinating) his style to the needs of the medium.'²

This clear assignation of primacy to the visual image in film will necessarily make any discussion of Thomas's verse commentaries more complex than a discussion of a printed poem. In the film judged as a whole, his commentary is inter-connected in interesting ways with the editing of the shots. *Wales - Green Mountain Black Mountain* credits Thomas as producer and scriptwriter. As producer, Thomas would probably have had some say as to where the location shots were to be taken, and possibly

¹Dylan Thomas et al., 'Poetry and the Film: a Symposium', *Film Culture* 29, (Summer 1963), pp.55-63. Reprinted as *Poetry and Film*, (New York: Gotham Book Mart, 1972).

²Anon. reviewer, *Documentary News Letter*, v, no.4, (1944), 46.

who was to narrate his commentary. Although it is impossible to discuss film as 'authored' in the way a poem or novel may be, this does not invalidate, and may even strengthen, discussion of the film as a complex of structures and strategies. Thomas himself regarded the combination of cinematic image and spoken word as conveying more than poetry on its own: 'Heard spoken to a beautiful picture, the words gain a sense of authority which the printed word denies them.'¹

¹Dylan Thomas, *Letters* , p.526.

2. Wales: Green Mountain, Black Mountain.

See what the gold gut drags from under
Mountains and galleries to the crest!¹

Strand films, with its regional "Pattern of Britain" series, was atypical in its articulation of nationality during the war. In the majority of wartime films, and especially the feature films, the appeal was to a 'national identity derived almost entirely from England, which was used almost inter-changeably with Britain to describe the nation.'² *Our Country* has long and significant detours in Wales and Scotland. *Wales - Green Mountain Black Mountain* is built around the interplay of two speaking voices, presenting a montage of Welsh and British, rural and urban, ageless and historical, natural and civilised. This dialogue structure prevents the film from being purely a propaganda piece about the Welsh role in the war: it is more about the nature of Welsh identity, presented implicitly even at the expense of the war.

The film was commissioned by the Ministry of Information. Plans for such a film seem to go back to 1941. An unpublished letter from Thomas's friend, Keidrych Rhys, to Herbert Read in 1941, mentions that

¹Dylan Thomas, 'Ballad of the Long-legged Bait', *Collected Poems*, p.130.

²Jeffrey Richards, 'National Identity in British Wartime Films', in Philip M. Taylor, ed., *Britain and the Cinema in the Second World War*, p.44.

The war office have asked me to send in a concrete scheme for a film on the Welsh war effort to Jack Beddington, MOI....There is considerable non-conformist anti-war feeling here.¹

This ministerial unease with the matter of Wales can perhaps be traced back to reports from Home Intelligence that 'the opinion, in Welsh speaking Wales, [was] that justice was not being done in this part of the Empire'.² The project that Rhys was invited to participate in probably came to nothing, but the Strand film seems to have been intended to fulfill the same function.

Unusually for previous filmic explorations of Wales, it directly addresses itself to the industrial problems faced in South Wales, and to the possibility of industrial reconstruction. The frankness with which this address turns into a criticism of the management of these areas in the recent past may have alienated some sections of the Welsh bourgeoisie. When shown to an invited audience in Rhyl, the town council denounced it

as "an insult to the Welsh nation," and it was agreed that representation should be made to the British Council, MOI, and BBC for it not to be shown overseas, where it had been meant to be seen wherever there were groups of Welsh-speaking people.³

The film bases its appeal to Welsh nationality on a complexly interwoven structure of repeated references and images. One of the most important of these references occurs in the title. The

¹Keidrych Rhys, letter to Herbert Read, 4 August 1941, Routledge Archives, Reading University, Box 1821.

²*Home Intelligence Reports on Opinion and Morale 1940-44* *ibid.*, Reel 2 1/292 94.

³Clive Coultass, *Images For Battle British Film and the Second World War 1939-45* (London: Associated University Presses, 1989), p.202(n).

word 'mountain' recurs in the film commentary in a number of different contexts.

The opening shot of the film is a stylized map of Great Britain, with all the borders drawn in, and Wales depicted in relief, with its mountains prominent. In *Our Country* the credits also appear over a map of Britain. Maps of Britain in fact appear again and again in British wartime documentary, especially in these films of nationality. They are depicted at the start of *Listen to Britain* and *Words for Battle*, while in the London Fire Service headquarters of Humphrey Jennings's *Fires Were Started*, a large and in practical terms redundant map of Great Britain dominates the background. The phrase 'Black Mountain' is itself possibly a pun on a large southern Welsh mountain, not far from the industrial areas. It could also signify slag-heaps, or slate tips. The earlier wars of the country are those of 'the mountain Welshmen', while the miners fight 'the obstinate dark rock middle of the mountains', and Wales itself is 'a mountain of strength'. The opening shots are of the rocky coast and the upland areas of North Wales, focussing on romantic images such as castles and cliffs. 'Mountain' is forcefully established as an initial point of reference for Welsh nationality.

The film then changes, and with mountain Wales still as a point of perspective, turns

From green to black mountain

From green to grey Wales,

with a panning shot of a town under some mountains, which passes to shots of coal mines. As we enter historical time, the commentary touches upon the war. It is distinguished from Wales's previous wars only in terms of more recent history:

Not the long and far away wild war
of the mountain Welshmen and the English kings
But the terrible near war of England and Wales.

The commentary accompanies a picture of women laying flowers by a cross: an activity which is later described as if it is essentially Welsh. The cross looks very much like a First World War memorial, an image bound to invoke unhappy memories, another 'near war of England and Wales' which led to carnage on an unprecedented scale, and was followed by an industrial depression that was still affecting areas of Wales at the outbreak of the Second World War.

From this, the film moves to the industrial centres of the South: the workers of Llanelli and the Swansea Valley, the docks of the South, and the Rhondda, are all described as 'fighting' by fulfilling their industrial tasks. Unlike many Thirties documentaries, the factory workers and miners are not seen impersonally, as dwarfed by the machines they work with, or pictured in silhouette against the furnaces, disguising their human features so their movements seem machine-like. The

miners are shown as members of a group, but with individual features discernible:

They go down like ghosts in black,
Only their smiles are white.

The industrial, South Welsh passage ends with the line 'Wales is a mountain of strength'. The miners fade out to a village under a mountain, followed by pastoral pictures such as a bridge over a stream, and cows being herded along a road. The economic and spiritual linkages between North and South are emphasised in the commentary:

This greener Wales is a strong mountain too....
Trains that take the mountain fleeces
Into the distant hills.

The second speaker comes in, almost surprisingly, about half-way through the film. His accent could be the quite anglicised English of the native Welsh speaker of North and Central Wales, with an enunciation similar to Thomas's own: clear and dramatic. It is also an accent notably closer to middle-class English. True to this ambivalence between 'timeless' rural Welsh and a specific dominant class, the voice comes in at the point of fusion between the previously visually opposed rural and urban:

The new war, the old singing
In the mountain villages....

The shots are of old houses and village streets. The slate exterior of a chapel is focussed on, and the speaker reveals a familiarity with Welsh chapels that foregrounds their visual qualities. The description of them, for instance, shows them as ugly:

In the squat grey chapel at the grey butt-end of the street...
Or in the tall stern chapel
Built in the seventies or the eighties.

One is here reminded that Thomas had once been commissioned by his publishers to write an ambitious book-length travelogue of Wales: the chapels are seen almost with the eyes of a tourist, named and dated, and even explained historically. They were built

As a rock of respectability
In the strange new industrial life that went on
At the foot of the mountain.

The verse emphasizes what is implicit in the cinematography, the rock-like similarity of the slate-roofed chapels to the mountains above them, suggesting that the chapel is somehow its child:

The tall stern father and mother of a mountain
Gray and bare over the blackened chapel roof.

Thus, in the symbolic system that the film sets up, the chapels and the mountain are intimately related: if the mountains are essentially and unchangeably Welsh, so are the chapels. They were built in opposition to what is strange and new, in a description which, however, still aestheticises what the chapels

are actually for. The camera and commentary give the impression of being outside and alien to the chapels, emphasising, even in the interior shots, the quaintness of what is being witnessed. Leaving the chapel, the film dissolves to a pastoral scene of a horse-drawn reaping machine in a field. As this shot of the reaper is held, a list of rural occupations is narrated; all chapel-goers, we are told, singing 'in a grim fore-play'. We are reminded of the earlier passage on the industrial workers in South Wales who are also contributing to the war effort. The singing of these people, as well as that of the playing country children,

Are sweet and powerful
Wild and gentle as the weather over the mountains
Or the wind-like movements of light and shadow
Through the high chill streets.

We now turn back to an interior shot of a chapel service, focussing on the hymn singers. The view this time is a familiar, inside one. As the narrator speaks, we can hear a male voice choir in the background. In shots that echo those of the smiling miners appearing from the pithead, we see the congregation leaving the chapel and standing outside.

Here in the chapels of Wales
Bethesda Smyrna Horeb and Sion
The young and the old come to sing and to worship...
They will come down miles of mountains
Or climb up from the sooted valley pans...
With gifts of valley-soured flowers
Or their remembrances of wild flowers
From high in the unspoilt fields.

This passage ends in a shot of a graveyard, and we are reminded of the earlier laying of flowers, which had been at one of the few explicit mentions of the war. As with the extended shot of the reaper while the list of rural occupations is read out, the war is an implicit sadness in the background. It was an essential element of wartime documentary that any explicit mention of the war should be uplifting, or at least mildly stirring. For the Welsh, however, it was almost inescapable to consider this war in the context of a history of bloody wars that led to defeat and subjection. The oppressed have a longer memory than the oppressors, and a treatment of Welsh nationality which ignored its history, would have lacked credibility. Thus the aspect of memory and history is foregrounded in the film, using the chapel as an essential link. Remembrance is given with flowers, both from the industrial lowlands and the unspoilt uplands. The chapel as meeting-place literally effects this link between the two kinds of Wales that the film has portrayed, rural and industrial. The same narrator later explores how the chapel is an important cultural centre, sliding almost imperceptibly in his description, from whist-drives to eisteddfodau to Druidism. The chapel is used to open up a chain of associations on the theme of 'Welshness', a structure that is more acceptable because of the inevitable-seeming stream of cinematic images.

The first narrator returns, in a tone that cuts back to the industrial base of the country. Where the second speaker had been comparing past and present, and how in North Wales they are still

linked, the first (southern Welsh accented) speaker now explains the altered state of the South by giving his narrative of the past:

The finding of coal, copper, iron ore, and anthracite
 Brought power and wealth to the valleys
 That had needed nothing but the wealth of their fields....
 The valleys grew rich,
 Houses spread over the hills,
 Smoke and dirt blew over the unrecognisable meadows,
 The fields of brick and steel.

The commentary implies that the industrialisation of South Wales, although it brought wealth, had not been desired by the Welsh. Pictures of smoke and flames emphasise, along with the commentary, the dirt and squalor that comes with industrialisation. Although exploitation is not explicitly mentioned, the poverty of the Thirties is emphasised, a strategy common to some wartime documentaries sharing the sentiments of the Beveridge report (and a strategy almost totally absent from Thirties documentary), that poverty as it had been seen in the previous decade should never be allowed to occur again. Industrialisation destroyed the earlier pastoral version of Wales, and took its history out of its hands:

The valleys grew rich
 But all the time the power and wealth of the worlds
 Were rocking,
 Rocking.

These lines are accompanied by a frenetic montage of a large pile of coins, with a hand picking them up and dropping them from the

palm, a hand dipped into dark, dripping industrial-looking mud or oil, ticker tape coming from a machine, newspaper headlines concerning the Wall Street Crash, and then the same shots of coal pit-heads as before, but with the wheels all still. This montage, with its clear message of historical causality, lust for money turning to mud, and stockbroking turning to crisis and industrial decline, is an unusually open attack on industrial capitalism, even for wartime documentary.

The image in the commentary of the dirt and smoke coming back down is so powerful that it sounds like a blanket condemnation of mass industrialisation *per se*. This is one of the points of the film in which Thomas's commentary uses obvious but effective poetic metaphor, with word-play and alliteration, bringing attention to the verse as verse, in a way that because of the timing, coming after the visual montage passage, complements the film's message of the unhappiness of the pre-war period.

The days when the pits stopped...
 And the great sheets of smoke that had
 Floated over industrial Wales
 Came down like blinds
 Over the blind windows of the mean streets,
 Came draping down over the houses without hope,
 Over the locked shop and the leaking roof.

The editing is more restrained in this passage, as the camera, in accord with the commentary, pans over still factories and a

smoky industrial city. It is a passage of specifically Welsh memory evocation. The Audenesque tone that Thomas now adopts seems to be a deliberate recollection of the previous decade:

At the corners lolled the old young men
Or they walked their thin whippets over the dirty grass
Or they scrambled on the tips for fish-tails of coal.

This is accompanied by presumably old footage of men with sacks clambering over slag-heaps, picking fragments of coal from where the trolley tips it. The memories this would have evoked in Welsh viewers in the depressed areas would have been strong.

The second narrator comes in again, to recite the most formalised part of Thomas's commentary, rhyming in couplets:

Remember the procession of the old young men
from dole queue to corner and back again,
From a pinched packed street to a peak of slag
In the bite of winter with shovel and bag.

As before, the second narrator is not historical but descriptive in tone, placing these events safely in the past, although ending on the prescriptive phrase, 'It shall never happen again,' accompanied by the image of a man closing a factory gate. This phrase is immediately taken up by the first speaker, in a demand made stronger by the fact that both speakers, who seem to come from different worlds, suddenly echo and reinforce each other:

It must not happen again....

Out of the sickening deadening idleness
 Must come the pride of labour again....
 Britain at war has asked these once denied
 Helpless and hopeless men
 For all their strength and skill....
 The world shall know their answer
 And the world shall never deny them again.

This is the only mention of 'Britain' in the poem, and in context it actually recognises how unreasonable the 'request' for Welsh industrial help is. A promise is made, conditional on victory (but the use of 'shall' rather than 'should' is noticeable), that economic improvement will be delivered after the war. As these lines are spoken, the camera pans along a line of happy, relaxing working-class men. The one at the end of the line is cradling a baby. They are, however, in a queue, which could mean the dole, or waiting for a job. The ambiguity is not clarified, but is followed by a socialist-realist type image of three workers, shot from below, so that they stand heroically silhouetted against the sky.

Although this might seem the clear conclusion to the film in a Grierson-type documentary, the Welsh-accented speaker does not have the last word. The background music returns to the original solo male voice, and, as at the beginning, there are ocean scenes. The second speaker reiterates the romantic theme of agelessness:

For as long as the salt wind blows over Cardigan Bay
 And the Pembroke coast, whitewashed with gulls,
 Greet the mountainous day

And the rocks of St. Davids echo
 And stand like cathedrals in the spray
 The voice of Wales is the voice of all free men.

This passage repays analysis, because of the apparent attempt to merge the idea of Welshness with the coastal and mountainous landscape. Like buildings, the coast is 'whitewashed', and is personified to the extent of 'Greeting' the day, while the rocks are 'like cathedrals'. We shall return to this passage in the context of Thomas's 'Poem in October', but it is worth noting that the choice of mountain and sea as the frames that start and end the film is significant, as the areas always least affected by human development, and so the areas with least human history. History in the film is problematic, since the film is conscious propaganda to recruit Wales to the war, while the Welsh history, as the film has to acknowledge, is one of oppression by the English. The solution in the film is to anchor Welsh identity and culture ultimately not in its history, but in its 'timeless' landscape. The day is 'mountainous' only as it is Welsh. The rocks are like cathedrals because the chapels and cathedrals are like the rocks and mountains. Thomas's metaphors merge this landscape with an idea of Welshness, giving it a grounded authority in its country. As the title suggests, the country can encompass both green and black, pastoral and industrial, within its limits.

3. Our Country

when each man is alone forever in the midst of the masses of men
 and all the separate movements of the morning crowds
 are lost together in the heartbeat of the clocks
 a day when the long noise of the sea is forgotten....
 the always to be remembered even though continual sea music
 music of the towers and bridges and spires and domes
 of the island city.¹

Unlike *Wales - Green Mountain Black Mountain*, and more similar to Jennings' films, the pastoral element in *Our Country* is not eventually merged with the industrial, but is maintained as a separate sphere of more true values. Scenes are counterposed rather than compared: there is a large rural harvest supper, intercut with gun batteries in operation. Later, there is an urban family dinner, intercut with approaching planes, some of which are shot down.

Another major difference between the films is the use of the sailor in *Our Country* to give narrative continuity. With such a figure, there seems less of a pure montage logic, dictated by the nature of the filmic material in the editing, and more of a narrative logic, as the character progresses from one area to another. Shots that may be images as if through his eyes are interspersed with shots showing him as observer and, sometimes,

¹Dylan Thomas, 'Our Country'.

casual participant. However, the film is is never clearly the sailor's story. The voice-over does not seem to represent his thoughts, but is more a generalised poetic description, a sometimes whimsical supplement to what the camera, through the sailor, sees. As such, he is comparable to the ambiguous witness in Eliot's *Four Quartets*, with whom we pass from region to region, in an apparently unmotivated travelling. With both we see the capital burning, but in neither poem nor film is he sufficiently individualised to become a poetic persona or filmic character.

In *Wales - Green Mountain Black Mountain*, Wales is zoomed into on the map as the titles appear. The opening shots are of the sea and a rocky coast at dawn, which is followed by film of mountains and hilly rural areas. They anchor the film into what becomes by association immutably Welsh, what could not be appropriated by an earlier imperialism, industrial growth, expropriation and decline, or the present war. *Our Country* also uses the sea as a framing-device at beginning and end, but for different reasons. In traditional British nationalism, given new impetus during the war by the threat of invasion, the sea and the coast are the natural borders protecting the island Britain from overseas danger or influence. It was also the life-line of supply for many much-needed materials. The merchant sailor, whom the film follows as he travels up and down the country, is thus a highly charged figure, a guardian of the first line of defence. At one point in the film he stands looking over the Channel from the cliffs, as the commentary reads:

The shape of another country lies so near
The wind under the cliffs could touch it with its finger.

A constant mannerism in Churchill's speeches was to refer to Britain as 'this island' and 'this island kingdom'. The emphasis was at once reassuring and nationalistic. The opposing coast is both near and inaccessible: danger is invoked at the same time that safety is assured.

It is at this significant point, as the sailor turns back to face inland, that there occurs the first of several explicit calls in the film to an organic nationalist feeling, for a Britain personified as female:

And from this island end...
A man may hear his country's body talking
And be caught in the weathers of her eyes.

The country's borders define the nation. This strategy can also be seen in Jennings's films. *Words for Battle* opens, after the map of Britain, with shots of the sea and the coast, while the quotation describes Britain, 'for water it is walled and guarded by the ocean'. Such appeals were ambivalent in the setting of the coast as a signifier of the country's security, in which case fortress and cliff imagery predominate, or sometimes in foregrounding the coast as a sign of the country's vulnerability. In the richer verbal tapestry of poetry, both could be referred to. Thus Alice Duer Miller's immensely popular narrative poem opens:

I have loved England, dearly and deeply,
 Since that first morning, shining and pure,
 The white cliffs of Dover I saw rising steeply
 Out of the sea that once made her secure.¹

Similarly, the work of Eliot and H.D. at the time is full of references to the sea and its limits. For H.D., it is the threatening universe that the crustacean has to protect itself from. Eliot also places the sea as the exterior border, personal and geographical limit, outside which all is alien, threatening:

The river is within us, the sea is all about us;
 The sea is the land's edge also, the granite
 Into which it reaches, the beaches where it tosses
 Its hints of earlier and other creation....²

Two speakers in *Wales Green Mountain Black Mountain* recite Thomas's script; the first has a distinctively South Welsh accent. In *Our Country*, the perhaps less successful device is an almost continuous voice-over by a man and a woman with standard English pronunciations, although the film follows the journeys and thoughts of a merchant sailor and a female factory worker. Jennings's films avoid the problems often caused by voice-overs by, not having a narrator in *Listen to Britain*; using only quotations in *Words for Battle*; and commissioning the prestige writer E.M.Forster in *A Diary for Timothy*. At the start of

¹Alice Duer Miller, *The White Cliffs of Dover* (London: Methuen, 1941), p.1.

²T.S.Eliot, 'Dry Salvages', section i.

Listen to Britain, however, the figure of Leonard Brockington introduces the film.¹ As with Quentin Reynolds in *London Can Take It*, his commentary is constituted primarily by his foreign-ness: his first words are 'I am a Canadian': his outside view is the only one capable of viewing the events in their totality, giving a considered opinion on what is not presented as an authored text. The passive is used to introduce *Listen to Britain*, 'The great sound picture that is here presented', as if it is an impersonal artifact of Britain at war, an impression emphasised by the intercutting of Brockington with a slow panning shot down a map of Britain. It is what is called a 'geographical' as opposed to a 'political' map, showing no evidence of cities or human land use: only the rivers and internal borders. An American soldier, coming in at the start and finish, is similarly used to frame the commentary of *Our Country*. A British voice-over would immediately reveal a class or regional base for the authority of the commentary. Another strategy Jennings often employs is his use of radio as representative of an impersonal 'voice of the nation', similar to his use of newspaper collages in his Mass Observation Reports and poems. There is no equivalent to this in Eldridge's films, but he is far more subtle and specific in his delineations of regionality, and in some parts, the celebration of Britain's regional differences. Thomas's commentary reads over the names of villages from all over the country, as the sailor is given a lift in a lorry through the countryside.

¹Although this introduction was directed by Jennings, some prints, particularly those released in Britain, were released without it. I am grateful to Sarah Street for this information.

If Jennings is more subtle in his use (or avoidance) of commentary, a case could be made for Eldridge being more subtle in the invocation of pastoral in these films. With Jennings the town/country counterpoint often seems to be too deliberately literary, and consequently remote. *Our Country* has war as a central thematic pivot. In almost every area the sailor visits, he witnesses some war-related activity. Walking back from the cliffs, he passes through a field of manoeuvring tanks. As with Jennings, scenes are counterposed rather than compared: there is a large rural harvest supper, intercut with gun batteries in operation. Later, there is an urban family dinner, intercut with approaching planes, some of which are shot down. A film about the whole of Britain inevitably takes its view from the centre, and finds no trouble in articulating the theme of the whole country at war. The use of pastoral scenes in this film often means no more than 'this is the kind of Britain that it is worthwhile to save'. However, a major difference from traditional images of pastoral in the film is the emphasis on rural labour, which, however, is portrayed as enjoyable. Harvesting is interrupted by drinking, and is concluded with a communal supper. In constructing *Wales - Green Mountain Black Mountain*, which was intended for non-theatrical release, and translated into Welsh in some prints, Eldridge and Thomas must have seen that the intended audience would have been unimpressed by such an appeal. They would either be rural people anyway, or people living in the industrial areas, with clear memories of real grievances that such an appeal could not address. Similarly, the war is not a central part of the thematic

structure. Soldiers are not mentioned in the commentary, and seldom seen. The appeal is more to a solid and absolute nationalism, invoking romantic images of the mountains and rough coastline as part of a definition of what is intractably Welsh.

Unlike most modern evocations of pastoral, there is no sense in this film of these country lifestyles being in decline or under threat.¹ It is the rural and what is defined as 'North Welsh' in the film which is the real source of power for the country. This kind of pastoral seems to be specifically Welsh, significantly different from English constructions of pastoral.

Industrialisation in Wales was more recent, and so the majority of people were more closely connected to the reality of rural life, and less likely to accept a mythification of the subject. One passage in the Welsh film discusses the agricultural experiments of Professor George Stapledon at Aberystwyth University. The commentary and film poeticize this work, linking it with the imagery of mountain, while the cinematography focusses on rows of plants and mountain sheepfarms:

Out of years of experiment
 New plants have come to being,
 Life has grown out of science,
 And from the laboratories and research stations
 Green fresh furrows stretch away
 Into the unpredictable distance.
 Many of the hillsides have been sown

¹Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1973), pp.9-12.

with these grasses now,
 And more sheep can live upon every acre.
 High up the sheep graze upon miraculous grass,
 A new strength has been given to the mountains.

The film centres on the chapel, which in the film constantly links rural activity with industrial. The cathedral (an image of greater centrality) plays a similar role in *Our Country*: near the start, the sailor walks into St. Pauls, standing alone, seen from above, as if from the gallery. He is dwarfed in this shot by the huge architecture. When he walks out, however, he is seen from a low angle, and once outside we survey with him the huge area of devastation surrounding the cathedral, making it central to our view of London. Similarly, St. Pauls is a motif in almost all of Jennings's films of this period, reminding us of its miraculous survival among the destruction of the surrounding districts, which had made it a popular ikon of the time, an image accessible to all classes of audience. Both chapel and cathedral connote a wealth of deep cultural associations that enable these films to anchor the audience into a critical notion of centrality, of 'what we are fighting for'.

