A POET'S COUNTRY:
LANDSCAPE AND NATIONHOOD IN T. S. ELIOT'S POST-CONVERSION POETRY AND POLITICS

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ABSTRACT

The thesis contributes to the knowledge on modernist national identity in the transnational context, with a primary focus on the agency of the rural landscape in the identity-making process. It engages with the post-conversion works of T. S. Eliot, investigates his ruralism in relation to the metropolitan and cosmopolitan aspects of modernism, and situates it within the context of late modernism where an idealised representation of rurality is exploited by various ideologies including fascism and imperialism. By drawing upon insights from transnational modernism and latest theoretical advances on cosmopolitanism, the thesis reveals through the case of Eliot that representations of rurality, local allegiances and rootedness can be emancipatory and coextensive with cosmopolitan projects.

My investigation begins by examining the ruralist elements in Eliot's poetry, pageant and translations during the decade of his conversion to the Anglican Church in 1927, and demonstrates how an emphasis on roots, inheritance and rural living is at once occasioned by and constitutes part of the cosmopolitan condition. The discussion of rootedness is then carried forward to its moral implications, namely its accused complicity with the fascist discourse of the 1930s. A reading of Eliot's interwar play alongside texts from British surrealism reveals that the vocabulary of 'Blood and Soil' used as a fascist slogan can also feed into an alternative literary imagination, one that is devolutionary and anti-nationalist. The argument proceeds to Eliot's wartime works and reveals how a transnational identity—again channelled through representations of rurality—intervenes into and resists the imperialist spatial ordering of the centre and the periphery. All these discussions of the transnational facets of Eliot's modernist ruralism prompt a reconsideration of the widely-made association between land-writing and reactionary politics, which the thesis challenges by showing that seeds of modernity and resistance are nonetheless meted out by representations of rurality and local roots.

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ABBREVIATIONS

CP1 *The Complete Prose of T. S. Eliot, Vol 1: Apprentice Years, 1905-1918*, ed. by Jewel Spears Brooker, Ronald Schuchard (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2014)

CP2 *The Complete Prose of T. S. Eliot, Vol 2: The Perfect Critic*, *1919-1926*, ed. by Anthony Cuda, Ronald Schuchard (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2014)

CP3 *The Complete Prose of T. S. Eliot, Vol 3: Literature, Politics, Belief, 1927-1929*, ed. by Frances Dickey, Jennifer Formichelli, Ronald Schuchard (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2015)

CP4 *The Complete Prose of T. S. Eliot, Vol 4: English Lion*, 1930-1933, ed. by Jason Harding, Ronald Schuchard (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2015)

CPP *The Complete Poems and Plays* (London, Faber and Faber, 1969)

ICS T. S. Eliot, *The Idea of a Christian Society* (London: Faber and Faber, 1939)

L1 *The Letters of T. S. Eliot*, vol 1: 1898-1922, revised edn, ed. by Valerie Eliot, Hugh Haughton, John Haffenden (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011)

L2 *The Letters of T. S. Eliot*, vol 2: 1923-1925, ed. by Valerie Eliot, Hugh Haughton (London: Faber and Faber, 2011)

L3 *The Letters of T. S. Eliot*, vol 3: 1926-1927, ed. by Valerie Eliot, John Haffenden (London: Faber and Faber, 2012)

L4 *The Letters of T. S. Eliot*, vol 4: 1928-1929, ed. by Valerie Eliot, John Haffenden (London: Faber and Faber, 2013)

L5 *The Letters of T. S. Eliot*, vol 5: 1930-1931, ed. by Valerie Eliot, John Haffenden (London: Faber and Faber, 2014)

L6 *The Letters of T. S. Eliot*, vol 6: 1932-1933, ed. by Valerie Eliot, John Haffenden (London: Faber and Faber, 2016)

NDC T. S. Eliot, *Notes Towards the Definition of Culture* (London: Faber and Faber, 1948)

OED *Oxford English Dictionary*

SP *Selected Prose of T. S. Eliot*, ed. by Frank Kermode (London: Faber and Faber, 1975)