As the earlier documentary tradition had shown, any narrative documentary of working practice would inevitably tend to show groups of people in relations of subordination to other groups: however, the films of nationality presented a radically different solution to the problem. If the films of Jennings are characterised by associative montage across class, as in the

cutting between high and low culture concerts in *Listen to Britain*, those of Eldridge are motivated by montage across locality. The cutting between rural and industrial Wales, and in *Our Country* the apparently aimless movements of the sailor that seems to take in the whole of Britain, again playing on a town and country contrast, does not lessen the sense of local or class solidarity, but strengthens it by not showing it in a relationship of superiority or inferiority to any of the other groups or localities. In this sense, perhaps, the films are utopian, showing things not as they are, but as they should be.

4. Poetry and Film

It would be bourgeois reaction to negate the reification of the cinema in the name of the ego, and it would border on anarchism to revoke the reification of the great work of art in the spirit of immediate use-values.... Both bear the stigmata of capitalism, both contain elements of change.... Both are torn halves of an integral freedom, to which however they do not add up.¹

In the work of Dylan Thomas in this period, we can see most clearly the lack of necessity in the traditional rigid separation between propaganda and art. Literary criticism valorizes art as an aesthetic principle and hermeneutic source of higher meaning, while social history valorizes propaganda and elements of mass culture such as film as a primary source, a 'reflection' of the

¹Theodor W Adorno, letter to Walter Benjamin 18 March 1936, in Fredric Jameson ed., *Aesthetics and Politics*, p.123.

social, while both fail to acknowledge the shifting and indeterminate boundaries between the two. Within the traditional terms of these disciplines, such separation is inevitable. It reproduces 'the great divide' that Andreas Huyssen perceives as central to modernity. But as he also points out, there is a 'secret interdependence' between the two: mass culture is 'the repressed other of modernism', while modernism is 'the strawman desperately needed by the system to provide an aura of popular legitimation for the blessings of the culture industry'.¹ Thomas's position is almost unique in that he straddles the terms of this opposition: at once a popular poet, a modernist, and a film-maker whose films, although now forgotten, were once seen by a mass audience.

Perhaps for this reason, he has been largely kept out of the academy-defined canon of high modernism, despite the fact that his poetry is more read outside universities than the poetry of the same period by Eliot or Pound. As in his life, Thomas remains today a victim of his own popularity, his perceived 'mass' character. However, a historical approach to all forms of cultural production, that maintains a sense of the aesthetic form and structure of texts and films, may successfully penetrate between these divisions. Huyssen goes on to follow Adorno in suggesting that

¹Andreas Huyssen, *After the Great Divide*, ibid., p.17.

the social processes that give shape to mass culture cannot be kept out of art works of the highest ambition and... any analysis of modernist... art will have to trace these processes in the trajectory of the aesthetic materials themselves.¹

For Dylan Thomas, this 'trajectory' is peculiarly open to analysis owing to his dual commitment to poetry and to film, to mass and modernist culture.

Thomas's film work does not have to be seen as an area of his life in which he participated reluctantly, or in enforced isolation from his literary work. Throughout the years 1940 and 1941, his letters show that he was actively searching for a job in the film industry, even though by this time he was proved medically unfit for front-line military service, the aspect of conscription he seems to have feared most.² In August 1941 he wrote hopefully to Vernon Watkins, 'I am still looking for a film job, & have been offered several scripts to do in the "near future".'³ Once he found the work, he did not regret it. Answering a questionnaire on how writers were earning their living in *Horizon*, Thomas admitted to '... enjoying it. Shadily living by one's literary wits is as good a way of making too little money as any other.'⁴ His first biographer, who knew him in this period, wrote that he 'was fascinated by films... and he was in this, *as in all*

¹Ibid., p.35.

²Dylan Thomas, *Letters*, to Kenneth Clarke, 1 April 1940, p.447. 'My greatest horror's killing'.

³Ibid., p.493, to Vernon Watkins, 28 August 1941.

⁴Dylan Thomas, 'Questionnaire: The Cost of Letters', *Horizon* xiv, no.81, (September, 1946), 140-174.

*other aspects of his work... a pro.*¹ The separation and effective suppression of his film work as 'propaganda', hence unworthy of discussion, in subsequent approaches to Thomas's career, would thus seem to present a lop-sided and eventually inadequate view of his productive output as a writer.

It was through film that Thomas kept in touch with the stream of European modernists with whom he had always ambivalently aligned himself, in a British cultural climate that, as the war progressed, saw a general turning away from Continental movements such as surrealism. His relations with modernism have often been seen as problematic, mainly because of his own self-disparaging or deceptively anti-intellectual remarks on the subject. His relations with the film medium, however, show how he was fully prepared to interest himself in modernist theory and practice. One of Thomas's co-workers at Strand films, Julian Maclaren-Ross, recalls:

Contrary to what is often said, he was extremely interested in the film medium.... We... shared [an] ambition, which was to write a film-script... a complete scenario ready for shooting which would give the... reader an absolute visual impression of the film in words and could be published as a new form of literature... the only ones we knew which almost succeeded in doing what we had in mind were those printed in *The Film Sense* by Sergei Eisenstein.²

¹Constantine FitzGibbon, *The Life of Dylan Thomas*, (London: Dent, 1965), p.279. My italics.

²Julian Maclaren-Ross, *Memoirs of the Forties* (London: Penguin, 1984), pp.128-9. A.T.Tolley, however, warns that memoirs 'by J. Maclaren-Ross should not be regarded as uniformly accurate.' (A.T.Tolley, bibliography to *The Poetry of the Forties* , p.299.)

Other sources also point to Thomas's early and committed interest in film as a subject of discourse, as well as film practice. His bibliography indicates that many of his grammar-school articles were film reviews. Some of his poems through the Thirties contain film imagery, and his letters refer to film with enthusiasm. After he had been working for Strand films for two years, he felt seriously enough about his work to suggest to his literary agent the publication of his film script about Burke and Hare.¹

Unlike the earlier modernists who, like Eliot, looked back on already declining forms of entertainment such as music-hall as the authentic popular culture, and on film as a new and potential artistic medium, Thomas grew up with the cinema from childhood, and regarded it as a form of popular entertainment. His 1936 poem, 'Then was my neophyte', is full of images from cinema, as viewed by a child. Vernon Watkins glosses this poem as 'a prophecy of his own melodramatic death, shown to him on a film which he as a child... sees unwinding and projected on a screen'.² Eisenstein's own work is inspired by a sense of itself as a popular medium, manipulating folk icons and images in a new language, appealing to all classes, cultures, and levels of literacy.

¹Dylan Thomas, *Letters*, p.516. The screenplay was published as *The Doctor and the Devils* (London, 1953).

²Gwen Watkins, *Portrait of a Friend* (Llandysul, 1983), p.33.

Wartime documentary, much influenced by the school of Grierson (which itself derived many of its techniques from Soviet cinema), and with many of the same people working in it, was endowed with an almost limitless audience, as government-produced shorts were routinely shown as part of an evening's programme. Documentaries, with unprecedented Government support, grew dramatically in importance in this period:

'Documentary film-makers became more influential than they were ever to be again'.¹ Such films often constructed a nearly missionary sense of Britain as 'the people', with a purpose almost as ordained as the post-revolutionary Soviet Union. In the form of address, the early Soviet system of 'agit-prop'-style mobile distribution directly to the people, was also similar:

The new documentary-inspired policy placed maximum emphasis on developing a non-theatrical distribution system for their films.... The documentary movement had claimed it as an article of faith that "in Britain there were more seats outside the cinemas than inside them". They saw the money-no-object conditions of wartime as the chance to prove it.²

These 'outside seats' were the church halls, schools, factories, YMCAs, and canteens for which many of the Strand films were produced. Such showings bare comparison with the early Soviet Agit-prop projection trucks, plying from village to village with short revolutionary films. The comparison could be extended to

¹Margaret Dickinson and Sarah Street, *Cinema and the State*, pp.113-114.

²Frances Thorpe and Nicholas Pronay, *British Official Films in the Second World War* (Oxford: Clio Press, 1980), pp.36-7.

the structure of funding and control of Soviet and wartime British film, and the fact that many Soviet directors of Eisenstein's generation actively admired the British wartime cinema. In short, Thomas was working in an atmosphere remarkably similar to that which produced the greatest works of modernist film.

Reviewers of his script, *The Doctor and the Devils*, when it was finally published in 1953, noticed his skilful use of modernist film techniques. The *Film Forum* reviewer noted 'the visual hyperbole one might expect from an expressionist German film of the early twenties',¹ while the *Newsreel* reviewer praised his 'remarkable command of the scenario form. The organisation of sequences, juxtapositions of shots, and interweaving of narrative threads, are excellently done.'² The ambition that Maclaren-Ross described, to produce film scenarios to equal those of Eisenstein, was approached (if not achieved) with great vigour.

Far from being something apart from his poetic production, a consistent case can be made for the existence of a strong creative link between his work on film in the early and mid Forties, and the creative breakthrough in 1944 and 1945 that

¹Crawford Robb, 'The Doctor and the Devils', *Film Forum* ix no.2, (December 1953), 14-15.

²Allan Borshell, 'The Doctor and the Devils', *Newsreel*, *Bulletin of the Federation of Film Societies* no.26 (September 1953), 13.

supplied the bulk of the poems in *Deaths and Entrances*. His poems deal in many cases with the same subjective set of wartime experiences he was negotiating, as consciously ideological and national territories, as part of a team, at Strand.

Thomas's friend Stephen Spender saw the importance of the relations between his poetry and his war work. 'Writing scripts, broadcasts, and so on, has given him the sense of a theme.'¹ As with *Four Quartets* and *Trilogy*, his volume *Deaths and Entrances* does not explicitly or directly take on the theme of defining the nation, but we see much of the same imagery and many of the same thematic articulations as in his film work. His personal reaction to the war, as shown in his letters, was significantly distanced from any nationalistic sentiments: 'I want to get something out of this war and put very little in.'² In 'Holy Spring' he refers to 'the war in which I have no heart'.³ As a Welshman, he was not a part of the literary centre in London, and was something of an alien even in the way that Eliot and H.D. were. As we have seen, Welsh feelings towards the war were sometimes significantly different from those of the English, and provided the necessary distance with which to view and express events while avoiding the taint of patriotism. The critic Walford Davies argues that 'the eccentric quality of Thomas's attitude to English is somewhat near the heart of the experience of being Anglo-

¹Stephen Spender, 'Poetry for Poetry's Sake and Poetry Beyond Poetry', *Horizon* xiii no.76, (April 1946), 221-238.

²Dylan Thomas *Letters*, p.408, To Glyn Jones, September 1939.

³All quotations from Thomas's poetry are from *Collected Poems 1934-1953* ed. Walford Davies and Ralph Maud (London: Dent, 1988). 'Holy Spring', p.133.

Welsh'.¹ His different cultural orientation - not quite the simple Cwmdonkin Drive provinciality he was to make central to his portrayal of his own upbringing (the defensiveness implicit in the joke of the title *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Dog*) - meant that during the war he was slightly out of step with much English and specifically London sentiment towards nationality, as he was living there on a temporary basis, something like an exile. An alien in a large and threatening metropolis was in fact the regular position of the modernist intellectual, much as Thomas would have decried both terms.

¹Walford Davies, *Dylan Thomas* (Swansea: Open University Press, 1986), p. 8.

5. 'Poem in October'

Deaths and Entrances differs significantly from Thomas's pre-war volumes. The poems tend to be longer, and often more accessible, usually with a more clear subject matter (frequently indicated with a title) than those which Thomas himself characterised as 'rhythmic and thematic dead-ends, that physical blank wall'.¹ Early in the volume comes 'Poem in October'. It is the first of the group of poems he wrote in 1944 and 1945, once he had settled back in Wales and begun to come to terms with the events of the war. The others in the same style, which G.S. Fraser aptly referred to as 'long poem[s] of formal celebration',² are 'A Winter's Tale', 'Vision and Prayer', 'Holy Spring', and 'Fern Hill'. Thomas referred to 'Poem in October' as 'A Laugharne poem: the first place poem I've written.'³ It is a 'place poem' in the same way that the two Strand documentaries, *Our Country* and *Wales - Green Mountain Black Mountain*, are place films, accounts at once subjective and universalising, stretching the meanings of intercut individual locations until it incorporates the whole nation. Because of the nature of the medium, the film commentary tends to use more pictorial, easily visualisable imagery, in a slightly less mannered language, whereas the metaphors in the poems are more conceptual, the syntax more difficult, and the words often newly coined. However, despite these differences, many passages show some similarity. It is surely no coincidence

¹Dylan Thomas, *Letters*, to Glyn Jones, December 1936, p. 243.

²G.S.Fraser, *Dylan Thomas* (London: Longmans, 1957), p.22.

³Dylan Thomas, quoted in Paul Ferris, *Dylan Thomas*, p.201.

that *Wales - Green Mountain Black Mountain* should end (and possibly start) on the Welsh coast very near Laugharne: Cardigan Bay, the Pembroke Coast, and St. Davids are all invoked, in a passage similar in many respects to 'Poem in October'. The shore ('heron / Priested' in the poem) is 'white-washed with gulls' in the commentary:¹ the strong ecclesiastical metaphor of the rocks of St. Davids (of course, itself the location of an important Welsh Cathedral) as cathedrals, turns the 'white-washed' gulls into part of the church architecture. In the poem, the morning 'beckons' and the water is 'praying'.² In the film, the coast 'Greets the mountainous day'. There are other reminiscences of his work for Strand in this poem. The churches and castles, so important in *Wales - Green Mountain Black Mountain*, re-appear in the poem. The scene in the film, just after a long passage about chapels, has the running children

sweet and powerful...

[as] the wind-like movements of light and shadow....

This recalls the passage in the poem about 'a child's / Forgotten mornings', in which he walked

Through the parables

Of sun light

And the legends of the green chapels.

¹ Compare 'the coast / Blackened with birds', from a poem that pre-dates his documentary work: 'Ballad of the Long-Legged Bait', *Collected Poems*, p.126.

² Dylan Thomas, 'Poem in October', *ibid.*, pp.86-88.

Again, as in the film, the chapels are essentially Welsh, stretching back into the country's past with the force of a legend. Also as in the film, they initiate a series of cultural and youthful associations: they are 'legends' because they represent more than they are. A comparison could be made between Thomas's use of chapels, and Eliot's (or indeed, Humphrey Jennings') use of London churches, as articulations of nationality, resonant with associations with the sacred, enabling the construction of a 'we'.

Despite some clear and generically explicable differences between the language of his scripts and of his poetry, the new style of *Deaths and Entrances* does have much in common with the commentative language he developed as a script writer. The style of *Deaths and Entrances* shares with the Strand documentary technique, and not with his earlier poetry, an accessibility, with a style, now perhaps thought of as belonging uniquely to Thomas, of describing objects and sensations with unusual word conjunctions, often based on their sound configurations. It was this specifically aural quality, fully brought out by his readings, that made his poetry distinctive and popular. Often the aural quality tends to over-ride conventional syntax and logical conceptions. Much of his film commentary uses the same method, giving an aural distinctiveness that ensures that the poetry will have an immediate effect upon first hearing. Although the syntax can sometimes be as difficult as in his earlier poems, and the imagery often bizarre, the fact that he is describing something, and as with film we are clearly aware of what he is describing,

makes the language of 'Poem in October' one of easy and pleasing visualisation:

Pale rain over the dwindling harbour
 And over the sea wet church the size of a snail
 With its horns through mist and the castle
 Brown as owls....

Writing a script, Thomas had to put words to images that would simultaneously be forcefully striking the viewer. The language could elaborate on the already-seen, but could not become too distinctive, difficult or extraneous to the visual impact. With these different determinations in mind, a certain similarity in the styles of the two discourses of poetry and film commentary may be seen.

There is also much that is comparable in the construction of a viewer in the films and in the poem. In 'Poem in October', Thomas is being both camera and commentator. Throughout the poem, everything is viewed from a specific point. The harbour is 'dwindling' as he climbs further up the hill. There is a strikingly rapid, montage-like transition between visual or aural images as elements of the scene: 'Above the farms and the white horses'; 'High tide and the heron dived when I took the road';

With water praying and call of seagull and rook
 And the knock of sailing boats on the net webbed wall.

This rapid switching of visual components is reminiscent of film-editing technique, in which a complete scene may be composed of many different shots, and may often be a quick code for establishing changes of location or theme. A brief shot of a pit-head, for instance, is enough to establish the Welsh Valleys. This specificity of point of view allows Thomas to adopt the language of his film commentaries, supplementing the bare visual image with metaphor and linguistic experimentation. Throughout 'Poem in October', Thomas uses these staccato images to show the narrator's movements, in a stanza-by-stanza account, as in a shooting-script, so that the poem could be described thus:

- | | | |
|-----|----|---|
| | 1) | Noises of sea-side morning coming to him in bed. |
| the | 2) | Low angle, close-up views of birds, the sea, and town. |
| up | 3) | Bird noises. Shots of hedgerows, the sun coming over the hill, and then a wood seen from above. |
| the | 4) | Long view of town, panning from the church to castle, to people's gardens. |
| | 5) | Cloud shots, the sun coming out. |
| | 6) | View from a distance of woods, river and sea. |
| the | 7) | Shot of the narrator on the hill, and then shot of whole town, from above. |

Such clarity of the wandering subject's position is unusual in lyric poetry. Fixity of physical position, often established in the title, was the traditional practice in romantic lyric poetry and after. A single location would allow the subject a reflection on inner state versus outer 'objective' condition. A moving persona would have belonged to narrative poetry, yet 'Poem in October' is

clearly intended as a lyric. It is a lyricism transformed by experience of filmic practice.

The narrative structure of the poem is also, as should be becoming clear, similar to the structures of the Strand films. The walking, narrating figure in the poem is strikingly analogous to the figure at the centre of *Our Country*, the sailor who travels the length and breadth of Britain, to Thomas's script and William Alwyn's music. There is a similar romantic aestheticisation of the viewer, at once involved in and distanced from the surroundings. In the film, he is clearly a device, a pretext that gives continuity to otherwise disparate shots of areas and activities of Britain. In the poem, he is also the pretext behind the swinging, cross-edited 'camera eye' that selects, from the manifold details of perception on a country walk, the objects to bring to the viewer's attention. In line with this constructed centrality of the subject as viewer, both figures tend to be alone in places that are normally crowded, for instance, the sailor walking through a deserted St. Pauls, and the 'I' of the poem, in the early morning, taking the road

Over the border
And the gates
Of the town closed as the town awoke.

The poem persona's movement from the coast and the town also parallels the sailor's travels from Glasgow inland, on what is essentially a discovery of pastoral Britain. The poem also shares

the common wartime country and city opposition. In a cinematically edited montage, the poet climbed the hill and

stood there in the summer noon
Though the town below lay leaved like October blood.

The poem ends, as it began, in solitude, having passed through a town, and then looked down on it from above. Similarly, in both of the Strand documentaries, the rural is the anchor, the source of values that can be used to view the town, and implicitly taken into it. The viewer standing on a hill in sunlight, looking down on a town still in shadow, as he prepares to go back down, is an apt image of the way pastoral tended to be used in the war. Pastoral is the contemplative frame that surrounds and supplies a meaningful context for the urban-located periods of action. It was an essential part of the code of the general articulation of the meaning of the war, providing a source of common reference by means of which a national 'we' was constituted.

6. Thomas and the Blitz

blessed be hail and upheaval
That uncalm still it is sure alone to stand and sing
Alone in the husk of man's home....¹

Another significant point of contact between *Deaths and Entrances* and the Strand documentaries is the way the Blitz is represented. *Wales - Green Mountain Black Mountain* hardly deals with the bombing raids, even though cities such as Swansea (as Thomas had witnessed) suffered heavy bombing losses. By contrast, in *Our Country* the danger, damage and experience of bombing are central elements. The film starts with the sailor disembarking at Glasgow, and rapidly transfers to London. The sailor is seen in St. Pauls and, immediately afterwards, the camera pans in a horizontal sweep across the extensive areas of destruction in central London, from the cathedral. The voice-over supplies the appropriate emotion:

And all the stones remember and sing
the cathedral of each dead body that lay or lies
in the bomber-and-dove-flown-over cemeteries
of the dumb heroic streets.

The street as cemetery is also a powerful motif in *Deaths and Entrances*, with frequent references in the poems dealing with the Blitz, to people buried or trapped in rubble. The stones, and

¹Dylan Thomas, 'Holy Spring', *ibid.*, p.133.

other non-human attributes of the city, are also often evoked as mourning these deaths.

The war theme is never far away in *Our Country*, even in the most pastoral scenes. After leaving London, the sailor goes to Kent. To shots of female apple pickers, and then passing planes, we hear:

War hangs heavy on the apple-dangled acres
shadowing the small round trees
of the heavy-hanging fruit.
Only the fruit-loving birds once flew over these tree-tops.

Shots of harvesting scenes are intercut with a gun battery bringing down a plane, and shots of a country meal and dancing are intercut with the Home Guard kitting up, and more approaching planes. By such montage methods, the viewer is constantly reminded of the presence of war, but only as an undertone, a backdrop for the more significant activities of agricultural labouring, school-teaching, or factory work. Nowhere is the sailor allowed to seem threatened, or as any more than a potential victim.

It is, significantly, the female narrator, the sailor's girlfriend, who describes the anxieties and reliefs of living through the bombing. Her commentary is in the first person, and where the sailor's voice-over had been descriptive, and his role that of a casual participant, the woman is subjective, and is

deeply involved in the events. She is first of all seen in a long passage without words, working in the factory, being met by the sailor, going to the cinema together, and eating with the family back at home. The industrial setting and the theme of bombing impose a more realistic tone to this passage, and she is distinguished by spoken lines that are not in the oratorical Thomas style, but plainer and more repetitive. The voice-over gives her thoughts as she eats:

Night after night, night after night,
walking back from the factory all alone, all alone,
and then the warning going
and looking up at the sky just like
someone looking up to see if it's going to rain tonight.

Her thoughts continue, remembering the start of a raid, while she is at home with her family, as she lights a candle, looks at a framed picture of the sailor, and puts the candle in the window. The whistle of her boiling kettle coincides, in a cinematic pun, with the sound of the all-clear. In an extended flash-back, we follow her as she walks to work through the scenes of destruction:

O walking through the streets in the morning
it nearly made you want to sing
though there were dead people under the stones
or people not dead
singing because the world was alive again
in the daytime
and I was alive
and you were alive.

The film then cuts back to her dinner with the sailor. The whole female narration takes place in a flash-back, a kind of circle that leads back to the moment of commencement, in a manner similar to Kaspar's narrative of the visionary moment in *The Flowering of the Rod*, outside the spatial and temporal progress of the sailor. After the sailor has dinner with the woman and her family, he takes the train back to Scotland, and finally back to the sea.

Several of the poems in *Deaths and Entrances* deal, with greater or lesser explicitness, with the Blitz: 'A Refusal to Mourn the Death, by Fire, of a Child in London', 'Deaths and Entrances', 'On a Wedding Anniversary', 'Ceremony After a Fire Raid', 'Dawn Raid', 'Lie Still, Sleep Becalmed' (especially in the original version), and 'Holy Spring'. Of these, 'Deaths and Entrances' and 'Dawn Raid' were written before it is known that he started working on the films for Strand.

In the later poems, the Blitz is almost always portrayed as harming or endangering figures of innocence and helplessness. In 'Ceremony After a Fire Raid', there is

A child of a few hours
With its kneading mouth
Charred on the black breast of the grave
The mother dug.

The subject in fact seems to be the same as that of 'A Refusal to Mourn the Death, by Fire, of a Child in London': a single child's death takes on the whole meaning of the destruction

I know not whether
 Adam or Eve, the adorned holy bullock
 Or the white ewe lamb
 Or the chosen virgin
 Laid in her snow
 On the altar of London,
 Was the first to die
 In the cinder of the little skull.

In Eliot's 'Little Gidding' the Blitz is described as a purging, a penance for wrong-doing. Thomas stresses the theme of the religious victim. The images are overwhelmingly of helplessness and innocence in relation to society. A sacrifice also means a propitiation, so the child as victim reflects on, or is even the reason for, the adult's position (Thomas or the reader) as unhurt.

Similarly, MacNeice's poem 'The Trolls' describes the discovery of something of redemptive value in the bombings, because the very possibility of death gives life and time a greater value, and the purely destructive elements are proved 'wrong in the end':

Time
 Swings on the poles of death
 And the latitude and the longitude of life
 Are fixed by death, and the value
 Of every organism, act and moment

Is, thanks to death, unique.

As in Thomas's poems, it is the fact of (other people's) death which makes the experience intense: makes it, in effect, a poetic happening. In another of MacNeice's Blitz poems, 'Brother Fire', the fire is seen as the 'enemy and image of ourselves', and strikes an elemental chord of response in those who see the ruins:

Did we not on those mornings after the All Clear
When you were looting shops in elemental joy
And singing as you swarmed up city block and spire,
Echo your thoughts in ours? 'Destroy! Destroy!'

MacNeice wrote of the same feelings in a prose article for *Picture Post*. The similarities of narrative, and verbal echoes, indicates that the article may have been a source of raw material for his poem. He wrote:

When the All Clear went I began a tour of London, half appalled and half enlivened by this fantasy of destruction. For it was... enlivening. People's deaths were another matter... but as for the damage to buildings, I could not help... regarding it as a spectacle, something on a scale which I had not come across.... There was a voice inside me which (ignoring all the suffering and wastage involved) kept saying, as I watched a building burning or demolished: "let her go up!" or "let her come down. Let them all go. Write them all off...."¹

The candidly admitted element of *schadenfreude* surely expresses an exultation closely connected to the observer's own personal survival. MacNeice distinguishes between the loss of human life

¹Louis MacNeice, 'The Morning After the Blitz' *Picture Post* ii no.5 (May 3 1941) 9-14.

and the destruction of property, but the element of spectacle is important in artistic responses to the Blitz, as it was indeed to the onlookers who crowded round the damaged areas each morning of the Blitz. Eliot on the roof as firewatcher, the drama of fire-fighting in Jennings' *Fires Were Started*, and of the morning after in *Our Country*, all highlight the physical destruction as spectacle, often with a prominent witness figure to objectify these feelings. One sociological interpretation of such behaviour in blitzed populations sees this as the fulfilment of a desire 'to celebrate... their comparatively uneventful escape from the trials of the night before'.¹

The titles of Thomas's poems, as newspaper headlines, give the feeling not of direct and personal reaction, but of reading about the incidents after the event, of reckoning up the destruction at a partial distance. Unlike MacNeice or Eliot's poems, in *Deaths and Entrances* the subject is not objectified as a participant or even a direct observer. Just as the sailor in *Our Country* could not himself be seen as a victim, suffering from fear, but is mediated through the irruption of a narratively obsolete female speaker, so the poet's emotions are objectified and made formal in the helpless victim. In 'A Refusal to Mourn', he refuses to mourn the child, because he does not want to 'murder / The mankind of her going'. Her death is a 'mankind' because everyone else, and particularly the poet, is still alive: quite literally, 'After the first death, there is no other', because the

¹E. Glover, quoted in Irving L. Janis, *Air War and Emotional Stress*, pp.154-156.

only people who can contemplate the death are those who are still alive, and so those who, despite the grief for others that they should feel, have to feel thankful for themselves. The long first sentence says, in an oratorical way, 'I won't mourn her until I too am dead'. Her position is a universal one, in that victims are always victims, and the rest of society can function only by their loss: the underlying Christian proposition is that only by Jesus (the 'white ewe lamb') dying, could humanity be redeemed.

There is a similar ambivalence, expressed in similar terms, in the speech of the woman in *Our Country*, after a raid:

it nearly made you want to sing
though there were dead people under the stones...
singing because the world was alive again.

It is not just the fact that 'the world' is alive which makes her want to sing, but the fact that 'I was alive / and you were alive'. The matter of other people being dead actually intensifies the joy of being with her lover. There is no mourning precisely because the ability to mourn, the fact of being alive, is a cause of relief.

As with H.D.'s 'nameless initiates' and the 'companions of the flame', it is escape from death which directly affirms the subject as participant in the collective; immediately after the Blitz, one counts oneself as a survivor. Tom Harrisson of Mass Observation commented that 'The bomb-baptisms of September

had been sufficiently widespread for everyone to feel personal identification with escape from death.'¹ Even Eliot, the most rigourously selfless observer of the Blitz, came near to acknowledging this when, in a rough draft of the conclusion to the poem, he wrote:

The dying die for us
And we die with them. / But to speak of regret
Is to outlive regret.²

In the final version, Eliot no longer speaks of regret, and what could be a specific reference to bombing casualties is transformed into a generalized metaphysical statement. Like Thomas, however, he saw that to construct a literary response to the Blitz was to refuse to mourn. As part of a narrative, destruction must be followed by reconstruction, sacrifice by redemption, death by birth. In this way, the constant recourse to religious narratives of sacrifice and redemption among all of these poets is an expression of an inevitable structure of feeling. Less inevitable was the specific content: the nature of the purgation or sacrifice, and the redemption or reconstruction afterwards.

Thomas's construction of victimhood is far more personal and human than Eliot's. The stress, in the female episode of *Our Country*, on relationship and love as being under threat from the

¹Tom Harrisson, *Living Through the Blitz*, p.86

²T.S.Eliot, quoted in Gardner, *The Composition of Four Quartets*, p.219.

bombing, is also expressed in 'On a Wedding Anniversary', in which a couple suffer when 'Death strikes their house':

The windows pour into their heart
And the doors burn in their brain.

The subjective pain of separation, or loss of love, is made equivalent to the violence of a bomb hitting the house. In the poem it is not clear which has happened. Similarly, in *Our Country*, the woman thinks, during her recollection of the raid:

This is the end of the world
I said to myself...
and you were dead as well.

And then the moment of doubt passes, as the planes leave:

We grew alive again, slowly
just like blind people climbing out of the cave
into the light of the very beginning of the world
and we were alive.

She describes the morning aftermath of the bombing as being 'like spring'. Spring is also, of course, the operative idea behind H.D.'s 'flowering' in the last section of *Trilogy*. References to spring (midwinter or actual) also abound in *Four Quartets*, although the culminating encounter is apparently autumnal.

Spring is also the metaphor that is operative behind the poem 'Holy Spring'. Although it is a re-working of an older

notebook poem,¹ the metaphors of ruin and spring are given more force by the resonance of the violence of bombing, and the spring that comes after it:

... as the morning becomes joyful
Out of the woebegone pyre
And the multitude's sultry tear turns cool on the weeping wall.

The Thames in 'A Refusal to Mourn' may be 'unmourning', but in other Blitz poems, such as 'Ceremony After a Fire Raid', the city landscapes become figures in the mourning or celebratory process, the pavements 'laid in requiems'. Thomas said of this poem, when writing to his friend, the fellow poet Vernon Watkins, 'it really is a Ceremony, and the third part of the poem is the music at the end'.² Certainly, in this part, the incantatory tends to dominate, just as in 'Vision and Prayer' it is the visual which dominates. Incantatory, but at the end, not a requiem:

Erupt, fountain, and enter to utter for ever
Glory glory glory
The sundering ultimate kingdom of genesis' thunder.

As with H.D., in the fluidity of the fused group, no simple unison may be celebrated: it is a recognition of the 'erupted' and 'sundering' nature of the fused group that is valuable. The poem also starts with the same grammatical fluidity we have seen in *Four Quartets*, fused into the curious opening word, 'Myself',

¹Dylan Thomas, 'Ten', February 1933 Notebook, *Poet in the Making / the Notebooks of Dylan Thomas* ed. Ralph Maud (London: Dent, 1968), pp.171-172.

²Dylan Thomas, *Letters* p.517, to Vernon Watkins, 27 July 1944.

which in the first section of the poem transmutes to 'us', although the second section offers the subject as 'I'.

Working on the Blitz in *Our Country* and other films, and experiencing it in his daily life, both in London and in Swansea, may have affected Thomas's work in other ways. The critic G.S. Fraser commented that 'some work he did on documentary film on the bombing raids, which in the end was found too grim for public release, had a profound effect upon his imagination; an effect that may partly explain the retreat, in many of his later poems, to the theme of childhood innocence and country peace.'¹ The fact that Thomas did address the Blitz in many of his poems would surely make it improbable that it also had the effect of causing him to retreat from such issues. Working on these films themselves, regardless of the emotional effect of filming the Blitz, may, however, have caused this change. Thomas's friend, the communist writer Jack Lindsay, put a similar question directly to him:

About 1945, discussing with him what I felt was a new scope of vision, a more active sense of human solidarity, in his poems, I said, "I think your work in documentary films has helped, by forcing you to find terms in which to define your position plainly and explicitly." He shook his head and denied that his scripts had at all affected his poems. I had indeed put the matter too crudely, and he was right in rejecting my formulation. But I still think his film-work did help to make him think more directly about the political world and that it thus played its part... in begetting such poems as 'A Refusal to Mourn'.... More

¹G.S.Fraser, *Dylan Thomas*, p.21.

importantly, it stirred his dramatic sense, made him want to find a cinematic sweep of objectively-based images, and thus led on to *Under Milk Wood*.¹

Lindsay's intuitions are almost certainly correct. The mode of address of Thomas's Blitz poems manages to construct a tight and highly formal arrangement of images, avoiding the lyricisation of individual perceptions found in MacNeice and other poets of the Blitz, but equally managing a montage that is far more condensed than the semi-narratives of H.D. and Eliot, yet contains the same essential structure of progression from purgatory or sacrificial altar to a reconstructed 'holy spring'.

¹Jack Lindsay, *Meetings with Poets* (London: Muller, 1968), p.30.

6. Thomas and Modernism

No reading of *Deaths and Entrances* can fail to take into account the importance of pastoral settings in these poems. But this is simultaneous with an equally new turning to public issues, such as the Blitz, in which he takes it upon himself to write for the whole of London, the survivors. The most uninterruptedly and unequivocally rustic poems (apart from 'Poem in October') are 'A Winter's Tale' and 'Fern Hill'. The first of these, with its winter setting and romantic narrative, is pastoral turned dark, introducing surrealist elements into the recognisable thematic elements of pastoral:

The carved limbs in the rock
Leap, as to trumpets. Calligraphy of the old
And the harp shaped voice of the water's dust plucks in a fold
Of fields. For love, the long ago she bird rises. Look.

The bleakness of this poem is the opposite of the way that, in the films he worked on, the countryside is presented as a source of strength and value. Perhaps it can only be understood in relation to the volume as a whole, particularly to its direct counter-point, the summertime 'Fern Hill'.

'Fern Hill' was the last poem Thomas wrote for *Deaths and Entrances*, and stands out rather differently from the rest of the volume. Here, the pastoral is unadulterated, and this one poem

would seem to represent an unequivocally turning away from modernist techniques and themes. However, he insisted to his agent that the poem should be put in the volume at a late stage of production because it was 'an *essential* part of the feeling & meaning of the book as a whole'.¹ Thus he saw its inclusion as important not because it was individually a good poem, but for the structure of the book. 'Fern Hill' has such a different tone from the majority of the other poems that it is difficult to see why he should have been so insistent on its inclusion. The conclusion must be that he thought the poem would add in contrast and difference, providing an uplifting conclusion that would counterbalance the darkness of poems such as 'A Winter's Tale'. The volume is given a roughly seasonal structure, almost starting with (poem in) October, going through the bleak winter of 'A Winter's Tale', and concluding with 'Holy Spring' and the summer ripeness of 'Fern Hill'. Thomas specifically asked to have it placed at the end of the book, which brings to mind the documentary use of the framing device, particularly as the last word of the poem, like the last shots of *Our Country* and *Wales - Green Mountain, Black Mountain*, is 'sea'. The uplift that this concluding poem provides should also be considered in the context of the national euphoria of the end of the war. He is using the same method as in wartime documentary film, in which pastoral is constructed as a point of reference of an uncomplicated, universally valued kind, from which an appeal can be made with reference to the whole country. In 'Poem in October', he stood on the sunlit hill, looking down on a cloud-shadowed town, an image

¹Dylan Thomas, *Letters* p.569, to A.J. Hoppé, 18 September 1945.

of the reposeful and solitary stance from which the morally troublesome aspects of urban life during the war can be viewed.

Similarly, in *Our Country*, as soon as the woman's narrative is over, the film suddenly races off again, out of the city, taking the sailor:

racing the rest of the world for the Highlands
Sunrise and sunset
Over the rainy lakes....

The release to a freer perspective is structurally necessary after the urban grimness of the Blitz. The fact of the sailor's departure from her, to perilous waters, is quietly forgotten. Similarly, the nostalgic celebration of childhood joy as a pastoral idyll in 'Fern Hill' is a release from the previous poem's 'the multitude's sultry tear', the opposite of pastoral:

But blessed be hail and upheaval
That uncalm still it is alone to stand and sing
Alone in the husk of man's home.

Professor Walford Davies, who convincingly argues the case for Thomas as a modernist by inheritance and belief, suggests that from 1938 Thomas's poetry withdrew 'from the dense imagistic techniques of modernism'.¹ This is to impose too

¹Walford Davies, *Dylan Thomas*, p.26.

narrow a definition of the meaning of 'modernism'. The fact that 'the later poems are more accessible' is for Davies evidence that Thomas's poetry had ceased to be modernist, but difficulty of reading is not an essential part of modernist style. The indubitably modernist films of Eisenstein, for instance, were made to be accessible to the largest possible number of people, in the largely illiterate and multi-lingual Soviet Union. Popularity and accessibility should not be seen as necessarily antithetical to the modernist tradition. Thomas can be located as a modernist in the war, just as Eliot and H.D. can. Eliot himself used pastoral in 'Little Gidding', and H.D. indulged in some romantic historical drama. They both simultaneously adopted a style of greater accessibility, an inclusivity of address that is comparable with Thomas's more popular tone.

The relations of pastoral to modernism are more complex than might at first be supposed. In the sense of modernism meaning the metropolitan and the uprooted, pastoral was indeed the 'other' of modernism. This changed, however, with the social conditions brought about by the rise of fascism and the war. Settledness seemed more attractive, borders became difficult to cross, and themes of nationality became inescapable. Eliot, H.D., and Thomas all had country retreats or places they could visit during the war. All sought for relatively uncomplex, accessible, and 'national' sources of value within the nation or culture. Because of their past output, however, critics tend to see these war-time volumes, *Trilogy* and *Four Quartets*, as well as *Deaths and Entrances*, as within the authorial canon of works produced

during radically different social conditions, and are judged as either conforming or not to these extraneous standards of the writers' past outputs.

The part of the equation that Davies regrettably misses from his analysis, is Thomas's desire to be, and success as, a popular poet. From the start, even his most inaccessible poetry was not elitist in the way Eliot's poetry was often seen, drawing on purely linguistic references within the English language, while Eliot often drew on cultural references from across the whole of European culture that only a few were in a position to understand. Thomas could not afford to be a modernist in quite the same way that the others were. A reading of his letters in this period makes it quite clear why: 'we sit in our bedroom and think with hate of the people who can go to restaurants'.¹ Much of his epistolary production seems to have consisted in composing ever more plausible and elaborate begging letters. His poverty made it imperative for him to produce a volume of poetry that would be received better than the difficult, and consequently slow-selling *Map of Love*. Rather than turning to a vulgarisation of recognised modernistic poetic technique, Thomas appropriated the style and form of that other modernist medium that was flourishing in the war: documentary film. He was quite daringly modernist in *Deaths and Entrances*, bringing in vastly varying stylistic elements, mixing pastoral nature poetry and childhood reminiscence with the difficult, the violent, and the surrealist: he was constructing

¹Dylan Thomas, *Letters* p.493, to Vernon Watkins, 28 August 1941.

a document of the country at war, wide-ranging, popular, and modernist, as the two ambitious film projects he worked on were.

The important institutional differences between filmic and poetic structurations of the wartime experience and ideology must be acknowledged, but precisely when the different forms of address are seen for what they are, it can be acknowledged that the two perceived areas of the artistic and propagandist are in fact strongly aligned.

CHAPTER SEVEN :

THE APOCALYPTIC MOVEMENT

1. The Apocalyptic Movement and the Avant-Garde.

[T]he whole disintegration thing was in the air. The surrealist disintegrations merely formalized it. I think it was all there, some kind of dreadful anticipation of the outbreak of war. The total absence of any kind of conviction, not only about politics, or spiritual matters, but even the technology of verse.¹

[T]here is a change in the style of the poems, whether good or bad, connected with the steady approach of war which we were conscious of during these years.²

The Apocalyptic Movement, in its inception, reveals close and conscious similarities with movements in European modernism; its poetry was, as Herbert Read described it, 'a linking up with the European spirit'.³ In its early formation it was linked to the little magazine, *Seven*, which published the work of

¹'An Interview with George Barker' *Contemporary Literature* xii no.4, (Autumn 1971), 375-401.

²William Empson, Preface to *The Gathering Storm* (London: Faber, 1940), p.9.

³Herbert Read, 'The New Romantic School', *The Listener* *ibid.*, 533.

Continental writers such as Emanuel Carnevali, Alfred Perlès, and George Seferis, and clearly favoured the prose of Parisian writers of the late Thirties, such as Anäis Nin, Henry Miller, and Lawrence Durrell. Eight issues of the magazine came out, between Summer 1938 and Spring 1940. By the end of 1938, a small group of British writers had formed around *Seven*, including Henry Treece, G.S.Fraser, J.F.Hendry, and Nicholas Moore.¹ In 1938 they produced a manifesto,² and in 1939 their first anthology publication, *The New Apocalypse*. Such activities are fully congruous with those of 'a well organized movement of the continental type'.³

The manifesto itself, as I shall argue later, is only partly in line with similar statements from the European avant-garde:

- 1) That Man was in need of greater freedom, economic no less than aesthetic, from machines and mechanistic thinking.
- 2) That no existent political system, Left or Right; no artistic ideology, Surrealism or the political school of Auden, was able to provide this freedom.
- 3) That the Machine Age had exerted too strong an influence on art, and had prevented the individual development of Man.

¹The fullest account of the movement is given in A.E.Salmon, *Poets of the Apocalypse* (Boston: Twayne, 1983).

This chapter is an implicit rebuttal of his dismissal of the influence of the European avant-garde: in his book, he devotes one page to Surrealism, even though he states that both Treece and Fraser agree that the Movement "derives from Surrealism" (Salmon, p.18). He goes on to devote several more pages to how certain dragon-imagery in Apocalyptic poetry is similar to that described in Carl Sagan's *The Dragons of Eden* (Salmon pp.19-22).

²11th December 1938, according to J.F.Hendry, quoted in Salmon, *ibid.*, p.3.

³Kenneth Rexroth, *The New British Poets* (London, 1949), p.xxii. Quoted in Salmon, *ibid.*, p.1.

- 4) That Myth, as a personal means of reintegrating the personality, had been neglected and despised.¹

In form and tone, however, the link was there. Subsequent critics have tended to brush aside links with the European avant-garde by describing the movement as romantic or neo-romantic. For instance, Robert Hewison comments, 'The Apocalypticists were the extremists in a wave of romanticism that surged through English culture in the war years'.² Salmon's *Poets of the Apocalypse* is based upon the premise of the movement as a re-birth of romanticism, and glosses over the continuity with modernism. Linda Shires calls them 'the products of certain co-ordinating romantic and subjective impulses which could no longer be suppressed'.³ Robin Skelton's Introduction to *Poetry of the Forties* discusses only the weakly thought-out and emotive statements about the movement published by Henry Treece, and because Treece was from the start undisguisedly neo-romantic, Skelton conflates the two trends, finding in both, evidence of 'pretentious and sentimental attitudinizing'.⁴ Even Edward B. Germain, in his Introduction to the anthology, *Surrealist Poetry in English*, dismisses the movement as 'of course, a new romanticism, Art unconcerned with revelation, showing little faith in the powers of the irrational'.⁵ Tolley is more just when he creates a

¹Quoted in Francis Scarfe, *Auden and After, The Liberation of Poetry 1930-1941* (London: Routledge, 1942), p.155.

²Robert Hewison, *Under Siege, Literary Life in London 1939-45*, p.113.

³Linda M. Shires, *British Poetry of the Second World War* (London: Macmillan, 1985), p.26.

⁴Robin Skelton, ed., *Poetry of the Forties* (London: Penguin, 1968), p.23.

⁵Edward B. Germain, ed., *Surrealist Poetry in English* (London: Penguin, 1978), p.40.

chronological distinction between the movement and later romanticism:

The movement that called itself Apocalypse has often been equated with the "new romanticism", or even with the poetry of the forties as a whole. In fact it began in the late thirties and can be said to have lost any clear identity by 1943.¹

Other commentators have also found more in common between apocalypticism and surrealism than with romanticism. Frederick Hoffman, for instance, writes that their 'writings ...stood ...as a restatement of the twentieth-century protest against tradition'.² Geoffrey Bullough, in *The Trend of Modern Poetry*, places them in a similar context.³ Andrew Crozier, although considering that 'To think of this ...style in terms of surrealism is helpful only up to a point,' sees in the movement a modernistic 'preoccupation with the self more far-reaching than that signified merely by the textual authority of the subject'.⁴

Any British cultural movement that went so far as to produce a manifesto can be seen to be intentionally in line with

¹A.T.Tolley, *The Poetry of the Forties* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985), p.101.

²Frederick J. Hoffman, 'From Surrealism to "the Apocalypse": A Development in Twentieth Century Irrationalism', *ELH: A Journal of English Literary History*, xv (June 1948), 147-165.

³Geoffrey Bullough, *The Trend of Modern Poetry* (3rd ed., London: Oliver and Boyd, 1949), p.222.

⁴Andrew Crozier, 'Styles of the Self: the New Apocalypse and 1940s Poetry', in David Mellor, ed., *A Paradise Lost: The Neo-Romantic Imagination in Britain 1935-55* (London: Lund Humphries, 1987), pp.113-115.

forms of European modernism. Describing itself as 'a guide to the modern chaos', its first anthology was advertised in *Seven* as

the first attempt made to display the influences and show the progress of the work done by experimental writers since the advent of the Auden-Spender-Day Lewis triumvirate. It is, in effect, a demonstration of the direction travelled by advanced writing since the beginning of this decade.¹

The words 'advanced' and 'experimental' imply conscious formal modernism, and suggest an alignment with the European avant-garde. It is the familiar celebration of newness, in which groups of writers proclaimed themselves as the first, the advance, in each new direction.

The particular modernist movement that the Apocalyptic group frequently identified with, and paradoxically at the same time most strongly defined themselves against, was surrealism. Both the similarities and dis-similarities were there: the movement was a child of surrealism, but a rebellious child that attempted to hide its parentage, while at the same time proclaiming its superiority. Henry Treece, in an essay originally written for *Seven*, 'An Apocalyptic Writer and the Surrealists' compares Dylan Thomas favourably with such writers as Breton, Eluard, Picasso (in his automatic texts), and Benjamin Péret.² G.S.Fraser, in his article, 'Apocalypse in Poetry', states:

¹Advertisement signed 'The Fortune Press', *Seven* no.7 (Christmas 1939), p.27.

²Henry Treece, 'An Apocalyptic Writer and the Surrealists', *The New Apocalypse* (London: Fortune Press, n.d.[1939]), p.49. His examples of surrealist poetry,

Like surrealism, the New Apocalypse is a movement which embodies not only a certain attitude to the technique of writing, but a certain attitude to life in general. The New Apocalypse, in a sense, derives from surrealism, and one might even call it a dialectical development of it: the next stage forward.¹

J.F.Hendry also takes issue with surrealism in the essays 'Myth and Social Integration' and 'Lorca and the Surrealists'.² Like many European philosophies imported into Britain, surrealism was mostly mis-recognised by those eager to express an opinion about it, including many of its influential supporters. Herbert Read noted approvingly of the Apocalyptic group, with some exactitude, that 'it is an English version of surrealismthe modification introduced into the movement by our young poets is the typical English one of compromise'.³ The apparent nonsense of ideology in surrealism could now be cast aside, leaving a common-sensical residue of technique that might be of practical use to Britain's new poets, or, in Read's words, might be 'more comfortable to live with'. As Orwell noted, with characteristic ironic brevity, the

incidentally, are seemingly all taken from the pages of *Contemporary Prose and Poetry* (see below).

¹G.S.Fraser, 'Apocalypse in Poetry', *The White Horseman* (London: Routledge, 1941), p.3. His idea (although J.F.Hendry in interview also lays claim to this phrase) in fact comes from David Gascoyne, who suggests in *A Short Survey of Surrealism* (London: Cobden-Sanderson, 1935), p.45, that Surrealism itself was a dialectical development from Dada.

²J.F.Hendry, 'Myth and Social Integration', *The White Horseman*, p.176.
J.F.Hendry, 'Lorca and the Surrealists', *Life and Letters To-day* xliii no. 86 (1944), pp.18-19.

³Herbert Read, 'The New Romantic School', *The Listener*, p. 533.

movement was 'Surrealism with the break on. The subconscious is to be liberated, but only on ticket-of-leave.'¹

In the late Thirties, the Apocalyptic group was responding to comparatively recent trends. Surrealism as a movement did not have any real impact in Britain until the mid-Thirties. In 1935, David Gascoyne's *A Short Survey of Surrealism* was published,² and in 1936 his translation of *What is Surrealism?*³ by André Breton. In the same year, the International Surrealist Exhibition was held in London, with much publicity. Also in 1936, Herbert Read edited and wrote the Introduction for a collection of essays in a book brought out by Faber, entitled *Surrealism*.⁴ The magazine *Contemporary Poetry and Prose*, edited by Roger Roughton, appeared for the next two years, providing a platform for the nascent English movement.⁵ By 1938, surrealism had taken a strong hold on the imaginations of many young literary intellectuals in Britain. *Seven* was a continuation of Roughton's magazine, with many of the same contributors and apparently a similar editorial policy. Seven of those who contributed to *Contemporary Poetry and Prose* went on to contribute to *Seven*,⁶ while many of the pieces in the latter, although by writers of a

¹George Orwell, 'The Dark Horse of the Apocalypse' *Life and Letters To-Day* xxv no.34 (June 1940), 315-318.

²David Gascoyne, *A Short Survey of Surrealism*.