TP1 *The Poems of T. S. Eliot, Vol 1: Collected and Uncollected Poems*, ed. Christopher Ricks, Jim McCue (London: Faber and Faber, 2015)

TP2 *The Poems of T. S. Eliot*, *Vol 2: Practical Cats and Further Verses*, ed. Christopher Ricks, Jim McCue (London: Faber and Faber, 2015)

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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

1.1 Prologue

> The two most serious long-distance problems we have, apart from the ultimate religious problem, are the problem of Education and the problem of the Land—meaning by the latter the problem, not merely of how to grow enough food, but of how to obtain a proper balance between country and town life.
>
> T. S. Eliot[1]

> I am used to dealing with the question of whether I am, qua poet, American or English; and usually can escape by pointing out that whichever Wystan Auden is, I am the other: though seriously my poetry, like that of other poets, shows traces of every environment in which I have lived. […] English landscape has come to be as significant for me, and as emotional charged, as New England landscape. I do believe, however, that the impressions made by English landscape upon myself are different from those made upon poets for whom it has been the environment of their childhood.
>
> T. S. Eliot[2]

> But what good are roots if you can't take them with you?
>
> Gertrude Stein[3]

In my adopted neighbourhood, Beeston, there is a lovely small dining place owned by an amicable British woman whose name is Jo. Its wide range of food choices, from salmon and asparagus quiche to carrot cake and my favourite

[1] T. S. Eliot, 'A Commentary', *Criterion*, 17 (1938), 478-85 (p. 482).

[2] T. S. Eliot, 'The Influence of Landscape upon the Poet', *Daedalus*, 89 (1960). 419-28 (pp. 421-22).

[3] The remark is taken from Gertrude Stein's response to a question on her American roots. Quoted in Susan Sontag, *Where the Stress Falls* (London: Vintage, 2003), p. 289.

broccoli and stilton soup, is freshly crafted by her every morning. Every detail of the restaurant decisively communicates the anti-industrial values of an intimate local community: the freshly cut seasonal flowers on the table, the pale green waxed table linen, the homemade honey and cheese sold from the counter wrapped in brown paper, and the quietly conversing customers from the neighbourhood who apparently know one another and Jo personally. I started to frequent the place for the love of her food, but it only occurred to me later on that my custom has apparently created tension in the snug homely space emphatically named 'Local *not* Global'. The conspicuous presence of a small-figured Asian woman measuring out her life with coffee spoons, trying but not always managing to sip her tea and cut her cake the way the Chilwell locals do on the next table, in itself lodges a challenge to the part negated in the restaurant's name. Does my presence there necessarily make me more 'local', or the place itself more 'global', or is it that this all-too-facile opposition between the 'local' and the 'global' is less viable than it sounds? Given the ever enlarging representation of non-'White British' residents in Chilwell (approaching 10%), along with the massive reality of global capitalism where the milk, ham, salmon and cut flowers may all have been harvested from thousands of miles away, being 'local' becomes increasingly an undertaking of accommodating to the non-local aspect of life—or so it seems.[4]

An examination of Eliot's career and life, especially those following his conversion in 1927, reveals a similar ongoing tension between a rooted locality

[4] UK Census Data, 'Broxtowe [as of 2012]', <http://www.ukcensusdata.com/broxtowe-e07000172#sthash.u8P7k5uy.3BDJ1JOh.dpbs>, [Accessed 2 June 2017].

and a transnational sensibility, which constitutes the starting point of this research. The tension is observed from many of his texts combined or individually, including a preface for the English version of Simone Weil's *The Need for Roots* (1949) in 1951. In many ways Weil's treatise is sympathetic to Eliot's own rural, Christian solution for modern malaise. Weil incorporates the education of a rural setting and substance as part of her cure for the widespread '*déracinement*' (uprootedness, the rupture from the past) observed from France and other western countries: a solution reminiscent of Eliot's own agrarianism and parochial ideal of Christian communities in *The Idea of a Christian Society* (1939) and *Notes Towards the Definition of Culture* (1948).[5] Like Eliot, Weil's emphasis on geographical and cultural roots paradoxically feeds into her disenchantment with the modern nation states and the patriotic sentiments both instigated by and responsible for the war. One's native land—the *patrie*—is for her 'a cold concern which cannot inspire love' and which 'suppresses everything that might be loved', and the 'absolute loyalty, total self-abnegation, the supreme sacrifice' it demands is the reason for the First World War.[6] Eliot, in his preface, negotiates the apparent discrepancy between a rooted existence and a discredited native land in Weil's account, as he tacitly suggests that their coherence only emerges with a transnational and trans-ethnic understanding. She is, according to Eliot, at once 'French, Jewish and Christian' 'in the highest degree', each identity commanding conflicting allegiances, but creating as a result 'a balanced judgment, a wisdom in