³André Breton, *What is Surrealism?* trans. David Gascoyne (London, 1936).

⁴Herbert Read, ed., *Surrealism* *ibid.*

⁵The history of this movement is traced by Paul C.Ray, *The Surrealist Movement in England* (London: Cornell University Press, 1971). Also, see J.H.Matthews, 'Surrealism and England', *Comparative Literature Studies*, i (1964), 55-72.

⁶Namely: Ruthven Todd, Roy Fuller, George Barker, Antonia White, David Gascoyne, Wallace Stevens, and Dylan Thomas. Norman MacCaig recalled in a letter to me that he had been a keen reader of the magazine.

younger generation than those who had written for *Contemporary Poetry and Prose*, had a distinctly surrealist tone, for instance the contributions by Philip O'Connor, Norman MacCaig,¹ and H.G.Porteus. Herbert Read contributed a review of Dylan Thomas's *The Map of Love to Seven*. It evolved rapidly from a mainly Cambridge-based poetry journal, to a major platform of avant-garde writing, and the cradle for the new movement.²

It is impossible to fully account for the course of the movement without a consideration of the role of Herbert Read. As early as 1935, he had predicted that surrealism, as a 'negative' and 'destructive' art, would play 'only a temporary role', being 'the art of a transitional period'. This would give way, he judged, to 'a new romanticism, especially in literature'.³ After his expulsion from the surrealist group in 1939, and his near simultaneous establishment as literary editor at Routledge, he was in a position to put some of these new beliefs into practice, as he gave solid material help to the Apocalyptic movement, which he firmly believed to be the start of a new romanticism. In his article 'The New Romantic School', the terms he uses to describe the movement match his own changes of opinion, as he himself drifted from surrealism. He describes a disillusionment with the Soviet revolution, and a concomitant turning away from political

¹'McCaig' in *Seven* and the Apocalyptic anthologies: later, Norman MacCaig.

²A.E.Salmon notes that *Seven* was central to the genesis of the movement, yet fails to quote from or refer substantially to the magazine, and does not list it as one of the 'Primary Sources' in his bibliography.

³Herbert Read, 'What is Revolutionary Art?' in Betty Rea, ed., *5 on Revolutionary Art* (London: Wishart, 1935), pp.20-21.

concerns. Faced with the unstoppable march of fascism in Europe, at home 'there was an immovable burden of lethargy and indifference'. Read himself experienced these things directly, in his support of the doomed Spanish anarchists, and his commitment to a British surrealist movement that failed to achieve any of its vaunted political aims. In the late Thirties, according to Read, the poet 'had no effective power in national life: his intelligence was not wanted, his idealism was despised.' Faced with these conditions, the poet 'turn[ed] in on himself' and 'cultivate[d] instead his private world, his ingrown moods, his dreams.'¹ Those political concerns that were manifested were utopian, compatible with Read's deferral of hope to a post-war reconstruction.

In May 1940, Hendry wrote to Read at Routledge, proposing that he should publish the second Apocalyptic anthology. Read's response was at first lukewarm, noting that Routledge 'has not hitherto published modern poetry', and that 'at the present very unfavourable moment' it was unlikely that this would change.² However, in October of that year, after apparently meeting Hendry, Read's opinion seems to have changed, and he was willing to publish the anthology. A letter of October 1940 reassures Read that the anthology 'is now practically in order for submission to you'. By January 1941, plans were well advanced, and Treece, Hendry, and Read seem to have met. Read wrote to Hendry:

¹ Herbert Read, 'The New Romantic School', *The Listener*, *ibid.*

² Letters between Hendry and Read, May 1940, Routledge archives at Reading University Library, Box 1796.

We have decided that it would not be advisable for me to write a preface for the book. I would of course have been very willing to do this, but we think that it might prejudice the reviewers. We would like to give the book the appearance of an entirely new and unsponsored venture.¹

Read's influence, although largely covert, was central to the way the movement developed.

Apocalypticism was from the start a hybrid. It did not have the political clarity of surrealism or the literary immediacy of previous British avant-gardes, or the native romanticism they so often looked back to. Instead the poets in the movement attempted to develop a cross-breeding of these elements that perhaps had less to do with ideological statement or pure literary experimentation, and more to do with the new literary generation's perceptions of avant-garde writing. The ambivalence with which the Apocalypics saw their predecessors is repeated by the mentor of both groups, Herbert Read. Vociferously supporting surrealism on its importation into Britain in 1936, he appears on closer scrutiny to have supported it on grounds significantly different from those of the surrealists themselves. His 70-page 'Introduction' to *Surrealism* does not deal with the theme of automatism in any but the most indirect way.² He bases

¹Letters from Routledge archives, University of Reading Library. Boxes 1815 and 1796.

²The trenchant review of the Faber *Surrealism* by Humphrey Jennings in *Contemporary Poetry and Prose* is worth quoting from at length, showing as it does the nature of the mutual suspicions and theoretical differences existing between the two most important exponents of the movement in England:

his support on the partially true perception that 'surrealism is a re-affirmation of the romantic principle'.¹ This is despite the fact that, in the same volume, André Breton states that 'An appeal to automatism in all its forms is our only chance of resolving, outside the economic plane, *all* ...[ideological] contradictions of principle.'²

The attitude to automatism is the most significant difference between the apocalyptic movement and surrealism. For the surrealists, it was never simply the composition of poetry by directly transcribing the words that spontaneously entered one's head, even though André Breton made this central to his definition of surrealism:

Pure psychic automatism, by which it is intended to express, verbally, in writing, or by other means, the real process of thought. Thought's dictation, in the absence of all control exercised by reason and outside all moral or aesthetic preoccupations.³

'...a special attachment to certain sides of Surrealism may be defensible, but the elevation of definite "universal truths of romanticism" in place of the "universal truths" of classicism . . . immediately corroborates really grave doubts already existent about the *use* of surrealism in this country Is it possible that in place of a classical-military-capitalist-ecclesiastical racket there has come into being a romantic-cultural-*soi-disant*-co-operative-new uplift racket ready and delighted to use the "universal truths of romanticism - co-eval with the evolving consciousness of mankind" as symbols and tools for its own ends? Our 'advanced' poster designers, our educational propaganda film-makers, our 'young' professors and 'emancipated' business men - what a gift Surrealism is to them when it is presented in the auras of 'necessity', 'culture' and 'truth' with which Read and Sykes Davies invest it.' *Contemporary Poetry & Prose* no.8, (December 1936), 167.

¹Herbert Read, *Surrealism* , p. 28.

²André Breton, *Surrealism* , p. 115. Author's italics.

³André Breton, *ibid.*, p. 59.

More important to the surrealists as the movement developed was what this unmediated psychic expression implied for art and society; automatism became their major subversive weapon, and allowed them to consider themselves as '*au service de la revolution*'. For Breton, automatism was a means by which to

elude forever the coalition of forces that stand watch to prevent any violent irruption of the unconscious: a society which feels itself menaced from all sides like bourgeois society thinks ...that such irruption could be fatal.¹

The act of automatism alone came to be for the surrealists a kind of revolutionary sacrament. A 'recipe' was given to enable anyone to produce a surrealist text. Lautréamont was quoted to the effect that 'poetry should be made by all'. Any bourgeois standards of literary or aesthetic judgement were thus invalid when dealing with the automatic text.² Such critical valuations were of no interest to the original surrealists, who delighted in discomfiting their critics. Automatism enabled any practitioner to tap into a kind of dream state in which verbal patterns and images emerged from the unconscious in a way that was, ideally, entirely free of all social blocks and conventions. Hence, it was asserted, automatism, by transcending bourgeois ideology, would

¹André Breton, quoted in Ray, *The Surrealist Movement in England*, p.11.

²That this problem remains today in attempts at critical elaborations of automatism can be seen in Stamos Metzidakis, 'Breton and Poetic Originality', *Dada / Surrealism* 17 (1988), p.28. 'The problem of differentiating between "valuable" and worthless transcriptions of what thought dictates remains a serious one. For Breton and many others it remained a kind of theoretical thorn in their critical side.' Breton, however, maintained throughout the period of the first two manifestoes that there should be no such differentiation, except when the transcriptions were clearly of a non-automatic nature. Any deviations from this fundamental tenet were vehemently opposed.

lead to a revolutionary awareness. The relations between the movement and politics is best summarised by Walter Benjamin: 'To win the energies of intoxication for the revolution - this is the project about which surrealism circles in all its books and enterprises.'¹ This intoxication is brought about by questioning, and making absurd, human expression in all its forms.

The apocalyptics, following the thought of Herbert Read, questioned expressivity only to a limited extent: 'Apocalyptic writing ...occurs where expression breaks through the structure of language ...without thereby impairing language as a means of communication.'² Their essays tend to condemn automatic poetry and its practitioners for being 'uncontrolled', 'bewildering', 'irresponsible', and 'nihilist'.³ The decision by Fraser and Treece to single out and reject only the element of automatism was a de-politicisation, taking from surrealism simply what they felt was useful in the composition of poetry: reference to the unconscious and its well-known themes, and a subjective, intensely personal discourse. The theoretical underpinnings of surrealist practice were removed. Thus Fraser, like Read, attempts to rescue from his dismissal of surrealism a validation of what is an essentially romantic idea of heightened subjectivity: 'if a poet describes honestly his private perspective on the world, his private universe, human minds are sufficiently

¹Walter Benjamin, 'Surrealism', *One-Way Street and Other Writings* trans. Edmund Jephcott and Kingsley Shorter (London: New Left Books, 1979), p.236.

²J.F.Hendry, 'Introduction: Writers and Apocalypse', *The White Horseman*.

³See, e.g., Henry Treece, 'An Apocalyptic Writer and the Surrealists', *The New Apocalypse*.

analogous to each other for that private universe to become (ultimately though certainly not immediately) a generally accessible human property'.¹ The apocalyptic poet is thus given the leeway to write almost as conventionally as he or she wishes:

As a result of this "reestablishment" of the poet's conscious mind in the working of poetry, new opportunities for the expression of sentiment have appeared; these opportunities are not unlike those offered the traditional poet, except that they have left, as a residue of surrealist history, resources in myth and imagery not ordinarily used by the conventional poets.²

Apocalyptic texts tended to keep the oneiric qualities of automatic writing, while also introducing semantic disruption within what was often a traditional poetic form:

It is the end of dream,
and on this side of dream we arm it with sleep,
prickle it with dead codes and the delirium of art.³

However, in the poetry of Hendry and MacCaig in particular, the ruptured expressivity, the questioning of communication, does achieve an important place for the movement within the small coterie of British avant-gardes.

The reasons for the rejection of automatism are often justified politically. The connections between the French

¹G.S.Fraser, 'Apocalypse in Poetry', *The White Horseman*, p.39.

²Frederick J. Hoffman, 'From Surrealism to "the Apocalypse"', *ELH*, *ibid.*

³Norman MacCaig, *Far Cry* (London: Routledge, 1943), p.8.

surrealists and the Communist party were well known in Britain, having been rehearsed, for instance, in Gascoyne's survey. A rare editorial in *Contemporary Poetry and Prose* was entitled 'Surrealism and Communism'. It reproves Herbert Read for publishing an article, ostensibly in support of surrealism, which claimed that the movement was more consistently communist than the party members 'who submit to all manner of compromise with the aesthetic culture and moral conventions of capitalism'.¹ The editorial concludes that 'those who, claiming to be communists, remain outside the party and criticize it, show not their independence but their irresponsibility'.² The dismissal of Read by the surrealists is significant: his politics seemed to fit better with the new literary movement. It is all too easy to mistake the apocalyptic rejection of revolution as a rejection of politics *per se*. For instance, Hoffman wrote that they spurned communism 'for a personal formulation of attitudes and a fundamental trust in the value of the *person* as as the limit of all literary activity ...an attitude of resignation and a withdrawal from the hostile society of World War II'.³ As we shall see, the withdrawn stance that the movement took on society was itself political.

Their poetry was a thought-out and consistent reaction to the pre-war and early wartime conditions of profound social

¹In *Bulletin Internationale du Surrealisme*, issue 4 (September 1936), 7.

²Unsigned editorial, 'Surrealism and Communism', *Contemporary Poetry and Prose* nos.4 &5 (August-September 1936), p.74.

³Frederick J. Hoffman, 'From Surrealism to "the Apocalypse"', *ELH*, *ibid*.

doubt and questioning. When Hendry was writing to Read about the anthology that Routledge might bring out, he observed of the movement that

it does represent an attitude to life and to society ...that ...is well-rounded-out. Without exaggeration, it may be the most positive step forward possible to English poetry for some time to come, especially in view of the incredible upset to all our opinions caused by the war.¹

Some forty years later, Hendry again asserted the same opinion. The main impulse behind the founding of the group was 'Undoubtedly the threat of war and Hitler's success'. The movement reveals an unexpected similarity with the poets of the previous generation, in that, for Hendry, 'The unifying impulse was to do something about the situation as mentioned'.² The tactics that were employed, however, had more in common with the shock of the avant-garde, than the political themes of the Auden group. Just as the motif of the *angelus novus* that Klee had developed within the European avant-garde in the 1910s and Twenties, was commonly used in British poetry and art only in the Second World War, so the avant garde attitudes of European modernism could only spread to Britain under the social conditions of the late Thirties and war period. Endemic crisis, warfare, and a revolutionary social base are clearly the conditions that favour the existence of an artistic avant garde.

¹J.F.Hendry, letter to Herbert Read, 29 October 1940, Routledge archives, Reading University Library, Box 1815.

²J.F.Hendry, 'An Interview', *Aquarius* 17 & 18 (1986/7), pp.43-50.

2. Apocalyptic Texts.

The first anthology of the movement, *The New Apocalypse*, was published in 1939. It contained poems by Dylan Thomas, Norman MacCaig, Philip O'Connor, Dorian Cooke, J.F.Hendry, Nicholas Moore, and Henry Treece. The Thomas poem 'How shall my animal', like his story 'The Burning Baby', had been published before in Britain.¹ Cooke's and Moore's poems are written from within a British romantic tradition. The contributions of MacCaig and O'Connor, as well as Cooke's contrivedly surreal story 'Ray Scarpe', are the most clearly surrealist-influenced, O'Connor's work reading like automatic texts, and MacCaig introducing surreal details and lists into poems with half rhymes and regular stanzas.

MacCaig writes that he was 'pretty interested in surrealism at the time but certainly not in automatic writing'.² His themes are not usually the sexual and deathly themes of Treece or the Neo-Romantics. His style is developed in his 'Nine Poems' in the second Apocalyptic volume. Each of these nine poems, which are of varying length, is shot through with a thematic unity. For instance, the first one begins

¹Dylan Thomas, *Criterion* (October 1938) and *Contemporary Poetry and Prose* 1 (May, 1936), 10-14.

²Norman MacCaig, Letter to author, 15 January 1990.

I brought you elephants and volcano tops
and a eucalyptus tree on a coral island

and continues to enumerate the improbable and sometimes disturbing things that he will do to the addressed person. The sixth poem is written apparently from the point of view of one of the Horsemen of the Apocalypse:

The innumerable banks of my river-sword turned
in a horse's bridle until the clouds with a final plunge
left the hut of sea-weed and shook up a parachute
of little spray. Under it a rainbow spun and burned,
crucifying saints in the blue glory of their rich
and anointed blood

and putting hooves under my ankles danced on a spit of fire
that licked dry the seamy wound between water and land,
followed it in a flicker round the freckled edge
on which lay the white bones of sticks and a litter
of scorpion skins.¹

The unusual syntax and strikingly difficult and unexpected imagery combine with clear references to world destruction, as with some of Hendry's poems. Also like Hendry, a certain pattern of reference seems to inform the whole poem, giving a unity that may not always be logical or even syntactical, but is still a form of expressive communication. As such, it provides a challenge to traditional romantic concepts of 'organic unity' in the work of art, because attempts to account for this unity logically, or even in terms of the subject, are bound to fail.

¹Norman MacCaig, *The White Horseman*, p.84.

In 1943 Routledge brought out MacCaig's first volume of poems, *Far Cry*. The jacket describes how his 'strange and forceful imagery first attracted attention in *The White Horseman*His work since then has gained in clarity and coherence.' These 'gains' are not easy to trace. The poems have no titles, but are numbered from one to thirty. They are in varying forms, usually in a loose stanza pattern with a uniform number of lines in each poem. Rhymes and half rhymes are fairly frequent: in formal terms, his poems are patterned and arranged, and some clarity is gained by the use of a first person that seems to guide the course of most of the poems. Thus they closely match the form of *Four Quartets* and *Trilogy*, although in content they are less unified.

The third poem apparently describes the narrator walking his dog, at evening, on a quay. This is the scene of a visionary experience, in which the sky is full of angels, and he hears:

...the piercing universal trumpet,
 the golden tongue braying of guilt and blood
 or the fanfare usher of an immaculate messiah.
 I mince about the slippery stones of my harbour
 retrieving the wrack and jetsam of a stranded world
 from the half inch between a cockle and a limpet,

 watch my day die in a fire of revolution,
 night like the middle ages snuff out the sky,
 ripple like chaos sigh out on a pebble
 myself. Myself stuck like a stick insect
 on the peeled stem of the world, humourless and grey

on the colourless collapse of nation upon nation.¹

The apocalyptic event, the last trump, is related bathetically to the 'mincing' poet, a powerless and comic figure who can only watch the night advancing, like an insect. The strange syntax and peculiar images should, however, give one pause for thought, as the subjective voice is merged into the poetic environment, becoming the 'immaculate messiah' to the half inch of pebble, out of which he is 'sighed'. The jarringly reiterated 'myself' emphasizes the doubt about subjective location, as two juxtaposed images of the self are proffered. Unlike orthodox surrealism in Britain, which as Michel Rémy has said, is 'of an essentially visual kind',² Apocalyptic poetry presents juxtapositions of subjectivity through the wrenching and rupturing of grammar, in which words and sentence elements are the blocks of the montage. It is in this sense that the Apocalyptic movement is truer to the European avant-garde, and even surrealism, than the more direct manifestations in Britain. In particular, the poetry of MacCaig and Hendry is distinguished by its concern with expressivity and language, the realm of the formulation of ideology. 'Orthodox' British surrealism, even in the work of Humphrey Jennings, was structured by a poetics of the image. Its greatest success was in painting, and the development into the fields of reportage and cinematography. Apocalyptic poetry, at its most advanced, was structured by a poetics of

¹Norman MacCaig, *Far Cry*, p.6.

²Michel Rémy, 'Was the Snark Really a Boojum?', in *A Salute to British Surrealism 1930-1950* (Colchester, 1985), pp.7-10.

language, in which syntax was ruptured, and the montage was of lexemes, of words and grammar.

The visionary or dream moment seems, in many of the poems, to be an attempt at invalidation of history, or at least of history as spectacle, as it was presented to anxious wartime British viewers in the 'March of Time' news series:

...no time in the hourly

march of no time, this nothing and zero minute
whose legs arch from sleeping to sleeping. Yet in this
ditch and drain dangle leaves that are green and solid
and blunt with the sun, are images cold as a planet
in its clear ether and visions suddenly valid
in a coil of dream.¹

Such a rejection is clearly counter to the dominant tone of Thirties poetry, in which one must become involved in exterior events; in the Forties, they are beyond the control of any individual. The cinema parallels this in the way that the horrifying news images are simply present, on the screen, offering no possibility of intervention. For instance, J.F.Hendry portrays newsreel from abroad as a foretaste of what is soon to be experienced in Britain:

Screened, we see the future in a haze
of images that sharpen into truth,
foreshadowing sore experience and the frost

¹Norman MacCaig, *Far Cry*, p.6.

of anger, till the cold cruel vision of the coming time is focussed.¹

In place of history as spectacle, for MacCaig there are dream moments that apparently gain their strength from being close to nature. The rejection of the cinematic 'march of no time' is not, however, a rejection of the image. Nature is taken as a source of dream image that remains valid. Similarly, Louis MacNeice wrote a poem, 'The News-Reel', that explores the same themes. The images that are presented to the cinema audience, in the period 'Since Munich', are a 'blind / Drama', a flow of spectacle that has no order or sense for the spectators, totally unlike the common feeling in the Thirties, that history had a pattern that was tangible. Also like MacCaig, he offers the delicate hope of eliciting from the newsreel some 'threads of vision' that will give a 'rhythm and a meaning' to the flow of images. MacNeice, however, does not locate this patterning agent in nature, but in human resources such as the selectivity of memory, that will eventually impose a pattern.²

MacCaig's second volume of poetry, *The Inward Eye*, came out as late as 1946, but can still justifiably be seen as part of the Apocalyptic Movement. As a volume of poems, it is arranged somewhat more conventionally than his previous volume, each poem having its own title, and to be considered as a separate lyric. Many of the poems are about nature and the Scottish

¹J.F.Hendry, 'Lament for a Generation', *The Bombed Happiness*, p.16.

²Louis MacNeice, 'The News-Reel', *Collected Poems* ed. E.R.Dodds (London: Faber, 1966) pp.203-204.

landscape, similar to Thomas's use of Welsh landscape in questioning traditional literary presentations of the rural. The whole volume presents a questioning of the pastoral tradition, and the nostalgia for simplicity and wholeness that it implies. 'Augury', for instance, addresses spring:

My tiny season, my cold and gentle spring
 when again will you win silence and the curled
 and crimped in ornaments of the goldsmith sun,
 and old bucolic time lie in his weathers
 content to hear his fair sweet seasons sing?¹

The poet is forced to recognize that, however much he may yearn, he can only reject such nostalgia:

But pastoral Virgil is a wizard now.
 His bees store ruin and the rainwhite fleece
 of his tame thoughts incites a thousand Argos.
 Death frets his words.

The ostensibly peaceful reference to a Golden Age is seen as a source of violence: the cultivated myth of the Edwardian Summer of 1914, and the general picture of an idyllic rural Britain, had given many of those serving in the First World War an apparent reason to go on fighting, but MacCaig diagnoses this kind of appeal as a damaging lie. It is necessary, he concludes, to say uncomfortable and complex things:

A host of allegories cry us down,
 shouting a shaded truth that corrupts the air,

¹Norman MacCaig, *The Inward Eye* (London: Routledge, 1946), p.12.

sardonic crow's voice, flapping in the words
 of all the praising birds that once were simple
 and flew around silence in a singing crown.

The language of the poem becomes more fraught and complex as he achieves the realization that to write in a pastoral style would be contributing to an over-simple myth about society.

The realization comes, in the volume as a whole, through observation of nature: his questioning of pastoral took the form of exposing nature's inhuman reality, and in a conceit that runs through many poems in the book, provides it with a language to speak its harsh and complex truths. Thus we have:

...A rhetoric
 of flaring vapours floods that starry prose
 that was an almanac of time's old course
 verbed with nine planets, adjectived with stars.

All the large language of fear's conjurer.¹

Here is an ecstasy written down in the wind.
 The hollow chapters of the wind enclose it.
 On scrawling pebbles, with a wave's crooked hand
 boldness and bravery in a useless onslaught
 make words in the sea's mouth.²

...the fabulous narrations of the air
 and the hoarse lyrics of heather and bog-myrtle

¹Norman MacCaig, 'Storm', *ibid.*, p.37.

²Norman MacCaig, 'The Dead Sea', *ibid.*, p.38.

and the way through the high tops, the lying, prophetic pass.¹

...a testament of leaves.²

...litanies of sand.³

This is far from the 'old bucolic sun' of traditional pastoral and, although in one way the poems represent a turning away from the central concerns of the avant-garde, or, indeed, of modernism itself, the interrogation and rejection of an accepted literary form that had previously commonly been turned to during periods of crisis, remains, within its historical context, a brave social gesture. Nature here is an allegory, in the sense that Benjamin defined it: a source of messages, the opposite of the romantic symbol. Some other apocalyptic and neo-romantic poets used the same theme. John Bayliss lamented that

now we can scarcely recall the rushing sunset,
the twisting wind and the unfamiliar bells,
nor tremble like trees in the high, the halcyon air:

but meet in the hungry hour of half-relished kisses,
wondering how soon this light despair of loving
will lie like broken foundations of flowers.⁴

¹Norman MacCaig, 'Return to Landscape', *ibid.*, p.31.

²Norman MacCaig, 'Spinning minnow', *ibid.*, p.43.

³Norman MacCaig, 'Albatross', *ibid.*, p.55.

⁴John Bayliss, 'Glasshouses', in Alex Comfort and Peter Wells eds., *Poetry Folios a Collection of New Verse* (Billericay: Grey Walls, 1942), [p.10].

The strength of some of the best poetry of the Second World War, by poets of a younger generation, comes from the recognition of the necessity of being difficult.

Apart from MacCaig, it is the poems of Hendry and Treece - apparently the co-editors of the volume - that most fully present a new development in 'experimental' writing. However subsequent critics have viewed their poetry,¹ it seems pre-eminently to be the verse of the late Thirties. The Italian futurists had innocently welcomed their coming war, but the apocalyptic, along with many, looked to the Second World War with a dread born from the experience or the powerful re-telling of the last war, as a probable end of civilization. The first of Hendry's poems in the volume is entitled 'Apocalypse', and concludes, as if in warning, with the word 'war':

By shriven marrow-
Blowing bone to trumpet stick
Of eye through sunspot pores.
The-devil-wounds-the-burrowing-
Angel, barbed with blood, blares
Many the wireworm war.

Similarly, his second poem, 'Picasso - For Guernica', is riddled with war imagery. In a brave attempt to find a poetic equivalent to the picture, the breakdown in syntax, the jarring dissonance of words and images recreates Picasso's strident

¹See, for instance, Ian Hamilton, 'The Forties - 1', *London Magazine* iv, (April 1964). Also, anything written by poets in 'The Movement' of the 1950s.

painting in a way anterior to the visual description, achieving the jarred, unexpected effects of a true surrealist text in a way significantly different from the early Gascoyne's homages to surrealist painters, which use lucid and unexceptionable language in order to describe surreal images visually.¹ Hendry wrote:

Neigh, horse, terror through steel and a thicket
Of bricks! Beam an eyebomb, cellar, and stride
Nerve, peeled pupil's enamel, rhomboid head!
I am the tiled blind hand plunged bulb in socket.

The decision to write about Guernica was particularly apposite because the major apocalyptic fear throughout society, in the pre-war period, was that of the bombing of Britain's own cities.² The destruction of Guernica increased the national terror that the start of the war would be heralded with huge fleets of Nazi aircraft bombing Britain's metropolis to the state of the Spanish

¹See, for instance, 'The Very Image (to René Magritte)':

An image of my grandmother
her head appearing upside-down upon a cloud
the cloud transfixed on the steeple
of a deserted railway station
far away

David Gascoyne, *Collected Poems* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), p.47.

²Guernica was a popular subject for avant-garde poets of the time. Paul Eluard wrote 'The Victory of Guernica', which appeared in translation in the same issue of the surrealist *London Bulletin* as Ruthven Todd's sonnet 'Drawings for "Guernica" - For Picasso'. Like Gascoyne's surrealist poems, they merely translate the visual element into the most approximate verbally presented images:

The woman weeps forever as if her tears
would wash away the blood and broken limbs
And the tortured horse whinnys and climbs
Iron hoof on broken beam towards electric stars.
Hands hold withered flowers, the broken sword
And the great arm reaches out with a lamp.

town. One English Lord apparently delivered this warning to parliament:

It may be that strangers from distant lands and from alien races will stand upon the desolated site of Westminster and whether in exultation or in sorrow will chant the words of the apocalypse: 'Alas! Alas! That great city of Babylon, that mighty city, in one hour thy judgement is come.'¹

Hendry's poem is thus a crystallisation of these fears, translating Picasso's political statement into a warning of a kind that was very familiar in the British political and social domain. The movement in general shared this tone: to describe oneself as 'Apocalyptic' in 1938 would have seemed politically realistic. The content of many of the Apocalyptic poems and stories at this time was often apocalyptic in this millenarian sense, of imminent disaster and war. G.S.Fraser's story, 'An Incident on the Campaign', was published in the Summer 1938 issue of *Seven*, and concerns the fate of a young man enlisted into a European war for which the Spanish Civil War had been 'the dress rehearsal'. Hendry's story, 'Your Life - You're welcome', in the Autumn 1938 issue grimly describes a Gaelic fisherman at the time of the First world War, ignorant of any political issues, slaughtered in the trenches. Similarly, Dylan Thomas's poem in the Autumn 1939 issue, 'When I woke', plays on a sense of political uneasiness:

I heard, this morning, waking,
Crossly out of the town noises

¹Lord Salter, *Memoirs of a Public Servant* (London: Faber, 1962), pp.260-261. Quoted in Uri Bialer, *The Shadow of the Bomber: The Fear of Air Attack and British Politics 1932-1939* (London: Royal Historical Society, 1980), p.158.

A voice in the erected air
 Shaking humanity's houses:
 Wake to see one morning breaking:
 Bulls and wolves in iron palaces:
 Winds in their nests in the ruins of man.¹

A poet from a slightly older generation, Stephen Spender, described how political events seemed to be Apocalyptic, with Stalin and Hitler as 'two monsters out of the Book of Revelation', and their armies and air forces 'over-running the land and darkening the skies, raining down bombs on the cities of the West'. Spender and others in the Thirties had believed that they were '*keeping Apocalypse at bay*', but on the outbreak of war, they expected 'the total destruction of London'.² The coming to prominence of the Apocalyptic movement in poetry at this time was partly caused by the manifest failure of the directly political project of the Thirties writers. The Apocalyptics proclaimed their powerlessness in the face of huge events, while still, in some cases, remaining sharply social.

Hendry's strength, more than that of anyone else in the movement, was in tapping into contemporary political and social concerns: many of his poems in the second anthology directly concern the war and its impact on British society. His 1942 volume, *The Bombed Happiness*, is similarly orientated to contemporary events. Out of the forty poems in the book, thirteen

¹As the poem appears in *Collected Poems*, pp.111-112, the last three lines are removed, and replaced by a less apocalyptic ending.

²Stephen Spender, *The Thirties and After / Poetry Politics People (1933-75)* (London: Fontana, 1978), p.85. Emphases as in the original.

have titles that refer explicitly to the war. Twenty-four of the poems deal with the war and its historical context in subject matter, while five more contain the word 'war' in some different context. All of the poems contain general images of violence and struggle. Some have a distinctly political ring to them:

...battling for the heart, the free U.S.S.R.
Strikes lightning through the shuttles of the soul.¹

You will pardon us, Hitler, if perhaps our laughter is red.²

The almost Audenesque confrontation with the political is seen particularly in his poem about the Spanish Civil War, in which the common image of the bull and bullfight in Lorca's work is taken to symbolize the struggle against Fascism:

Your black bull, Federico, has charged the noon
And, unbelievably, gored it through ...
The black bull, planted foursquare upon Spain.

After some menacing description of the bull, ambiguously representing fascism, the necessity of combating it is made clear, in which the power of poetry is given a key role:

There can never be dawn again until it is blinded or slain...
We are afraid now to sing your songs, for
Each one is a "banderillo" quivering in the bull.³

¹J.F.Hendry, *The Bombed Happiness* (London: Routledge, 1942), p.13.

²J.F.Hendry, *ibid.*, 'Churchillian Ode', p.19.

³J.F.Hendry, *ibid.*, 'Monologue for Lorca', p.32. A 'banderillo' (properly 'banderilla') is the dart thrown to lodge in the bull's hide, to weaken it through blood-loss.

Henry Treece, the best represented poet in the volume, takes themes more deeply embedded in a tradition of literary romanticism that plainly reaches back, judging by his poetic diction, to the Jacobean playwrights, in language it is hard not to see as simply indulgent, without the newness of literary experiment seen in the work of Hendry:

I took a man with eyes of pain, whose pearls
Pranking the rubble robbed me of my sleep:
I loved a man with a dagger of lath, lithe,
Lissom and lying, cut-purse with a poet's tongue.
And these two-hearted chuckled at my ruin,
Crack-wit they called me, whispering to the trees.¹

The poems straddle uneasily the gap between lyric and narrative: the title of one is 'Towards a Personal Armageddon', but it is only partial, and shows no discernible movement or change of the subject. Arranged as a sequence of apparently but obscurely connected sonnets, it recalls Thomas's 'Altarwise by Owl-light'. Treece stands out in the first two anthologies as a poet apparently uninfluenced by modernist thought or practice: even his derivative pastiches of Dylan Thomas bring the poetry to a far more romantic concern with the suffering individual, sex, and death than in Thomas's own poetry. As Tolley writes, 'it was clear from the beginning that modernism was uncongenial to Treece'.²

¹Henry Treece, 'From Towards a Personal Armageddon - For J.F.Hendry', *The New Apocalypse*, p. 86.

²A.T.Tolley, *The Poetry of the Forties*, p.108.

The second Apocalyptic anthology, *The White Horseman*, was brought out by Read's publishers, Routledge. It contained poetry by Henry Treece, J.F.Hendry, G.S.Fraser, Norman MacCaig, Nicholas Moore, Tom Scott, and Vernon Watkins. Treece's poems show a greater formal organization than in the previous volume: his long poem 'The Ballad of the Prince' is complete, embodying a sectional narrative. The archaic language and imagery recall perhaps Tennyson's *Idylls of the King*, and seems to bring back the long-outmoded use of heroic metaphor:¹

She, cut in monumental marble,
Long limbs arranged, and only the gold fillets
Of her hair alive, twinkling like brazen eyes
From dusty archives of a temple cell
On ancient hills, where kings rode on a cloud
With trees for slaves, nourished on lightnings.

Of Hendry's ten poems in the volume, by contrast, seven are explicitly concerned with contemporary Europe and the war. The poems are mostly far more verbally restrained than those in *The New Apocalypse*. The second of Hendry's poems, 'Midnight Air-Raid', a beautifully sustained piece of lyric description, ends in a direct confrontation with the function of poetry at such a time.

¹Henry Treece significantly wrote that the 'peak of this Romantic Movement was reached by Tennyson, whose poetry has wrongfully been derided recently'. 'More Notes on the Image', *How I See Apocalypse* (London: Lindsay Drummond, 1946), pp.56-63.

The bombers and the fires in London are a form of ultimate violence which

Splits the atom of doom; yet the poet, in his words,

Knows these mean the end of speech, whose channels are
Mined, and learn to forge his consonants into casings and bolts,
To sew his lines with teeth, like bullets in machine-gun belts,
Filling them all with explosions of wild vowels

The end of speech is the starting point of his questioning, in which a form of expression other than speech is to take over. The theme of attempting to give expression to the ineffable, as in Eliot's wartime work, runs through many of Hendry's poems of the period:

The world exudes this death
In a language of signs and seasons

From the frozen tongue, still lolling,
Flows the living speech of the soul.¹

This sorrow's magnitude makes mockery of gesture.²

It is the absence of the heart
In the ebbing seas of heaven,
An ebbing beyond laughter and too tense for tears.³

This is the land where no words come
Except in the shape of things,
A world where the truth is dumb

¹J.F.Hendry, 'A Winter of War', *The White Horseman* , p.56.

²J.F.Hendry, 'Lament for Poland', *ibid.*, p.58.

³J.F.Hendry, 'London before Invasion: 1940', *ibid.*, p.60.

And blood the arbiter of wrongs.¹

The war is seen as just eluding the possibilities of everyday language. As Hendry stated later, his allegiance to the principals of the movement made it 'difficult to translate the barbarism and obscenities of current history into anything resembling a coherent statement'.² His predominant sense of the times, like that of MacCaig, is one of chaos and dissolution:

Our splitting days pitch like a ship that is piled
Upon reefs; and every second springs a hole
Through which the waters of our lives rise in a trough.³

The image of a shipwreck is continued in the poem 'Churchillian Ode', to describe the effect of Hitler's aspirations:

Silt of your wreckage, an ambition's debacle, and the debris
Piles inanity upon insanity too torn for the mind to understand.⁴

What cannot be understood cannot be conveyed except through a rupture or aporia in accepted communication. Instead of normal speech, it is necessary to use 'a language of sign and seasons', 'the living speech of the soul'. As with MacCaig, normal verbal language is exposed as inadequate, and a new language is sought for in signs. In 'Midnight Air-raid' he hints at the nature of this language, consonants forged 'into casings and bolts', with machine-gun-like 'explosions of wild vowels'. The poet in his or

¹J.F.Hendry, 'Poem in Storm', *The Bombed Happiness*, p.22.

²J.F.Hendry, 'Interview', *Aquarius*, ibid.

³J.F.Hendry, 'Lament for a Generation', *The Bombed Happiness*, p.16.

⁴J.F.Hendry, 'Churchillian Ode', ibid., p.19.

her sphere should become the analogy of the soldier in battle. The genuinely apocalyptic nature of pre-war expectations, and the violence of the experience of bombing, found their homologues in this bristling, disruptive language.

H.D. contemplates a similar theme to Hendry's description of vowels and consonants as fulfilling the role of the parts of a weapon, in *The Walls Do Not Fall*:

folio, manuscript, old parchment
will do for cartridge cases;

...and Hatsheput's name is still circled
with what they call the *cartouche*.¹

But for her, to use the scribal mystery of poetry in the service of war was a perversion.² Hendry, like the Italian futurists, seems at once fascinated and appalled by the machinery and cataclysm of warfare. This is an idea he also explores in 'Churchillian Ode':

I offer you inspiration in crates of munitions. My poems are
Cool water to drink in bomb-craters. I erect wires of barbed
Speech in action to cripple the deliberate hunter of human freedom.

¹H.D., *Collected Poems*, p.518.

²As also for Dylan Thomas, who in a jocular verse letter to T.W.Earp (30 August 1932) described himself as:

'At war with the Celtic gnats under a spitfire sun,
reading that twenty poems make fifteen cartridge cases.'

Dylan Thomas, *Letters*, p.501.

The mimesis of syntactical disruption and the machinery of war is seen particularly in the two poems in this volume which most stretch syntax and verbal association, and, as in some of MacCaig's poetry, deliberately use imagery from a Biblical apocalypse, 'Europe:1939' and 'Golgotha':

Cast in a dice of bones I see the geese of Europe
Gobble in skeleton jigsaw, and their haltered anger
Scream a shark-teeth frost through splintering earth and lips

Secrets in the heart tear out the jangling entrails lions hide.
Their unbelief is death, and all these dead now walk up out
Of my speech of hands where love and living plead and bleed.¹

Our wound is night, bridged in the frigid hours;
God's manna strung upon a nail spins dawn
In skull-tolled bell behind straw eyes, and hoods
A set dog barking at the rat of heart.

One small wind in this ash blows up world fire.²

Even though not as extreme as his poems in *The New Apocalypse*, this is the kind of poetry most often attacked by critics as characteristically and regrettably 'apocalyptic'. If the poetry has any strength it comes from the period in which it is written, when the most questioning literary intellectuals were striving to find new forms to express the problems of war. A poet outside the movement expressed the same sense of difficulty:

Inside the poets the words are changed to desire,

¹J.F.Hendry, 'Europe: 1939', *The White Horseman* , pp.62-63.

²J.F.Hendry, 'Golgotha', *ibid.*, p.64.

And formulations of feeling are lost in action
Which hourly transmutes the basis of common speech.¹

As we have seen, Hendry theorized Apocalyptic writing as occurring 'where expression breaks through the structure of language to become more organic, without thereby impairing language as a means of communication'.² If 'language' is taken as conventional discourse, Hendry clearly sets himself to interrupt the syntax of recognised speech in the interests of an 'expressivity' which involves unusual word combinations that nevertheless contain meaningful communication, through conjunctions of images. Unlike the surrealists, Hendry still has something conscious and 'meaningful' to express: his tortured language does not come from a pre-social intoxication, but from an intellectual apprehension of the nature of society.

The New Apocalypse and *The White Horseman*, along with the volumes of the period by Hendry and MacCaig, represent Britain's avant-garde of the Forties, as surrealism attempted to be in the Thirties. Hendry and MacCaig's poems should be seen in the same way that Marinetti's poems of the Balkan War are: as literary experiments, attempts to go beyond what was

¹Roy Fuller, 'Soliloquy in an Air Raid', *The Middle of a War* (London: The Hogarth Press, 1942), p.20.

²J.F.Hendry, 'Introduction: Writers and Apocalypse', *The White Horseman*.

expressible, striving to find new verbal forms for the most important world events.¹

The fullest first-hand accounts of the development of the movement are given by Henry Treece.² He describes how the first anthology met its costs and received a good response from critics and readers. It was

a little later, with the encouragement of Herbert Read, that we brought out our second anthologythis time, the impact of the anthology was a little greater ...by 1941, we were receiving so many letters of sympathy and allegiance, from composers and painters as well as poets, that we felt it was time to take a rest.

When describing the final Apocalyptic anthology, *The Crown and the Sickle*, Treece concedes that

the Movement had lost its original vigour ...in the face of the general catastrophe, any literary movement began to seem embarrassingly small. For the real Apocalypse was everywhere. Ours was but a pale and private ghost, peering uncertainly from the wartime paper of the small magazines. The Movement was finished, and we were the first to know it.³

In accord with this revaluation, the editorial policy of the final anthology was very different. A short preface, written by Treece, simply states that the book

¹See Marjorie Perloff, *The Futurist Moment. Avant Garde, Avant Guerre, and the Language of Rupture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1938), pp.59-61.

²Henry Treece, 'Apocalypse Revisited', *World Review*, N.S.29 (July 1951), 22-29. Also many of the chapters in *How I See Apocalypse*.

³Henry Treece, 'Apocalypse Revisited', *ibid.*

contains no manifesto and presents no editorial policy distinguishable from a general desire to collect and display these international examples of a new Romantic tendency, whose most obvious elements are love, death, an adherence to myth and an awareness of war.¹

The number of poetry contributors is greatly increased, to include not only Treece, Hendry, and Cooke, but also the more ostensibly and outspokenly neo-romantic of the young poets of the time: Alex Comfort, Peter Wells, Gervase Stewart, Leslie Phillips, Robert Herring, Robert Greacen, Wrey Gardiner, Ian Bancroft, John Gallen, Maurice Lindsay, and Seán Jennett. Of these, I shall only consider the work of Treece and Hendry.

'To the Edge and Back' is a development of the sectional descriptive-narrative technique Treece had used in 'Ballad of the Prince'. It experiments with various verse forms and verbal patterns, alternating poetry and prose, but fails to find a language adequate to the prophetic and visionary experience he relates:

as I wrote, the words appeared upon the sky above my head in signs of fire, in all the colours of damnation, and attended by distant singing, as of the Sad Ones from under the hill who find that the promised Paradise is one of stone and the eternal sobbing of the wind across a sunless moor.²

¹Henry Treece, 'Preface', *The Crown and the Sickle*, p.[5].

²Henry Treece, 'To the Edge and Back', *The Crown and the Sickle* (London: P.S.King and Staples, n.d. [1944]), p.50.

Treece's poetry fails to transcend an unreconstructed Celtic twilight mysticism of several decades before. G.S.Fraser justly called him 'more of a traditionalist than anybody else writing in English at the moment'.¹

Hendry's poetry in this volume becomes stylistically less complex, uses traditional verse forms, and word groupings that obey the rules of sentence structure:

What brutal simperer, garlanded with graves,
Fiddles idiots out to dance upon the maimed?
What monstrous bodies, sculptured in these caves,
Fill his wild asylums with the damned?²

The more controlled syntax does not confine or control his unruly, hysterical images, and the result seems somewhat unfortunate, neither adventurous experiment nor successful lyric. Even his ambitious 'Prelude to a Ballad for Heroes' reads in parts like a patriotic text from the previous war:

Assuage, assuage, Jerusalem's refugees, whose pain
Burns in the brain like falling tears or a great rain.
Before their storm let the field of England stand, a lake of balm,
And the great bastions of her trees buttress calm.³

¹G.S.Fraser, 'Apocalypse in Poetry', *The White Horseman* , p.19.

²J.F.Hendry, 'Débris of Houses', *The Crown and the Sickle* , p.55.

³J.F.Hendry, 'Prelude to a ballad for Heroes. Woodwinds.', *The Crown and the Sickle* , p.58.

Likewise, Hendry's 1943 volume, *The Orchestral Mountain, a Symphonic Elegy*, proves to be disappointingly trite and romantic in its phraseology. After his previous poetry, there is a curious absence of references to the war, as Hendry turns to a more personal theme: his grief at the death of his wife during the Blitz. The only explicit mention of the war demonstrates how his style had changed.

The world's rushing unicorn thrust horns of blood
In upon the dark flower of her conscience,
Trampled among her temple's innocence.
Ears bleeding with her innocence my most dear
Distilled the colours of her pain, a lovely aster.
Blood in frescoes, jostling streets whose spiked
And bristling chestnut hangs out global war.¹

The elegy form constrains the poem to the personal: the war and its social effects can only be seen as a threatening, outside force. The unicorn is purely a reference to a derivative mythical tradition, unlike the powerful bull image for fascism in his 'Monologue for Lorca'. The image of a horn thrusting through a flower, which is her conscience, is confused, and the temple as 'innocence' highlights the obvious Freudian-derived idea of the unicorn as phallic. As the passage continues, Hendry seems to be striving for intelligibility, but ends with bathos; alongside blood and global war, the idea of a street as a bristling chestnut simply does not measure to the register.

¹J.F.Hendry, *The Orchestral Mountain, a Symphonic Elegy* (London: Routledge, 1943), p.35.

3 The Politics of the Apocalyptic Movement.

Division, insecurity, the sense of impermanence, make the attempt to create something orderly and complete - for me, the attempt to write poetry - more necessary than ever.¹

It is art's truth itself - reconciliation of the kind that real life denies - which is the accomplice of ideology, since it pretends that reconciliation is a fact.²

Not just Hendry's poetry, but the last anthology as a whole unfortunately lives up to its promise to be a collection of derivative 'new romantic' writings. All pretence to being an experimental or modernist movement is cast aside. This broad change brought the movement more closely into line with its influential protégé, who had abandoned serious involvement with the theories of the European avant-garde. Herbert Read was a major spokesman for what came to be known as the 'neo-romantic' movement, from the early Forties. As poetry editor at Routledge, he was able to exert an influence on who should and should not be published during the war. He also contributed many articles and prefaces to poetry magazines and anthologies of the period, becoming in effect, along with T.S.Eliot at Faber (with whom he regularly discussed which poets should and should not be published), an acknowledged expert and arbiter on contemporary poetry. He welcomed neo-romanticism, as it shed its surrealist trappings, as 'reconstructive'.³ His stress on organicism shows a

¹Anne Ridler, 'The Lustre Jug', *Transformation* *ibid.*, p.202.

²Theodor W. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, p.195.

³Herbert Read, 'Preface' to Alex Comfort and Robert Greacen, eds., *Lyra* (Billericay, 1942), pp.9-11.

close link with Peter Bürger's differentiation between the nature of the avant-garde and the traditional artwork:

The organic work of art is constructed according to the syntagmatic pattern; individual parts and the whole form a dialectical unity. An adequate reading is described by the hermeneutic circle: the parts can be understood only through the whole, the whole only through the parts. This means that an anticipating comprehension of the whole guides, and is simultaneously corrected by, the comprehension of the parts. The fundamental precondition for this type of reception is the assumption of a necessary congruence between the meaning of the individual parts and the meaning of the whole.¹

Thus most traditional and especially romantic English poetry is 'organic', and even the early Apocalyptic texts of MacCaig and Hendry are informed by a unity of reference that purely automatic texts lack. As Hendry stated, they wanted to achieve 'not merely the juxtaposition of images not commonly juxtaposed, but the recognition, the communication of organic experience, experience with personal shape, experience which (however wild and startling in content) is a formal whole'.² Apocalyptic poetry was concerned with verbal disruption, but a disruption that was still meaningful in that it was contained by the total meaning of the poem. This was in contrast to the predominantly visual, image-centred productions of the British surrealist poets.

The essential difference between Apocalypticism and surrealism should now be clear. Breton's theories, for all their

¹Peter Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, p.79.

²J.F.Hendry, quoted in Geoffrey Bullough, *The Trend of Modern Poetry*, p. 222.

acknowledged debts to the romantics, broke free from the restrictions of form that this heritage implied. Bürger continues, using the example of surrealist texts:

This precondition is rejected by the non-organic work, and this fact defines its decisive difference from the organic work of art. The parts 'emancipate' themselves from a superordinate whole; they are no longer its essential elements. This means that the parts lack necessity. In an automatic text that strings images together, some could be missing, yet the text would not be significantly affected.¹

The Apocalyptics took on board what they considered useful from the surrealist subject matter, its supposed access to the Freudian unconscious. They also took on something of the avant-garde definition of the poetic image. G.S.Fraser, striving to describe exactly what the movement meant by the image, quotes Raymond Spottiswoode's definition of filmic montage: 'in its effectual aspect, the production of a concept or sensation through the mutual impact of other concepts or sensations'.² However, Fraser goes on to say that the surrealist use of the image 'lacks organic unity'; whereas in the work of Dylan Thomas there is 'an organic quality'. He concludes that this is the major difference between surrealism and the Apocalyptics.³ Apart from the poems by MacCaig and Hendry in the first two anthologies, the movement displayed an essentially romantic aspiration. Indeed, once the

¹Peter Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, p.80.

²From Raymond Spottiswoode, *Grammar of The Film. An Analysis of Film Technique* (London: Faber, 1935). Quoted, G.S.Fraser, 'Apocalypse in Poetry', *The White Horseman*, p.10.

³G.S.Fraser, 'Apocalypse in Poetry', *ibid.*, pp.14-15.

'disruption of syntax' in Hendry's own poetry is put aside, the expressive content of his poetry can often be seen to be romantic. The neo-romantic movement in its theoretical writings still used the language of modernism and experimentation, but by the mid-Forties, it began to seem unconvincing:

The Romantic artist is the advance guard of human sensibility, who leaves the artistic world ...richer than he found it.