[5] Simone Weil, *The Need for Roots: Prelude to a Declaration of Duties towards Mankind* [1949], tr. by Arthur Willis, with a preface by T. S. Eliot (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1952), pp. 85-91.

[6] Weil, pp. 111, 124.

avoiding extremes'.[7] It is also worth mentioning how his verdict on Weil's political thinking, that 'she appears as a stern critic of both Right and Left; at the same time more truly a lover of order and hierarchy than most of those who call themselves Conservative', may also apply to Eliot himself with little adaptation.[8] At a time when pinning Eliot down with any single identity—an Anglican, a Tory, a misogynist, an anti-semite, an imperialist, an American—becomes increasingly counterproductive, it is fruitful to assess the poet and his politics in a similar way he does Weil: undogmatic while remaining attuned to the rich ideological undertones, bearing in mind their being the mental product of someone inhabiting the interstices of nations, locations, landscapes, and any constructed identities.

1.2 Mapping modernist 'country'

This thesis investigates Eliot's 'country' after Raymond Williams's definition of the word: both a native land and the rural or agricultural parts of it, the latter sense formed in opposition to the emerging cities in the sixteenth century.[9] While examining the presence of both senses in Eliot's poetry and politics, my thesis gives an account of the fertile ground where the two senses intersect, asking how representations or defences of a rooted rural existence participate in the imagination of a national community, and proposing that a reading of Eliot's works in terms of his transnational experiences offers

[7] T. S. Eliot, 'Preface', in *The Need for Roots*, by Simone Weil (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1952), p. xii.

[8] Eliot, 'Preface', pp. viii-iv.

[9] Raymond Williams, *Keywords*, revised edn (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), p. 81.

alternative patterns of interpretation of the two. To better suit the purpose, the thesis primarily focuses on Eliot's post-conversion works. The choice is not only based on the fact that Eliot's ruralist sentiments mostly emerged after the conversion and were greatly associated to the Christian, parochial social ideals, but also on the observation of another aspect of change the conversion augured: a deeper allegiance with his adopted homeland and the prospect of a protracted expatriation in England. The tension between the two senses of the word 'country' is already enacted in the single act of conversion.

When Raymond Williams problematised the important 'when' and 'where' of modernism three decades ago in *Politics of Modernism,* the location of modernism was still decisively urban. As Williams sees it, modernism, from its material to sensibility and modes of production, is dominated by 'a persistent intellectual hegemony of the metropolis' which forges 'a new set of "universals"'.[10] However, if Williams's own argument in *The Country and the City* is still relevant, where the two categories are understood in a dynamism of mutual formation—the rural myth being a product of urbanisation and cities progeny of land capital—then modernism's prized metropolitanism is fit to be studied as a response to the changing rural landscape behind the scene. The traditional methods of production and social order that the countryside embodies may seem resistant to the rapid expansion and industrial progress that defines modernity. However, modernism's troubled relationship with both tradition and modernity makes investigations into its nostalgic gaze at the countryside and its old orders all the more pertinent. Modernism's celebrated

[10] Raymond Williams, *Politics of modernism: Against the New Conformists* (London: Verso, 2007), pp. 38, 45.