Such an artist searches for a completion, a pattern and a purpose in the tumultuous world about him. He looks for a new relationship of things to replace an outdated tiredness and a debility and depression of description

Surrealism is romantic in *concept*Yet it fails as an artistic philosophy since it either only states an attitude or at other times stretches the boundaries of fantasy to the point at which no message is apparent or comprehensible

Apocalypticism expressed faith in man's freedom, wholeness, and necessity for organic living; and disagreed with the common lack of humanity shown by most political systems.¹

It is hard to see this view of surrealism as anything but a misconception, missing the subversive core of its thought. But such a mis-reading of the European movement has roots deep in British perspectives. This is revealed by the swift change the movement underwent, into neo-romanticism.

¹Henry Treece and Stefan Schimanski, 'Introduction: the Personalist View of Romanticism', *A New Romantic Anthology* (London: Grey Walls Press, 1949), pp.18-19.

The Apocalyptic philosophy built up by Hendry, and enshrined in the manifesto, seems to have soon collapsed, along with all but the derogatory references to surrealism. Already by 1941, G.S.Fraser stated that 'the Apocalypics are what, in a rather special sense, one may call romantics'.¹ Soon afterwards, Henry Treece seems to have publicly abandoned the platform, referring to 'the title *Apocalyptic*, ...which I would prefer to call "*New Romantic* "'.² At the same time as the publication of *The Crown and the Sickle*, the British poetry market was flooded by a spate of 'neo-romantic' anthologies and annuals, many edited by Henry Treece and Stefan Schimanski.³ Many of these publications carry articles by Reginald Sorenson, Labour M.P. for West Drayton. Schimanski had worked for him, and had also been secretary to the labour peer, Lord Wedgewood. There is much evidence to suggest a connection between the ascendant Labour Party and the new romanticism. Hendry stated that Treece and Schimanski's philosophy, 'personalism', 'fitted very well into the Labour Movement as exemplified by George Lansbury'.⁴ All these publications also demonstrate a massive preponderance of the short, subjective and syntactically conventional lyric. This tendency was noted by John Lehmann as 'an extreme lyricism, sentimental rather than surrealist'.⁵ They certainly represented a

¹G.S.Fraser, 'Apocalypse in Poetry', *The White Horseman*, p.25.

²Henry Treece, 'A Statement on Poetry To-Day', *Kingdom Come* iii (Spring, 1942), 21.

³e.g. *Transformation, A New Romantic Anthology, Leaves in the Storm*. Other neo-romantic small magazines included *Kingdom Come*, *Now*, *Poetry Quarterly*., *Poetry (London)*, *Voices*, *Adelphi*, *Oasis*, *Counterpoint*, *Here Today*, *Poetry Folios*, *New Road*, *Here and Now*, and *Wartime Harvest*.

⁴J.F.Hendry, 'Interview', *Aquarius*, ibid.

⁵Quoted by Denys Val Baker in 'A Review of War-Time Reviews', Stefan Schimanski and Henry Treece, eds., *Transformation Three* (London: Lindsay Drummond, n.d. [1945]), p.198.

loss of the original iconoclastic impetus of the movement, as a poetics of rupture gave way to one of organic form.

The surrealists themselves had acknowledged their debt to romanticism, but in Breton's phrase, if they were the tail-end of the romantic movement, they were 'an excessively prehensile tail'.¹ Breton unquestionably felt he was emphasising elements in romanticism that made it more subversive and political. The idea of automatism, after all, appears to be a development of the romantic notion of poetry as inspired: the writer not as producer, but creator. The surrealists, however, attempted to upset the parallel notion of the artist as a genius, separate and gifted with a divine inspiration. Given the right conditions, anyone could write automatically: automatism was inspiration for the masses. As such, its very form carried a subversive political content.

The use that the Apocalypics made of romanticism, even at the start of the movement, was significantly different. At first reading, J.F.Hendry might seem to be invoking a similar politicisation of romanticism:

from the individual solution we must try to push on to the social solution, which Romanticism in the past has failed to find. The Apocalyptic movement is the same problem seen socially: "the collapse of old forms and the emergence of new and more organic ones." It

¹André Breton, *What is Surrealism ?* , p.73.

describes the liberation of feelings that are breaking down the old social fabric.¹

They replaced the notion of a non-discriminating proclamation of automatic texts with a poetics of organic form,² in which the unconscious played a role hardly different from that of 'inspiration' to the romantics. Hendry, in the same passage as that quoted above, stated that this 'break[ing] through' of language made it 'more organic'. However, rather than perceiving itself as part of an active process working towards fundamental social change, Hendry says that their language 'describe[s]' a process that is already occurring: the Apocalypse was at hand. Given a sincere belief, understandable at the time, that revolution really was at hand, it is possible that he was welcoming what he saw as inevitable. However, the vagueness of the terms 'organic' and 'the old social fabric' should give one pause for thought.

In an essay in the Apocalyptic anthology brought out by Routledge, Hendry states

Surrealism of course is a conglomeration of myths, corresponding to the political "order", or disorder, of anarchy. Apocalypticism represents rather the restoration of order to myth, a pattern of myth, individual and social, which in art should correspond to the political order of planned socialism.³

¹J.F.Hendry, 'The Apocalyptic Element in Modern Poetry', *Poetry Scotland* Second Collection (n.d.[1945]), pp.61-66.

²Henry Treece, 'An Apocalyptic Writer and the Surrealists', *The New Apocalypse* p.55, states that automatism will result in 'an artistic anarchy and organic decay'.

³J.F.Hendry, 'Myth and Social Integration', *The White Horseman* , p.176.

The wartime economy of Great Britain was a form of 'planned socialism'; it was the foundation of the post-war Butskellite consensus, in which fundamental social change was blocked in the interests of a growing technocratic class. It was easy to rally phrases such as 'organic', and even 'myth', into a mystified presentation of this as an ideal social order. Like Read's concept of 'reconstruction', Hendry's thought stops at the limits of bourgeois democracy, without the revolutionary fervour that so notably possessed the surrealists.

Unlike previous modernist movements in Britain, the participants were all British; unlike the poetry of the previous decade, they were not from the intellectual elite of the metropolitan centres, but, like Dylan Thomas, the displaced provincials and nationalities of Wales and Scotland. Hendry, MacCaig and Fraser were Scottish, Treece was Welsh, while Cooke was from Leeds. Only Nicholas Moore, son of the Cambridge and Bloomsbury philosopher G.E. Moore, could claim to have inherited his literary place. As MacCaig recalls,

The only thing of interest (to me) about the "movement" was that individuals from Cornwall, Wales, Scotland (and, of course, England), none of whom *I* knew, found that they were writing the same.¹

Unlike the Thirties grouping of poets, they did not all know each other. For instance, in Fraser's account: 'I ...had not met Hendry or Treece in those daysWe were scattered all over Britain, and

¹Norman MacCaig, letter to author, 15 January 1990.

were soon to be scattered over several different continents.'¹ The poets of the movement were 'unknown to each other and so not constituting a clique but a fairly broad section of the young writers of the time'.² It was no longer the Oxford or Cambridge educated elite of the Auden generation, but a far more broadly-based bourgeois grouping, representative of the class faction that gained increasing hegemonic influence during the social changes of the war.

The movement fitted into the politics of the European avant-gardes in the late Thirties and the early war years, in which period the form of their poetry was adequate to the insecure and violent social situation. During the later period of the war, however, the social emphasis shifted to the idea of 'reconstruction' and its concomitant notions. At the same time, the movement abandoned its disruptive serial quality, and drifted back into a traditional poetics of organicism. The notion of 'organicism' in poetry, especially with the Apocalyptic emphasis on conscious patterning of 'disordered' elements of the psyche, has a clear parallel with aspects of social reconstruction, especially welfare state reformism from above. After the 'collapse of social forms' witnessed during Total War, Hendry wished to instate 'more organic ones'.³ Read similarly links the new style of poetry to the nature of wartime society,

¹G.S.Fraser, *A Stranger and Afraid* (Manchester: Carcanet New Press, 1983), pp.116-117.

²Henry Treece, Quoted in Salmon, *Poets of the Apocalypse*, p.73.

³J.F.Hendry, 'Introduction: Writers and Apocalypse', *The New Apocalypse*, p.9.

deliberately choosing the word 'reconstructive' to describe the new poets of the Forties: 'their poetry is therefore projected away from the immediate struggle into the new world which has to be created out of the ruins of our civilisation'.¹

In poetic creativity, the disordered masses of the unconscious are not to be given power, but their dynamism can be harnessed by the conscious 'ruler'. Freedom is only gained by control: by limiting the sense of the possibilities of freedom, Read and Hendry are able to envisage a society governed by rationalistic behaviour, free from the oppression of 'mechanistic thinking'. The Machine becomes a synonym for mass culture, which 'prevent[s] the individual development of Man'. The manifesto has recourse to myth 'as a means of reintegrating the personality'. Myth, or 'individual myth' as Hendry calls it, is what replaces automatism in Apocalyptic theory. It is the complex of very subjective, supposedly unconscious feelings, about death, sex and the other Freudian themes, out of which every Apocalyptic poet could create a poem:

the poet shall discover and reveal to the world, by reasoning as well as by intuition, by story as well as by image, those fundamental, organic myths which underlie all human endeavour and aspiration, and from the recognition of whose universal application will come a reintegration of the personality with society.²

¹Herbert Read, 'Preface' to Alex Comfort and Robert Greacen eds., *Lyra*, p.11.

²Henry Treece, 'More Notes on the Image', *How I See Apocalypse*, p.62.

According to Andrew Crozier, this theory of myth represented an important break from the 'self-consciousness of the subject' in the poetry of Auden and others. Hendry's argument 'provided a theory for the poetic style that reproduces the objective world within the projection of the self, including its unconscious content'.¹ The attitude to the unconscious is, in a clear war-time politics, one of amelioration and accommodation, bringing parts of it to light to prevent the 'revolution' presented in the automatic text.

Charles Russel has condensed what he feels to be the defining characteristics of any avant-garde movement into four assumptions that, he writes, they all have in common:

(1) the avant-garde perceives itself to be part of a self-consciously modern culture subject to constant socio-historical change; (2) the avant-garde adopts an explicitly critical attitude toward, and asserts its difference from, the dominant values of that culture; (3) each avant-garde movement reflects the writers' and artists' desire that art and the artist may find or create a new role within society and may ally themselves with other existing progressive or revolutionary forces to transform society; (4) ...the avant-garde explores through aesthetic disruption and innovation the possibilities of creating new art forms and languages which will bring forth new modes of perceiving, expressing, and acting.²

¹Andrew Crozier, *A Paradise Lost*, p.116.

²Charles Russel, *Poets, Prophets and Revolutionaries: The Literary Avant-Garde from Rimbaud Through Post-Modernism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), p.4.

Clearly, it is in the second and third assumptions that the Apocalypticism may be seen to differ from most other avant-garde movements. This difference had its roots in the difficulty of maintaining a subversive attitude while society was under direct military threat, as was the case in the early Forties.

Apocalypticism was at its most politically questioning just before the start of the war, when Hendry's essays explore how art may change society, for instance through a therapeutic exposure of people's deepest individual concerns. Russel goes on to say, 'for avant-garde writers, the notion of social change is very broadly definedAlways, however, the social changes the avant-garde seeks would effect the nature and role of art in society.'¹ Under the pressure of a mounting European crisis, the movement gradually surrendered this emphasis, and so slid inevitably into a bastardisation of romanticism.

Surrealism and Apocalypticism were born out of similar social roots, but under very different social conditions. The class to which Breton describes himself and the other French surrealists as belonging to is the same class that, in Britain, produced the Apocalypticism: 'for the most part from the petite-bourgeoisie ...all by vocation possessed with the desire to act upon the artistic plane'.² Yet their reactions to First World War European society is worth recording:

¹Charles Russel, *ibid.*, p.16.

²André Breton, *What is Surrealism?*, p.45.

Above all, we were exclusively preoccupied with a campaign of systematic refusal, exasperated by the conditions under which, in such an age, we were forced to live. But our refusal did not stop there; it was insatiable and knew no bounds. Apart from the incredible stupidity of the arguments which attempted to legitimize our participation in an enterprise such as the war, whose issue left us completely indifferent, this refusal was directed - and having been brought up in such a school, we are no longer capable of *changing* so much that it is no longer so directed - against the whole series of intellectual, moral and social obligations that continually and from all sides weigh down upon man and crush him.¹

As we have seen, this uncompromisingly revolutionary view was rare in Britain in the Second World War. The social conditions were different enough from those of First World War France for it to remain a virtually unassailable tenet that the war should not be questioned fundamentally. Yet neither could the war be fully supported, experience of the previous war having ingrained itself on the younger generation. Trapped in this dilemma, a form of subjective, personal anarchism was developed in which the social was denied, although organic order as a principle was upheld, reaching forth from the subject, and expressing itself in myth. The surrealist poetics fitted the surrealist revolutionary programme; likewise, the organicist Apocalyptic view of poetry perfectly matched the Apocalyptic movement's meliorist, social-democratic views.

¹André Breton, *ibid.*, pp.45-46.

CHAPTER EIGHT:

CONCLUSION

The day will come when the joybells will ring again throughout Europe, and when victorious nations, masters not only of their foes but of themselves, will plan and build in justice, in tradition, and in freedom a house of many mansions where there will be room for all.¹

it was possible at last to make plans for a future, which before had been almost impossible because however much one might try to disguise it, there was always the conviction that war would come. Now one could think about the time when it would be over.²

The idea of 'People's War' did not directly concern Read. Or rather, he turned the same concerns in a different direction. It was the physical destruction of much of Britain's architecture during the Blitz that started the emphasis within his writings throughout the war period, on 'reconstruction'. As early as the Autumn of 1940, before the major damage of the Blitz, he was advising that 'our main thoughts should be directed to the period

¹Winston Churchill, 'The War Situation: a House of Many Mansions', Broadcast 20 January 1940, *Churchill Speaks*, p.700.

²Anne Ridler, 'The Lustre Jug', *Transformation*, p.200.

of reconstruction which must follow the war'.³ One of his editorials in the *Burlington Magazine* was entitled 'The Problems of Reconstruction' and centred on the problems of architectural rebuilding.⁴ As such, his concern matched that displayed by Eliot in 'Little Gidding', and that shown in *Picture Post* features, with the emphasis on the physical destruction of buildings, especially churches.

However, for Read, as for many others, the physical destruction soon came to represent something greater: the breaking of the superstructure of the old establishment.

It seemed... that all our institutions, institutes, associations and federations had become so many empty forms, structures with their windows blown out, their walls cracked, their reports and memoranda a heap of sodden ashes.⁵

In his 'Ode Without Rhetoric' he describes 'the power taken / from palsied hands'.⁶ That was merely the beginning of the process that the Blitz was to continue. Read's attitude must have been ambivalent: as the art lover and editor of the connoisseur-orientated *Burlington Magazine*, the destruction would have been a heartbreaking scene. For the anarchist, actively writing for subversive periodicals at this time, there must have been an

³Herbert Read, 'The Vitality of Abstract Art', *The Listener* xxiv no.610 (19 September 1940), 407-408.

⁴Herbert Read, 'The Problems of Reconstruction', *Burlington Magazine* mxxviii no.456 (March 1941), 71.

⁵Herbert Read, 'Art in an Electric Atmosphere', *The Politics of the Unpolitical* (London: Routledge, 1943), p.75. *Horizon* iii no.17 (May 1941), [308]-313.

⁶Herbert Read, *Collected Poems* (London: Faber, 1936), p.161.

element of *schadenfreude* in the destruction. The two themes were merged in his concern with reconstructing society along new lines. Read is in fact mirroring a pattern noted by Arthur Marwick, that the 'destruction-disruption' dimension of the changes wrought by war, has a concomitant "'reconstructive" effect, a desire to rebuild better than before'.⁷ Although seen most clearly in Read's work, it is a structure of feeling that can be traced in the poetry of many of the modernist writers of the time. The same ideas could also easily be used in some of the most blatantly nationalistic propaganda, for instance in Arthur Bryant's *English Saga (1840-1940)*:

[Britain's] future and that of the world depend not only on her victory but on her ability to restate in a new form the ancient laws of her own moral purpose and unity. By so doing she may discover a common denominator for human reconstruction more glorious than anything in her long past.⁸

Just as the predominant myth of the First World War had been the pastoral Edwardian Summer, this Second World War myth centres on a reconstructed future Britain that is equally organic and even pastoral. Both depend on a duality between nature and the machine: to escape from the war is to return to nature. Peace is portrayed in terms of vegetation, war in terms of machines.

⁷Arthur Marwick, 'World War II and Social Class in Great Britain', *Britain and the Netherlands Volume ii, War and Society* *ibid.*, p.204.

⁸Arthur Bryant, *English Saga (1840-1940)* (London: Collins, 1940), p.334.

Read's writings most clearly show how this utopia was formulated. Unlike the two authoritarian political systems of fascism and communism, and unlike the perceived malaise of Britain *entre deux guerres*, Read proposed early in the war that society should be rebuilt along organic lines:

Man is an organic being, and though he has evolved a brain which can produce abstract schemes of perfect logicity, there is every evidence to show that he cannot live according to such schemes - his mode of life must not be logical or intellectual but organic. This is a scheme which can be developed most appropriately in sociology, and it is indeed the theme of Karl Mannheim's great work, *Man And Society in an Age of Reconstruction*.⁹

Later in his life, Read acknowledged Mannheim as one of his most influential teachers.¹⁰ Karl Mannheim, the prophet of a technocratic society to be obtained by the establishment of a meritocratic elite, had come to Britain in the mid-Thirties, a refugee from Nazi oppression, and substantially re-wrote and expanded this book, in English, during the early years of the war. Read knew him and corresponded with him as an editor at Routledge and Kegan Paul, which not only published Mannheim's book, but also made him general editor of their influential 'International Library of Sociology and Social Reconstruction', which by 1942 was bringing out the early works of people such as Erich Fromm and E.F.Schumacher, and also publishing titles with such reconstructive connotations as *The Implications of Economic Planning* and *Principles of National Planning*. How many of these

⁹Herbert Read, 'How Shall We Rebuild?', *The Listener* xxiv no.615 (24 October 1940), 586-587.

¹⁰Herbert Read, 'Preface' to *The Cult of Sincerity* (London: Faber, 1968), p.5.

titles were due to Read's influence is hard to say, but the general conjunction of themes of reconstruction along the lines of the Beveridge Report, whether 'organic' or not, is striking.

Reconstruction was a key word of the period in many spheres of life: the Government even temporarily appointed a Minister for Reconstruction. This wartime emphasis displaced the revolutionary yearnings of the participants in the people's war into the future, allowing a utopian emphasis that paradoxically, in official ideology, became associated with a belief in the potential of technology. The destroyed churches were to be replaced with gleaming rectangular towers and blocks. During the Fifties, the remaining back-to-backs of the Docklands were to be replaced by towerblocks, breaking up a long-established working-class community.

For Read, the nature of this reconstruction would bring modernist art back into society through architecture and public art. In this rebuilding, he said,

we can affirm with certainty that there is an indissoluble link between the vital forces in modern architecture and modern industrial art, and the abstract painters and sculptors.... side by side they will shape the visual features of the new world.¹¹

In a Routledge book addressed to the problems of reconstruction across the whole range of society, *This Changing World*, which

¹¹Herbert Read, 'The Vitality of Abstract Art', *The Listener*, p.407.

came out towards the end of the war, Read wrote that those 'in whom the spirit of modernism is embodied'

will re-emerge eager to rebuild the shattered world.... They will say: our world is in ruins; it needs not only hard work and perseverance to rebuild it, but also skill and vision.... let us direct your work and we promise you that out of the ruins a better world will emerge.¹²

Elsewhere, he elaborated how the wartime destruction of 'all conventions, whether of thought or action' takes place not just in social organisation, but also in the 'cultural sphere. Painting and poetry, drama and the film - all are involved in this insurrectionary test'.¹³ After the war, everything would be reconstructed. The world Read contemplated was an aesthetic Utopia, founded on the technocratic form of an unproblematically conceived modernism. As such, his aesthetic theory was incorporated into his plan: the surrealist 'conquest of the irrational' would play 'a decisive part' 'in education, in drama, film, in every form of activity that involves the pictorial image'.¹⁴ Surrealism would no longer be a 'destructive' art form, but would evolve a more public style in which archetypal symbols are created 'to act as a safety-valve for the suppressed forces of... the unconscious'.¹⁵ As with the inflated role that Eliot gave the writer in his social theories, Read's search for a role for the artist betrays a fear of the advance of a mass culture that threatened to supersede the place of high culture. A retreat for

¹²Herbert Read, 'Threshold of a New Age' in J.H.Brumwell ed., *This Changing World* (London: Routledge, 1944), p.12.

¹³Herbert Read, 'Preface', *Lyra*, p.9.

¹⁴Herbert Read, 'Vulgarity and Impotence', *Horizon* v no. 28 (1942), 267-276.

¹⁵Herbert Read, 'Public Styles and Private Languages', *The Listener*, 207.

the artist was found within the social mechanisms of the state, in architecture, planning, design, and technology.

Despite this well-imagined plan for the future, it is still unclear how revolutionary Read's ideas actually were. He welcomes the war as a revolution, but fails to explain how it can be so if the same class remains in power. During the war years he consistently maintained political activity, writing for instance for the anarchist periodical which opposed the war, *War Commentary*, arguing for the abolition of 'private ownership of land, abolition of rent, and abolition of all farms of more than fifty acres in extent'.¹⁶ In an article for a related anarchist magazine he argues that any distinction between democracy and fascism 'is more or less consciously hypocritical', and that the only alternative is 'communism as conceived by the libertarian tradition of anarcho-syndicalism'.¹⁷ To some extent, however, his belief in progress towards a reconstructed new world was blind faith. As the war progressed, this became more obvious, and his hopeful rhetoric of reconstruction was replaced by a more tenuous theme of the war as 'symptomatic' and part of a larger 'universal war', which, he asserted hopefully, was 'moving towards greater integration... towards greater stabilisation of the means of production.... towards a complete communization of the means of production'.¹⁸ Read's statement of his politics

¹⁶Herbert Read, 'Use of Land', *War Commentary* ii no.1 (November 1940), 7-8.

¹⁷Herbert Read, 'The Cult of Leadership', *Now* no.1 (1943) 9-19.

¹⁸Herbert Read, 'The Universal War', *Transformation* no.3 (n.d.[1945]), 53-57.

appears at first to be revolutionary, but conceals a deeper passivity:

the youth of the world is waiting for a new faith.... They want a world that is morally clean and socially just, naturally productive and aesthetically beautiful. They hate fascism, they recoil from communism, and they despise democracy.... they will act, and onto the ruins of war they will cast the tarnished baubles and stale furnishings of those parliaments which brought death and despair to two successive generations of young men.¹⁹

The young are waiting for change: and somehow, without agency or organisation, they will proceed towards revolutionary action. The transition from present to future tense is unexplained. The embittered rhetoric and emphasis on youth implies a lack of faith in any such revolution in the near future, remaining rather in the apocalyptic mode of prophesy. Nor is the nature of the new society elaborated.

In Read's association with surrealism and anarchism, the ideology of organicism, with all the emphasis on process and evolution that it implies, was central to his thought. In this vision, the role of the modernist artists loses all of the anti-bourgeois connotations of an earlier modernism. The artists, according to Read, will work happily in a new age, the heirs of a 'people's war' in which an organic society has been achieved. In 'A

¹⁹Herbert Read, 'The Politics of the Unpolitical', in Stefan Schimanski and Henry Treece eds., *Transformation* (London, 1943), p.26.

World Within a War', he mixes traditional rural romanticism with his 'crystalline' organicism of peacetime reconstruction:

The sense of glory stirs the heart
 Out of its stillness: a white light
 Is in the hills and the thin cry
 Of a hunter's horn. We shall act
 We shall build
 A crystal city in the age of peace
 Setting out from an island of calm
 A limpid source of love.²⁰

Eliot and H.D. also shared this myth of an organic, reconstructed future. Indeed, the notion can be said to be the structuring principle behind *Four Quartets* and *Trilogy*. Eliot's use of cyclical images, and his modulated repetition of phrases in the wartime *Quartets*, may bear some relation to the organic theories he was entertaining in this period. Justifying the role of the elite in the society he envisioned, Eliot wrote, in a style that has much in common with the poems,

This higher level of culture must be thought of as valuable both in itself and because of its enrichment of the lower levels: thus the movement of culture would proceed in a kind of cycle as in vegetable nature, the roots imbibing nourishment from the soil, the sap rising through the stem, and the dead leaves falling to earth to feed the soil that feeds the roots.²¹

²⁰Herbert Read, 'A World Within a War', *Collected Poems*, p.173. .

²¹T.S.Eliot, 'The Class and the Elite', *New English Review* xi no.6 (October 1945), pp.499-509. When Eliot incorporated this as a chapter of *Notes Toward the Definition of Culture*, he excised the last half of this sentence.

Eliot's social writings of this period, culminating in *Notes Toward the Definition of Culture* are his own contribution to the reconstruction debate. But the vision he gives in *Four Quartets* is more subtle and mythically resonant than the high Tory elite he describes in his prose. There is a strong element of pastoral in all three of the *Quartets* in question, perhaps most obviously in the village dancing of *East Coker*, but also in *Dry Salvages*

(Not too far from the yew tree)
The life of significant soil.²²

In 'Little Gidding', pastoral is given the authority of the voice of the 'dead master', whose significance to the structure of the poem I have already described. His language is placed in contrast to the narrator's description of the 'urban dawn wind' of the disfigured London street in which the meeting takes place: he is from another realm, and speaks in a slightly archaic diction, strung through with pastoral reference:

Last season's fruit is eaten
And the fullfed beast shall kick the empty pail.

Eliot's purpose in doing this must be to link the figure in to the 'other' of the mechanistic war-torn London scene, the idealised pastoral world that permits Eliot to bring the organic element into the poem in such a way that the *Four Quartets* are the most integrated, formally unified body of work in his oeuvre. According to Bürger, the 'man-made organic work of art that pretends to be

²²T.S.Eliot, *Dry Salvages* , section v.

like nature projects an image of the reconciliation of man and nature'.²³ This reconciliation is allowed in the text by the many references to such an imaginary reconciliation.

H.D. had, in the first poem of *Trilogy*, explicitly denied involvement in the practical and instrumental affairs of

new-world reconstruction,
in the confederacy of labour.²⁴

Her target here seems to be the governmental rhetoric and propaganda that she felt was threatening the mystic role of the poet and scribe. However, even the title of the last poem of *Trilogy*, *The Flowering of the Rod*, shows her concern with an organic regeneration. As in Read's poem, this is finally shown in a vision of a utopian human community living together,

Paradise
Before Eve ²⁵

that, as we have seen, brings to a formal end the questioning of human subjectivity which had opened the poem. The last sections of *Trilogy* can be seen as reverting to a form of narrative, with traditional individual subjects. As such, it foreshadows H.D.'s post-war epic poem, *Helen in Egypt*, in which the Kaspar / Mary doubling is repeated, this time with Helen and Achilles. Thomas

²³Peter Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, p.78.

²⁴H.D., *The Walls Do Not Fall*, section 14.

²⁵H.D., *The Flowering of The Rod*, section 32.

similarly went on from *Deaths and Entrances* to write his pastoral celebrations, 'In Country Sleep', 'In Country Heaven', and 'Over Sir John's Hill'. Humphrey Jennings continued to work on patriotic films about Britain, but had less to celebrate and more to conceal: his small post-war output clearly does not belong to modernism. The heirs of the Apocalyptic movement, along with many British painters, were swept along upon a tide of neo-romanticism.

This marks a significant point in the history of modernism, as, in the name of reconstruction, modern art was absorbed into the instrumental tools of the state. British modernism was never quite able to recover its critical pre-war stance: subsumed within the ideological sphere to which it had willingly allied itself, but which became the rhetoric of reconstruction and the Cold War, a historically entrapped modern art became part of the expressive mechanism of the state: from this point on, civic architecture and monuments were all to be erected in a modernist style. Modernist works entered the academy with full honours. Herbert Read was knighted, and Eliot canonized within the literary world. Any contradiction between modernism and the social sphere was negated. The positive moment of modernism seen in the war period, enabled the moment of its complicity, once social relations returned to peace in 1945.

The form of these poems and films was unique to the social relations of wartime, the 'community of praxis' in which social

antagonisms were momentarily subsumed into different structures of feeling. Such conditions could not last for long, but they allowed for a Utopian moment that was an honourable, if uncharacteristic climax to the history of modernism. It gave way to a desiccated period in cultural history, overshadowed by Klee's banalistic 'Angelus Novus', now a figure for the Enola Gay. The European avant-garde, meanwhile, migrated across the Atlantic, and planted the seeds for the replacement of modernism by a different set of high-cultural relations, more eager to confirm its bonds with mass culture, but less able to adopt a critical, distanced stance.

Appendix

Dylan Thomas's Commentaries on the Soundtracks of Wales : Green Mountain, Black Mountain and Our Country.

Grateful acknowledgements are made to Mrs. Rust, widow of the late Donald Taylor, producer for Strand Films, for permitting the reproduction of this material.

The punctuation of this transcription is, for the most part, conjectural - endeavouring to convey the intonation of the speakers, while keeping within the bounds of grammatical rules - except in those parts of *Our Country* that have been previously reproduced (in *Documentary News-Letter* v (1944), 96), where I have followed the printed punctuation.

Wales : Green Mountain, Black Mountain

First speaker:

Morning is gliding over Snowdon,
 Over the mountains where for centuries
 The men of Wales fought their enemies the English;
 Over the castles,
 Over Harlech and Conway and Caernarvon
 Garrisoned by English kings
 In the long and far-away wide wars.
 Morning mist over the vale of Llangollen
 And over the oldest rocks in the world,
 The ageless world-backed morning waking mountains;
 And mist moves too, but greyer now
 Over cold bare hill-backs and violent grassless peaks.
 From green to black mountain,
 From green to grey Wales,
 Morning is breaking over Wales at war:
 Not the long and far-away wild war
 Of the mountain Welshmen and the English kings
 But the terrible near war of England and Wales
 And her brothers and sisters all over the earth
 Against the men who would murder man.
 In the furnaces of Llanelli
 The roaring furnaces of the Swansea Valley,
 In the stamp and clatter and glare of the black and red
 works
 Where the fires never go out,
 They fight with blinding blazing rods and piston rams,
 They fight to the rhythm of iron forest
 Thrusting between flames,
 They fight with the white-hot muscles and arms of steel;
 In the docks of the South
 They fight with ropes and cranes and hoists,
 They load the ships to slide
 Into the mined and death-sprung waters,
 And all the quays are alive, loud with war;
 In the Rhondda Valley

They fight with pick and shovel and drill,
They fight the cruel obstinate dark rock middles of the
mountains
for minerals and metals,
They go down into the splintered darknesses of the mines,
Into the blind propped underworld
With horses and canaries,
They go down like ghosts in black:
Only their smiles are white.

Wales is a mountain of strength.

And in the North
The farmer drags his sheep over the wind-blown heights;
This greener Wales is a strong mountain too,
The shepherds whistle to their collies
And dogs back the sheep home;
A bleating world of wool moves highly above
The sea and river,
Over the valleys pocked and shredded with trains
That rumble into towns,
Trains that take the mountain fleeces
Into the distant mills.
It is not only the miner and farmer,
The steelworker and the shepherd
Who fight for peace
And mind their mountains.
In Aberystwyth
At the University Department of Agriculture
Professor Stapleton has succeeded in breeding
New and more luscious kinds of grass.
Out of years of experiment
New plants have come to being,
Life has grown out of science,
And from the laboratories and research stations
Green fresh furrows stretch away
Into the unpredictable distance.
Many of the hillsides have been sown
with these grasses now,
And more sheep can live upon every acre.
High up the sheep graze upon miraculous grass,
A new strength has been given to the mountains.
But below, in Llanberis, at the foot of Snowdon
Men still work the stone for an ancient richness,
Scaling and hacking those steep hillsides,
Those high-hewn walls that have known

For hundreds of old years
 the rope-ladder and the nailed boot,
 The pick and the grappling iron
 Of the Welsh slate quarrymen,
 Now on the roofs of buildings
 In London and Paris and New York:
 The slates of Llanberis quarries
 Lie under strange skies.

The new grass and the old stone
 In the mountains of contrast.

Second Speaker:

The new war, the old singing
 In the mountain villages;
 In the squat grey chapel at the grey butt-end of the street,
 Bethesda, Smyrna, Capel Horeb, Capel Sion,
 With the hand-blown organ or an old harmonium
 For the reed and the cough,
 Or in the tall stern chapel built in the seventies or the
 eighties
 As a rock of respectability
 In the strange new industrial life that went on
 At the foot of the mountain,
 The tall stern father and mother of a mountain
 Gray and bare over the blackened chapel roof.

But the singing in the chapels
 Is now a grim foreplay
 The voicings of colliers or shepherds
 Quarrymen or small farmers
 Tradesmen from scorched valleys
 Or ploughmen from the long fields,
 The voices of children brought up to playing Indians
 On the slag heaps
 Or pirates in the cattle-voiced meadows
 Are sweet and powerful,
 Wild and gentle as the weather over the mountains
 Or the wind-like movements of light and shadow
 Through the high chill streets.

Here in the chapels of Wales
 Bethesda, Smyrna, Horeb, and Sion,
 The young and the old come to sing and to worship,
 To listen to the poetry and oratory of the preacher;
 They will come down miles of mountains

Or climb up from the sooted valley pans;
 They come to talk at the chapel doors
 When the service is over
 Or in the churchyards where the stone angels
 Stand cold in front of the sun,
 They come to talk among the poor and gravestones
 With gifts of valley-soured flowers
 Or their remembrances of wild flowers
 From high in the unspoilt fields.

On weekdays the women meet in the chapel hall,
 The mothers and the grandmothers,
 The whisk-drive and the jumble-sale committees.
 There are concerts and Eisteddfodau,
 The young people dance
 And old remembering watch them.
 Here the bards and the minstrels meet
 As they met in the Middle Ages
 Over lovely valleys in the South where
 They played on harps and sang
 Barnacled with smoking chimneys
 And clustered with bad streets.

First Speaker:

The finding of coal, copper, iron ore, and anthracite
 Brought power and wealth to the valleys
 That had needed nothing but the peace of their fields
 And the honour of the labour of their own hands.
 The valleys grew rich,
 Houses spread over the hills,
 Smoke and dirt blew over the unrecognisable meadows,
 The fields of brick and steel.
 The valleys grew rich,
 But all the time the power and wealth of the worlds
 Were rocking,
 Rocking.
 The days when the pits stopped
 The factories closed their gates
 The furnaces died out
 And great sheets of smoke that had
 Floated over industrial Wales
 Came down like blinds
 Over the blind windows of the mean streets,
 Came draping down over the houses without hope,
 Over the locked shop and the leaking roof.
 At the corners lolled the old young men

Or they walked their thin whippets over the dirty grass
Or they scrambled on the tips for fish-tails of coal.

First Narrator:

Remember the procession of the old young men
From dole queue to corner and back again,
From a pinched packed street to a peak of slag
In the bite of winter with a shovel and bag,
With a drooping fag and turned-up collar
Stamping for the cold at the ill-lit corner,
Dragging through the squalor with their hearts like lead
Staring at the hunger and the shut pit head
Nothing in their pockets, nothing home to eat
Lagging from the pithead to pinched packed street.
Remember the procession of the old young men,
It shall never happen again.

First Speaker:

It must not happen again.
Already new industries are on their way to Wales
To the Rhondda Valley
The Treforest industrial estate
Is one shape of Wales to come.
Out of the sickening deadening idleness
Must come the pride of labour again.
Out of the huddle of slum and alley
Must come the clean broad roads
And cool quiet houses.
Britain at war has asked these once denied
Helpless and hopeless men
For all their strength and skill
At the coal seam and dockside
The foundry and the factory.
The world shall know their answer
And the world shall never deny them again.

Second speaker:

For as long as the salt wind blows over Cardigan Bay
And the Pembroke Coast, whitewashed with gulls,
Greets the mountainous day
And the rocks of St.Davids echo
And stand like cathedrals in the spray
The voice of Wales is the voice of all free men.
We shall work to win,
War shall never happen again.

Our Country

Male Voice:

To begin with
 a city
 a fair grey day
 a day as lively and noisy as a close group of sparrows
 as terribly impersonal as a sea cavern full of machines
 when morning is driving down from the roofs of buildings
 into stone labyrinths and traffic webs
 when each man is alone forever in the midst of the masses
 of men
 and all the separate movements of the morning crowds
 are lost together in the heartbeat of the clocks
 a day when the long noise of the sea is forgotten
 street-drowned in another memory
 of the sound itself of smoke and sailing dust
 trumpets of traffic signs and hoardings and posters
 rasp of the red and green signal lights
 the scraped string voices of overhead wires
 and the owl sound of the dry wind in the tube tunnels
 the blare and ragged drumroll
 of the armies of pavements and chimneys
 and crossings and street walls
 the riding choirs of the wheels
 the always to be remembered even though continual sea
 music
 music of the towers and bridges and spires and domes
 of the island city.

There is peace under one roof.
 And then birds flying
 suddenly easily as though from another country.
 And all the stones remember and sing
 the cathedral of each dead body that lay or lies
 in the bomber-and-dove-flown-over cemeteries
 of the dumb heroic streets.
 And the eyes of St. Paul's move over London:

To the crowds of the shunting flagged and whistling 371
cluttered cave- hollow other-world under glass and steam
the loudspeaking terminus.

Going home now
going home to a quiet county
going to war now
going to that strange country
going away
coming back to the ten-million-headed city
or going away never to come back.

Going out
out over the racing rails
in a grumble of London-leaving thunder
over the maze track of metal
through a wink and a spin of towns and signals and fields
out
to the edges of the explosive the moon-moved man-
indifferent capsizing sea.

The shape of another country lies so near
The wind under the cliffs could touch it with its finger
and from this island end
white-faced over the shifting sea dyes
a man may hear his country's body talking
and be caught in the weathers of her eyes
and striding inland
is plunged again in the armoured floods.

Nothing under the sun can change
the smiling of sun on harvest
the ripeness of sun passed.
War hangs heavy over the apple-dangled acres
shadowing the small round trees
of the heavy-hanging fruit.
Only the fruit-loving birds flew once over these tree tops.
[...]¹
flying along plants and flowers
through harvest corridors
swiftly over the short country distance
[...]

¹Due to the occasional bad quality of the film print, at some points the film commentary was briefly inaudible. I have indicated such points with square brackets.

It must last them a long winter
and at least as dark a spring.

372

A man may see on the roads he rides
summer and war
on all four far sides.
And a man may hear on every hand
the voice of the rejoicing land
sounding together with the shout of the guns
and the silvery tongues of the planes.

Outside the kitchens and music
the laughing the loving the midnight talking
the resting the sleeping
in all the blind houses
outside
the searchlighted country night
is at war with another darkness
men who were late at harvest
stand cold and calm and armed
on hilltops under the punishing rush of planes.

All night long the lorries have roared the long roads
now it is dawn.
All night through villages asleep
they grumbled past pond and school and green
oasthouse or windmill
the weather-cock church and the unseen windswung inn-
sign.

By orchard and cottage cluster
and the drinking trough in the market square
and the lover's lanes
they thundered through a hundred all over the country
strangely singing names:
Black Motley, White Motley, Paddon Hollow,
Minterne Magna and Much Marcle,
Pinching Field, Corfe, Sturminster Marshall,
Shibbon-in-Bredon,
Walton-in-Gordano.

He may find some peace
and be at home again
in the County Town
with coops and hutches and stalls and pens
listening to the noises of farmers and horses and hens
breathing the smell of of cattle and leather and straw
and the clucking quacking whinnying mooing market day.

And going into the farmer's pubs
once for all [...] cider
and once in a week news of the slow countryside.

And a man-made journey
still within the iron gates
through valleys and tunnels
over hills slag-black or grey as summertime slates
or through fat lovely fields lying green
under their flower folds
to where Wales waits.

The hymns and coal and castles and tin plates
pithead and ploughland and rickety streets
whipped wind in the mine mounds
pucked snow over the rough mountain hare
meadow and chapel and huge bitten sea coast
humpbacked irontrack
bricked over smoke-stack
spreadeagled bundle of barracks
the valley's voice.

Voice of the hunger-born pit boy
and blind pony
denial of defeat
the grief-fed country's furnace
the fire in men,
the valley's voice.

Take any direction
any road up or down
the island also is pointed a village corner

Take to the woods, to the lanes
 drenched with quietness and leaves
 or to the tiny roads above the valleys
 where the bright tufts of the rivers weave
 the weaving island leads always
 coursing on down from the blown sky-touching highland
 height
 to the tarns in the towns of smoke
 the clamorous galleries and metal scapes of mechanised
 night.

Woman's voice:

Night after night, night after night
 walking back from the factory all alone, all alone
 and then the warning going
 and looking up at the sky
 just like someone looking up to see if it's going to rain
 tonight
 [...]
 But running home all the same because you never knew
 you never knew if there wouldn't be a whine or a scream
 or a noise like the whole town blowing up
 and then suddenly all the houses falling down on you
 and everybody you knew lying all dead in the street.
 This is the end of the world
 I said to myself
 in case the others heard
 Though they were thinking it too in the dark,
 this is the end of the world
 and you were dead as well
 and then we grew alive again, slowly
 just like blind people climbing out of the cave
 into the light of the very beginning of the world
 and you were alive.
 When the morning came it was like spring
 in the middle of winter.
 O walking through the streets in the morning
 it nearly made you want to sing
 though there were dead people under the stones
 or people not dead,
 singing because the world was alive again
 in the day-time

and I was alive
and you were alive.

375

Man's Voice:

The train is racing the trees to Scotland
Racing the towns that fly by like snowflakes
Racing the rest of the world for the Highlands
Sunrise and sunset
Over the rainy lakes.

Here near at one island end, the north fringe,
walk deep through the forbidding timber temples
count the Samson pillars fall
the thwacks of the wood-and-wind-splintering axe
crack of the trunk-shorn boughs
shuffle of leaves
the suddenly homeless birds' tree-call.
Forget for a second the beckoning sea
that lies at the end of the journey,
commanding your coming back
behind each fated tree.

To end with
a quayside
a fair grey day
with the long noise of the sea flowing back
as though never in factory or harvestfield
market or timber temple street or hill
it could have been forgotten
for a moment of the tidal movement of man's time
with the call of of ships
the monotonous sea voice of the beautiful scavenging gull
the salt smell strong as sunlight
grease on the deck
the facing of the sea.
To end with
the faces of fishermen.

Bibliography

A. Literary, Filmic, and Social Theory.

[Adorno, Theodor Wiesengrund, and] Hans Eisler, *Composing for the Films* (London: Dennis Dobson, 1951).

-----, 'Transparencies on Film', *New German Critique* 24-25 (Fall/Winter 1981/2) 199-205.

-----, *Aesthetic Theory* trans. C.Lenhardt, ed. Gretel Adorno and Rolf Tiedemann, (London: Routledge, 1984).

Arnheim, Rudolf, *Film* trans. L.M.Sieveking and Ian F.D.Morrow (London: Faber, 1933).

Benjamin, Walter, *Illuminations* trans. Harry Zohn ed. Hannah Arendt (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1968).

-----, *One-Way Street and Other Writings* trans. Edmund Jephcott and Kingsley Shorter (London: New Left Books, 1979).

Bürger, Peter, *Theory of the Avant Garde* trans. Michael Shaw (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984).

Eisenstein, Sergei, 'Film Form, 1935 - New Problems' *Life and Letters To-Day* xiii no.1 (September 1935), 185-194.

-----, *The Film Sense* trans. Jay Leda (London: Faber, 1943).

Furhammer, Leif, and Isaksson, Folke, *Politics and Film* trans. Kersti French (London: Studio Vista, 1971).

Giddens, Anthony, *The Consequences of Modernity* (Cambridge: Polity press, 1990).

Golding, P., et al., eds., *Communicating Politics* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1987).

Gramsci, Antonio, *Selections From Prison Notebooks* ed. Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1973).

Gurevitch, Michael, et al., eds., *Culture, Society and the Media* (London: Routledge, 1982).

Huyssen, Andreas, *After the Great Divide Modernism, Mass Culture, and Post Modernism* (London: Macmillan, 1986).

Jameson, Fredric, *Marxism and Form* (London: Princeton University Press, 1971).

-----, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (Cornell: Cornell University Press, 1981).

Janis, Irving L., *Air War and Emotional Stress Psychological Studies of Bombing and Civil Defense* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1951).

Kaes, Anton, 'The Debate About Cinema: Charting a Controversy (1909-1929)', *New German Critique* 40 (1987), 7-33.

Kojecky, Roger, *T.S.Eliot's Social Criticism* (London: Faber, 1971).

Macksey, Richard, and Eugene Donato, eds., *The Languages of Criticism and the Sciences of Man The Structuralist Controversy* (London: John Hopkins Press, 1970).

Metzidakis, Stamos, 'Breton and Poetic Originality', *Dada / Surrealism* 17 (1988), 28.

Mouffe, Chantal, ed., *Gramsci and Marxist Theory* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1979).

Perloff, Marjorie, *The Futurist Moment. Avant Garde, Avant Guerre, and the Language of Rupture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1938).

Pudovkin, V.I., *On Film Technique* trans. Ivor Montagu (London: Victor Gollancz, 1929).

Reisz, Karel, *The Technique of Film Editing* (London: Focal Point, 1953).

Schroeder, Jean, *Pierre Reverdy* (Boston: Twayne, 1981).

Shaw, Martin, ed., *War State and Society* (London: Macmillan, 1984).

Smith, Paul, ed., *The Historian and Film* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976).

Spottiswoode, Raymond, *Grammar of The Film. An Analysis of Film Technique* (London: Faber, 1935).

Thistlewood, David, *Herbert Read: Formlessness and Form, an Introduction to His Aesthetics* (London: Routledge, 1984).

West, Alick, *Crisis and Criticism* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1937).

Williams, Raymond, *The Country and the City* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1973).

-----, *Problems in Materialism and Culture Selected Essays* (London: Verso, 1980).

-----, *The Politics of Modernism Against the New Conformists* (London: Verso, 1989).

B Literary, Filmic and Social History.

Addison, Paul, *The Road to 1945: British Politics and the Second World War* (London: Cape, 1975).

Aldgate, Anthony, and Richards, Jeffrey, *Britain Can Take It: The British Cinema in the Second World War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986).

Anstey, Edgar, 'Development of Film Technique in Britain', in Roger Manvell, ed., *Experiment in the Film* (London: Grey Walls Press, 1949).

Arts Enquiry, The, *The Factual Film* (London, 1947).

Balfour, Michael, *Propaganda in War 1939-45 Organisations, Policies and Publics in Britain and Germany* (London: Routledge, 1979).

Barr, Charles, ed., *All Our Yesterdays - 90 Years of British Cinema* (London, 1986).

Bialer, Uri, *The Shadow of the Bomber: The Fear of Air Attack and British Politics 1932-1939* (London: Royal Historical Society, 1980).

Calder, Angus, *The People's War: Britain 1939-45* (London: Cape, 1969).

Cavalcanti interview, *Screen* ii no.13, (1972), 33-53.

Chefdor, Monique, and Quinones, Ricardo, eds., *Modernism Challenges and Perspectives* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1986).

Clarke, I.F., *Voices Prophesying War 1763-1984* (London: Oxford University Press, 1966).

Collecott, Diana, 'H.D. and Mass Observation', *Line* no.13 (Spring 1989), 153-169.

Colls, Robert, and Dodd, Philip, 'Representing the Nation: British Documentary Film, 1930-45', *Screen* xxvi no.1 (Jan-Feb 1988) 21-33.

Corner, John, ed., *Documentary and the Mass Media* (London: Edward Arnold, 1986).

Costello, David R., 'Searchlight Books and the Quest for a "People's War", 1941-2', *Journal of Contemporary History* xxiv no.2 (April 1989), pp.257-276.

Coultass, Clive, *Images For Battle British Film and the Second World War 1939-45* (London: Associated University Presses, 1989).

Curtis, Tony, ed., *Wales, The Imagined Nation, Studies in Cultural and National Identity* (Bridgend, 1986).

Dickinson, Margaret and Street, Sarah, *Cinema and the State* (London: British Film Institute, 1985).

Duke, A.C., and C.A.Tamse, eds., *Britain and The Netherlands: Volume VI, War and Society* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1977).

Fernbach, David, 'Tom Wintringham and Socialist Defense Strategy', *History Workshop Journal* 14 (Autumn 1982), pp.63-91.

Gloversmith, Frank, ed., *Class, Culture and Social Change* (Sussex, Harvester), 1980.

Hall, Stuart, 'The Social Eye of Picture Post', *Working Papers in Cultural Studies* (Spring 1972), 71-120.

Hamilton, Ian, 'The Forties - 1', *London Magazine* iv, (April 1964).

Hardy, Forsyth, ed., *Grierson on Documentary* (London: Collins, 1946).

-----, *John Grierson, a Documentary Biography* (London: Faber, 1979).

Harper, Sue, 'Costume Fiction in World War Two' *Red Letters* 14 (Winter 1982-3), pp.14-24.

Harrison, Charles, *English Art and Modernism 1900-1939* (London: Allen Lane, 1981).

Harrisson, Tom, *Living Through the Blitz* (London: Collins, 1976).

Higonnet, Margeret Randolph, et.al., eds., *Behind the Lines Gender and the Two World Wars* (London: Yale University Press, 1987).

Hodgkinson, Anthony W., 'Humphrey Jennings and Mass Observation: A Conversation with Tom Harrisson', *Journal of the University Film Association* xxvii no.4 (1975), pp.31-34.

Hurd, Geoff, 'Notes on Hegemony, the War and Cinema' in Geoff Hurd ed., *National Fictions World War Two in British Film and Television* (London: British Film Institute, 1984).

Jeffery, Tom, *Mass-Observation - A Short History*, Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies Stencilled Occasional Papers S.P. no.55 (1978).

Kuhn, Annette, '"Independent" Film-Making and the State in the 1930s', *Edinburgh '77 Magazine* 2 (1977), 45-55.

Lovell, Alan, and Hillier, Jim, *Studies in Documentary* (London: Secker and Warburg / British Film Institute, 1972).

Mackenzie, John M., *Propaganda and Empire: The Manipulation of British Public Opinion, 1880-1960* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984).

-----, ed., *Imperialism and Popular Culture* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1986).

McLaine, Ian, *Ministry of Morale: Home Front Morale and the Ministry of Information in World War II* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1979).

MacPherson, Don, ed., *British Cinema: Traditions of Independence* (London: British Film Institute, 1980).

Madge, Charles, 'The Birth of Mass Observation', *Times Literary Supplement* (Nov 5 1976), 1395.

Mandel, Ernest, *The Meaning of the Second World War* (London: New Left Books, 1986).

Marwick, Arthur, 'Print, Pictures, and Sound: The Second World War and the British Experience' *Daedalus Journal of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences* iii no.4 (Fall 1982), pp.135-155. 381

-----, ed., *Total War and Social Change* (London: Macmillan, 1988).

Mellor, David, ed., *A Paradise Lost: The Neo-Romantic Imagination in Britain 1935-55* (London: Lund Humphries, 1987), pp.113-115.

Moorehead, Caroline, *Sidney Bernstein a Biography* (London: Cape, 1984).

Mowat, Charles Loch, *Britain Between the Wars 1918-1940* (London: Methuen, 1955).

Noxon, Gerald, 'How Humphrey Jennings Came to Film', *Film Quarterly* xv 2 (Winter 1961-2), 19-29.

Orbanz, Eva, *Journey to a Legend and Back: The British Realistic Film* trans. Stuart Hood (Berlin: Volker Spiess, 1977).

-----, and Croft, Jeremy, 'British Film Censorship and Propaganda Policy during the Second World War', in James Curran and Vincent Porter, eds., *British Cinema History* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1983).

-----, 'John Grierson and the Documentary - 60 Years On', *Historical Journal of Film Radio and Television* ix no.3 (1989), 227-246.

Ray, Paul C., *The Surrealist Movement in England* (London: Cornell University Press, 1971).

Robertson, James C., 'British Film Censorship Goes to War', in *Historical Journal of Film Radio and Television* ii no.1 (March 1982), 49-64.

Rotha, Paul, *Documentary Diary, an Informal History of British Documentary Film, 1928-39* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1973).

Russel, Charles, *Poets, Prophets and Revolutionaries: The Literary Avant-Garde from Rimbaud Through Post-Modernism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985).

Sheratsky, Rodney E., 'Humphrey Jennings, Artist of British Documentary' *Film Library Quarterly* viii no.3/4 (1975) 6-9.

382

Short, K.R.M., ed., *Film and Radio Propaganda of World War Two* (London: Croom Helm, 1983).

Sinclair, Andrew, *War Like a Wasp The Lost Decade of the Forties* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1989).

Sked, Alan, and Chris Cook, eds., *Crisis and Controversy* (London: Macmillan, 1976).

Smith, Harold L., ed., *War and Social Change, British Society in the Second World War* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1986).

Smith, Malcolm, and Peter Miles, *Cinema Literature and Society Between the Wars* (London: Croom Helm, 1987).

Spender, Stephen, *The Thirties and After Poetry Politics People (1933-75)* (London: Fontana, 1978).

Summerfield, Penny, 'Mass Observation: Social Research or Social Movement?', *Journal of Contemporary History* 20 (1985), 439-452.

Sussex, Elizabeth, 'Cavalcanti in England', *Sight and Sound* vii no.4, (Autumn 1975), 205-211.

-----, *The Rise and Fall of British Documentary* (California: University of California Press, 1975).

Swann, Paul, *The British Documentary Film Movement, 1926-1949* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

Tallents, Sir Stephen, 'Empire Marketing Board, 1926-33', *United Empire N.S.* xxiv 8 (August 1933), 484-5.

-----, 'The Birth of British Documentary' (in three parts), *Journal of the University Film Association of America* xx 1-3 (1968), 15-21; 27-33; 61-66.

Taylor, Philip M., *The Projection of Britain, British Overseas Publicity and Propaganda, 1919-39* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981).

"The Critical Issue"; a Discussion Between Paul Rotha, Basil Wright, Lindsay Anderson, and Penelope Houston', *Sight and Sound* vi no.27, (1958), 270-275; 330.

Thorpe, Frances, and Pronay, Nicholas, *British Official Films in the Second World War* (Oxford: Clio Press, 1980).

Titmuss, R.M., *Problems of Social Policy* (London: HMSO, 1950).

Vaughan, Dai, *Portrait of an Invisible Man, The Working Life of Stewart McAllister, Film Editor* (London: British Film Institute, 1983).

Wright, Basil, *The Long View* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1974).

Yass, Marion, *This Is Your War Home Front Propaganda in the Second World War* (London: HMSO, 1983).

Werckmeister, O.K., *The Making of Paul Klee's Career, 1914-1920* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989).

Young, Peter, *World War 1939-45* (London: Barker, 1966).

C Texts by Modernists.

Barker, George, 'An Interview with George Barker' *Contemporary Literature* xii no.4, (Autumn 1971), 375-401.

-----, 'Munich Elegy No.1', *Collected Poems* ed. Robert Fraser (London: Faber, 1987), p.104.

Breton, André, *What is Surrealism?* trans. David Gascoyne (London, 1936).

-----, *Manifestoes of Surrealism* trans. Richard Seaver and Helen R.Lane (Michigan, 1969).

Dahlberg, Edward, and Read, Herbert, *Truth Is More Sacred, A Critical Exchange on Modern Literature* (London: Routledge, 1961).

Doolittle, Hilda, 'Conrad Veidt', *Close-Up* no.3 (September 1927), pp.34-44.

-----, 'The Cinema and the Classics III', *Close-Up* no.5 (November 1927), pp.18-31.

-----, 'A Letter From England' *Bryn Mawr Alumni Bulletin* (July 1941), 22.

-----, 'Majic Ring - Second Typed Draft [?]', in Beinecke Library, Yale, n.d.[1943-44].

-----, *The Walls Do Not Fall* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1944).

-----, *Tribute to the Angels* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1945).

-----, *The Flowering of the Rod* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1946).

-----, *Tribute To Freud* (New York, 1956).

-----, *Collected Poems 1912-1944* ed. Louis L. Martz (New York: New Directions, 1983).

-----, *The Gift* (New York: New Directions, 1982).

-----, '"H.D. by Delia Alton" (Notes on Recent Writing)', *Iowa Review* xvi no.3 (1986), 174-222.

Eliot, T.S., Preface to St.-John Perse, *Anabasis* trans. T.S.Eliot (London: Faber, 1931).

-----, *The Idea of a Christian Society* (London: Faber, 1939).

-----, 'Last Words', *Criterion* xviii no.71 (January 1939), pp.273-274.

-----, 'Truth and Propaganda', *New English Weekly* xv no.22 (September 14 1939), p.291.

-----, 'Man and Society', *The Spectator* no.5841 (June 7, 1940), 782.

-----, 'Rudyard Kipling', the introduction to *A Choice of Kipling's Verse* (London: Faber, 1941).

-----, *The Dry Salvages* (London: Faber, 1941).

-----, *Little Gidding* (London: Faber, 1942).

-----, 'on Poetry in Wartime', *Common Sense* xi no.10 (1942), 351.

-----, 'Notes Towards a Definition of Culture' *The New English Weekly* xx nos.14-17 (January-February 1943).

-----, *East Coker* (London: Faber, 1944).

-----, 'The Man of Letters and the Future of Europe', *Horizon* x no.60 (December 1944), pp.382-389.

-----, 'The Social Function of Poetry', *The Adelphi* xxi no.4 (July-September 1945), 152.

-----, 'The Class and the Elite', *New English Review* xi no.6 (October 1945), pp.499-509.

-----, 'Culture and Politics', *The Adelphi* xxiii no.3 (April-June 1947), 119-121.

- , *Notes Towards the Definition of Culture* (London: Faber, 1948).
- , and George Hoellering, *The Film of Murder in the Cathedral* (London: Faber, 1952).
- , *Knowledge and Experience in the Philosophy of F.H.Bradley* (London: Faber, 1964).
- , *The Complete Poems and Plays of T.S.Eliot* (London: Faber, 1969).
- , *The Music of Poetry The Third W.P.Ker Memorial Lecture delivered in the University of Glasgow, 24th February 1942* (Glasgow: Jackson, 1942).
- , 'Interview with T.S.Eliot', in George Plimpton, ed., *The Paris Review Interviews: Writers at Work 2nd Series* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1977), pp.104-5.
- Empson, William, *The Gathering Storm* (London: Faber, 1940).
- Gascoyne, David, *A Short Survey of Surrealism* (London: Cobden-Sanderson, 1935).
- , *Collected Poems* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988).
- Germain, Edward B., ed., *Surrealist Poetry in English* (London: Penguin, 1978).
- Hendry, J.F., and Henry Treece, eds., *The New Apocalypse* (London: Fortune, 1939).
- and Henry Treece, eds., *The White Horseman* (London: Routledge, 1941).
- , *The Bombed Happiness* (London: Routledge, 1942).
- , *The Orchestral Mountain, a Symphonic Elegy* (London: Routledge, 1943).
- , and Treece, Henry, eds., *The Crown and the Sickle* (London: P.S.King & Staples, n.d.[1943]).

-----, 'Lorca and the Surrealists', *Life and Letters To-day* xliii no. 86 (1944), pp.18-19.

-----, 'The Apocalyptic Element in Modern Poetry', *Poetry Scotland* Second Collection (n.d.[1945]), pp.61-66.

-----, 'An Interview', *Aquarius* 17 & 18 (1986/7), pp.43-50.

Jennings, Humphrey, 'Three Reports', *Contemporary Poetry and Prose* i no.1(1936), 39.

-----, Review of Herbert Read, *Surrealism, Contemporary Poetry & Prose* no.8, (December 1936), 167.

-----, and Madge, Charles, eds., *May the Twelfth Mass-Observation Day-Surveys 1937* (London: Faber, 1937).

-----, and Madge, Charles, 'Poetic Description and Mass-Observation' *New Verse* no.24 (February-March 1937), pp.[1]-6.

-----, 'How Has Poetry Become Highbrow?' *The Listener* xix no.486 (4 May 1938) 971-972.

-----, *Poems* (New York, 1951).

McCaig, Norman, *Far Cry* (London: Routledge, 1943).

-----, *The Inward Eye* (London: Routledge, 1946).

Nash, Paul, 'The Personality of Planes', *Vogue* (March 1942), 43, 76.

-----, 'A Painter's Preoccupations', *Little Reviews Anthology* (1946), 146-152.

Read, Herbert, 'The Form of Modern Poetry' *Symposium* i no.3 (1930), 309.

-----, ed., *Unit 1: The Modern Movement in English Architecture, Painting and Sculpture* (London: Cassell, 1934).

-----, 'Experiments in Counterpoint', *Cinema Quarterly* iii no.1 (Autumn 1934), 17-20.

-----, 'What is Revolutionary Art?' in Betty Rea, ed., *5 on Revolutionary Art* (London: Wishart, 1935).

-----, ed., *Surrealism* (London: Faber, 1936).

-----, 'Surrealism - The Dialectic of Art', *Left Review* ii no.10 (July 1936), supplement facing p.508, ii-iii.

-----, 'Speech by Herbert Read at the Conway Hall', *International Surrealist Bulletin / Bulletin Internationale Du Surréalisme* no.4 (September 1936), 7.

-----, *Art and Society* (London: Heinemann, 1937).

-----, *Poetry and Anarchism* (London: Faber, 1938).

-----, 'Why I am a Surrealist', *New English Weekly* x no.21 (March 4 1937), 413-414.

-----, *Collected Essays in Literary Criticism* (London: Faber, 1938).

-----, 'Myth, Dream, and Poem', *Transition* no.27 (April-May 1938), 184-185.

-----, ed., *The Knapsack, A Pocket-Book of Prose and Verse* (London: Routledge, 1939).

-----, 'In What Sense "Living"?', *London Bulletin* no. 8-9 (January-February 1939), 5.

-----, *Annals of Innocence and Experience* (London: Faber, 1940).

-----, 'Public Styles and Private Languages', *The Listener* xxiv no.604 (8 August 1940), 207.

-----, 'The Vitality of Abstract Art', *The Listener* xxiv no.610 (19 September 1940), 407-408.

-----, 'How Shall We Rebuild?', *The Listener* xxiv no.615 (24 October 1940), 586-587.

-----, 'Use of Land', *War Commentary* ii no.1 (November 1940), 7-8.

-----, 'The Problems of Reconstruction', *Burlington Magazine* mxxviii no.456 (March 1941), 71.

-----, 'Art in an Electric Atmosphere', *Horizon* iii no.17 (May 1941), [308]-313.

-----, 'Vulgarity and Impotence', *Horizon* v no. 28 (1942), 267-276.

-----, 'The New Romantic School', *The Listener* xxvii, (23 April 1942), 533.

-----, 'The Cult of Leadership', *Now* no.1 (1943) 9-19.

-----, *Education Through Art* (London: Faber, 1943).

-----, 'Ode Without Rhetoric, Written During the Battle of Dunkirk, May, 1940', *Transformation* 1 (1943), 66-7.

-----, Introduction, *Henry Moore: Sculptures and Drawings* (London: Lund Humphries, 1944), p. xxiii.

-----, 'Art and Crisis', *Horizon* ix no.53 (May 1944), 336-350.

-----, *A Coat of Many Colours* (London: Routledge, 1945).

-----, 'The Universal War', *Transformation* no.3 (n.d.[1945]), 53-57.

-----, 'The "Prelude" in Wartime', *Briarcliff Quarterly* ii no.6 (July 1945), 99-105.

-----, *The Grass Roots of Art* (London: Lindsay Drummond, 1947).

-----, *Coleridge as Critic* (London: Faber, 1949).

-----, 'The Situation of Art in Europe at the End of the Second World War', in *The Philosophy of Modern Art, Collected Essays* (London: Faber, 1952), p.53.

-----, *The True Voice of Feeling: Studies in English Romantic Poetry* (London: Faber, 1953).

-----, *The Tenth Muse: Essays in Criticism* (London: Routledge, 1957).

-----, 'Avantgardism and Modernism', *The London Magazine* xvii no.3 (March 1960), 57-60.

-----, *Collected Poems* (London: Faber, 1966).

-----, *The Cult of Sincerity* (London: Faber, 1968).

Reverdy, Pierre, 'L'Image' *Nord-Sud* (March 1918) 73-5.

Roberts, Lynette, *Gods With Stainless Ears: A Heroic Poem* (London: Faber, 1951).

Sitwell, Edith, 'Some Notes on Poetry', *The Tribune* (October 16 1942), 18.

-----, *Street Songs* (London: Macmillan, 1942).

Thomas, Dylan, 'Questionnaire: The Cost of Letters', *Horizon* xiv, no.81, (September, 1946), 140-174.

-----, *The Doctor and the Devils* (London, 1953).

-----, et al., 'Poetry and the Film: a Symposium', *Film Culture* 29, (Summer 1963), pp.55-63.

-----, *Poet in the Making the Notebooks of Dylan Thomas* ed. Ralph Maud (London: Dent, 1968).

-----, *The Collected Letters* ed. Paul Ferris (London, 1985).

-----, *Collected Poems 1934-1953* ed. Walford Davies and Ralph Maud (London: Dent, 1988).

Woolf, Virginia, *The Death of the Moth and Other Essays* (London: Hogarth, 1942).

D. Other Texts.

Brook, Donald, *Writer's Gallery, Biographical Sketches of Britain's Great Writers and Their Views on Reconstruction* (London: Rockliff, 1944).

Brumwell, J.H., ed., *This Changing World* (London: Routledge, 1944).

Bryant, Arthur, *English Saga (1840-1940)* (London: Collins, 1940).

Bryher, *The Heart to Artemis, A Writer's Memoirs* (London: Collins, 1963).

Calder, Ritchie, *The Lesson of London* (London: Searchlight Books, 1941).

Church, Richard, *20th Century Psalter* (London: Dent, 1943).

Comfort, Alex, and Peter Wells, eds., *Poetry Folios a Collection of New Verse* (Billericay: Grey Walls, 1942).

Comfort, Alex, and Robert Greacen, eds., *Lyra* (Billericay: Grey Walls, 1942).

Churchill, Winston S., *Churchill Speaks Winston S. Churchill in Peace and War Collected Speeches, 1897-1963* ed. Robert Rhodes James (Leicester: Windward, 1981).

Day Lewis, Cecil, *Word Over All* (London: Jonathon Cape, 1943).

Fuller, Roy, *The Middle of a War* (London: The Hogarth Press, 1942).

Hamilton, Ian, ed., *The Poetry of War 1939-45* (London: Alan Ross, 1965).

Home Intelligence Reports on Opinion and Morale 1940-44 (Brighton: Harvester Microform, 1979).

Home Propaganda: A Report Prepared by Mass Observation for the Advertising Service Guild (London: published as 'Bulletin of the Advertising Service Guild, no.2', n.d.[1941]).

Huxley, Julian S., 'The Growth of a Group Mind in Britain Under the Influence of Total War', *The Hibbert Journal* xxxix no.4 (July 1941), 337-350.³⁹³

Jameson, Storm, *The End of This War* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1941).

Lewis, Alun, *Selected Poetry and Prose* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1966).

Maclaren-Ross, Julian, *Memoirs of the Forties* (London: Penguin, 1984).

Macneice, Louis, 'The Poet in England Today', *New Republic* (March 25 1940) 412.

-----, 'The Morning After the Blitz' *Picture Post* ii no.5 (May 3 1941) 9-14.

-----, 'The Way We Live Now', *Penguin New Writing* 5 (April 1941), 9-14.

-----, *Autumn Journal* (London: Faber, 1939).

-----, *Collected Poems* ed. E.R.Dodds (London: Faber, 1966).

Miller, Alice Duer, *The White Cliffs of Dover* (London: Methuen, 1941).

Montagu, Ivor, *The Political Censorship of Film* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1929).

Orwell, George, *The Lion and the Unicorn* (London: Searchlight Books, 1941).

-----, 'The Dark Horse of the Apocalypse' *Life and Letters To-Day* xxv no.34 (June 1940), 315-318.

Ourselves in Wartime (London: Odhams Press, n.d.[1945]).

Powys, John Cowper, *Letters of John Cowper Powys to Louis Wilkinson 1935-1956* ed. Louis Wilkinson (London: Macdonald, 1958).

Priestley, J.B., *Postscripts* (London: Heinemann, 1940).

Schimanski, Stefan, and Henry Treece, eds., *Transformation One to Transformation Four* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1943-4; London: Lindsay Drummond, n.d. [1945-7]).³⁹⁴

Skelton, Robin, ed., *Poetry of the Forties* (London: Penguin, 1968).

Spender, Stephen, *Forward from Liberalism* (London: Gollancz, 1937).

-----, *Ruins and Visions* (London: Faber, 1942).

-----, *Citizens in War - And After* (London: G.G.Harrap, 1945).

-----, 'Poetry for Poetry's Sake and Poetry Beyond Poetry', *Horizon* xiii no.76, (April 1946), 221-238.

Stonier, G.W., 'Poetry and the War', *The New Statesman and Nation* xxviii no.706 (September 2 1944), 155-156.

Tallents, Sir Stephen, *The Projection of England* (London: Faber, 1932).

Tate, Allen, et al., 'The New Criticism', *The American Scholar* xx no.1 (Winter 1950-51), 86-104.

Treece, Henry, and Schimanski, Stefan, *A New Romantic Anthology* (London: Grey Walls Press, 1949).

-----, 'A Statement on Poetry To-Day', *Kingdom Come* iii (Spring, 1942), 21.

-----, 'Apocalypse Revisited', *World Review*, N.S.29 (July 1951), 22-29.

-----, *How I See Apocalypse* (London: Lindsay Drummond, 1946).

Wintringham, Tom, *New Ways of War* (London: Penguin, 1940).

E Literary and Textual Criticism, and Literary Biography.

Ackroyd, Peter, *T.S.Eliot* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1984).

Brown, Dennis, *The Modernist Self in Twentieth Century English Literature A Study in Self-Fragmentation* (London: Macmillan, 1989).

Bullough, Geoffrey, *The Trend of Modern Poetry* (3rd ed., London: Oliver and Boyd, 1949).

Clearfield, Andrew M., *These Fragments I Have Shored: Collage and Montage in Early Modernist Poetry* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1989).

Davies, Walford, *Dylan Thomas The Poet in His Chains* (Swansea: Open University Press, 1986).

DuPlessis, Rachel Blau, *H.D., The Career of That Struggle* (Brighton: Harvester, 1986).

Elborn, Geoffrey, *Edith Sitwell a Biography* (London: Sheldon, 1981).

Featherstone, Simon, 'The Nation As Pastoral in British Literature of the Second World War', *Journal of European Studies* xvi no.63 (September 1986) 155-168.

FitzGibbon, Constantine, *The Life of Dylan Thomas* (London: Dent, 1965).

Fraser, G.S., *Dylan Thomas* (London: Longmans, 1957).

Friedman, Susan Stanford, *Psyche Reborn: The Emergence of H.D.* (Bloomington, 1981).

Gardner, Helen, *The Composition of Four Quartets* (London: Faber, 1978).

Guest, Barbara, *Herself Defined: The Poet H.D. and Her World* (London: Collins, 1985).

Harder, Worth, *A Certain Order: The Development of Herbert Read's Theory of Poetry* (The Hague, 1971).

Hawthorn, Jeremy, ed., *Narrative from Malory to Motion Pictures* (London: Edward Arnold, 1985).

Hermans, Theo, *The Structure of Modernist Poetry* (London: Croom Helm, 1982).

Higgins, Ian, ed., *The Second World War in Literature: Eight Essays* (Edinburgh, 1986).

Hoffman, Frederick J., 'From Surrealism to "the Apocalypse": A Development in Twentieth Century Irrationalism', *ELH: A Journal of English Literary History*, xv (June 1948), 147-165.

Hughes, Gertrude Reif, 'Making it Really New: Hilda Doolittle, Gwendolin Brooks, and the Feminist Potential of Modern Poetry', *American Quarterly* xlii no.3 (September 1990) 375-401.

Jay, Gregory S., *T.S.Eliot and the Poetics of Literary History* (London: Louisiana State University Press, 1983).

King, James, *The Last Modern a Life of Herbert Read* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1990).

Knowles, Sebastian D.G., *A Purgatorial Flame Seven British Writers in the Second World War* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1989).

Lindsay, Jack, *Meetings with Poets* (London: Muller, 1968).

Matthews, J.H., 'Surrealism and England', *Comparative Literature Studies* i no.1 (1964), 55-72.

Moody, A.D., *Thomas Stearns Eliot Poet* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979).

Nicholson, Norman, 'The Regional Poets of the Forties' *Aquarius* nos.17 & 18 (1986/7), 84-89.

Perl, Jeffrey M., *Skepticism and Modern Enmity, Before and After Eliot* (London: John Hopkins University Press, 1989).

Pratt, Terence M., 'Adventures in the Poetry Trade: Dylan Thomas 397 and Arthur Rimbaud' *English Language Notes* xxiv no.4 (June 1987) 65-73.

Sader, Marion, *Comprehensive Index to Little Magazines, 1890-1970* (New York: Milwood, 1976).

Salmon, A.E., *Poets of the Apocalypse* (Boston: Twayne, 1983).

Scarfe, Francis, *Auden and After, The Liberation of Poetry 1930-1941* (London: Routledge, 1942).

Shires, Linda M., *British Poetry of the Second World War* (London: Macmillan, 1985).

Schweik, Susan, 'Writing War Poetry Like a Woman' *Critical Inquiry* xiii no.2 (Spring 1987) 532-556.

Stanton, Michael N., *English Literary Journals, 1900-1950* (Detroit, 1982).

Tolley, A.T., *The Poetry of the Forties* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985).

Watkins, Gwen, *Portrait of a Friend* (Llandysul, 1983).

West, Alick, *One Man In His Time An Autobiography* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1969).

Woodcock, George, *Herbert Read: The Stream and the Source* (London: Faber, 1972).

Weinig, Sister Mary Anthony, *Verbal Pattern in Four Quartets: A Close Reading of T.S.Eliot's Poem* (Troy, Michigan, 1982).

Filmography

Fires Were Started, Crown, dir. Humphrey Jennings. 1942.

Listen to Britain, Crown, dir. Humphrey Jennings and Stuart McAllister. 1942.

Our Country, Strand, dir. John Eldridge, commentary written by Dylan Thomas. 1943.

Spare Time, GPO, dir. Humphrey Jennings. 1942.

The First Days, GPO, dir. Humphrey Jennings, Harry Watt, and Pat Jackson. 1939.

These Are the Men, Strand, devised & composed by Alan Osbiston and Dylan Thomas. 1943.

Words for Battle, Crown, dir. Humphrey Jennings. 1941.

Wales - Green Mountain, Black Mountain, Strand, dir. John Eldridge, commentary written by Dylan Thomas. 1943.