claim of 'novelty' is in itself, of course, a refashioning of tradition. Jeffrey Perl, in *The Tradition of Return*, describes the modernist endeavours of Eliot, James Joyce, D. H. Lawrence and Ezra Pound all as writing closely with—rather than away from—the romantic, mythic and Greek tragic traditions, and in so doing the supposed gap between 'progress' and 'return' is narrowed or even closed.[11] Or as Stan Smith observes, '[o]riginality must be matched by a sense of origins'.[12] By way of reading Eliot's 'Tradition and the Individual Talent', Smith frames the modernist poetic and critical revolution in terms of 'the supervention of novelty' masquerading as a 'return' of an existing order of tradition.[13] In other words, old tradition in the modernist context should not be construed as a static given, but rather as being constantly tested on its frontier with the 'novelty' and 'contemporaneity'. In this transformed model, the new supersedes the old while being paradoxically incorporated into 'the *whole* existing order' they both constitute.[14] To interpret modernism as the mechanism where tradition permeates and transfigures into novelty is to rehearse Perry Anderson's reminder of modernism's intrinsic transitional feature. In a study on modernism in relation to revolution, Perry Anderson calls attention to the liminal space modernism occupies between structures old and new:

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[11] Jeffrey Perl, *The Tradition of Return: The Implicit History of Modern Literature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), p. 281.

[12] Stan Smith, *The Origins of Modernism: Eliot, Pound, Yeats and the Rhetorics of Renewal* (New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1994), p. 3.

[13] Smith, pp. 32-33.

[14] T. S. Eliot, 'Tradition and the Individual Talent', in CP2, 105-12 (p. 106).

> European modernism in the first years of this century thus flowered in the space between a still usable classical past, a still indeterminate technical present, and a still unpredictable political future. Or, put another way, it arose at the intersection between a semi-aristocratic ruling order, a semi-industrialized capitalist economy, and a semi-emergent, or -insurgent, labour movement.[15]

Modernist engagement with rurality—often the home setting of the 'semi-aristocratic ruling order'—is thus not to be regarded as incongruent with metropolitan modernism. Rather, the countryside is arguably a crucial modernist location lying at the very heart of modernist inventions and partaking in their formation. The emerging importance of the rural locations is evinced by the growing body of studies of the past decade or so that foregrounds this subject. These studies are largely concerned with two interrelated aspects of modernist ruralism: the nostalgic yearnings for the countryside and its traditional aristocratic order, and the role it plays in the popular construction of national identity especially in the British context. Central to the first aspect is the authenticity myth often associated with the countryside, which has a tendency to be regarded as being at odds with the modernist enterprise. In *Sincerity and Authenticity*, Lionel Trilling reads modernism and its futurist urge as a radical intervention into the association of authenticity with organic beings and ways of life, the link established as the result of the nineteenth-century anti-industrial, anti-mechanical sentiments.[16] The 'partisanship with the organic'—represented by authors including D. H. Lawrence, E. M. Forster, and Henry Miller—is seen as cohabiting with yet

[15] Perry Anderson, 'Modernity and Revolution', *New Left Review,* I/144 (1984), p. 105.

[16] Lionel Trilling, *Sincerity and Authenticity* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971), pp. 126-7.

only marginal to the progressive, technological modernist Icarus.[17] A thesis similar to Trilling's is advanced in greater length by Martin Wiener, who effectively conflates the two senses of 'country' in his compelling argument on the ruralist discourse in the British context. According to Wiener, it is upon an idyllic rural myth that a quintessential English identity was constructed, which in turn checks the forces of modernity represented by the development of industrial spirit.[18]

Both Wiener and Trilling's arguments point at the opposition between ruralist writings and modernist sentiments. Yet Trilling, while nodding at the dichotomy, also gives hint to the modernist, iconoclastic potential of an 'organic', 'authentic' being inherent to the rural ideal: the 'authenticity' of Englishness, as Trilling suggests, has to it a violent core as its Greek root suggests (*Authenteo*: to commit a murder).[19] In lieu of the observation, any myth of 'authenticity' is bound to create tension with the time and space that engender it, so would the rural myth that helps construct an authentic England in the interwar years. One latest study on this front is Jeffrey McCarthy's *Green Modernism*, which identifies a streak of radicalism in the interwar traditionalist accounts of the British countryside. For McCarthy, the experience of the First World War deepens the culture's attachment to a rural vision of England, but the discourse is at once countered and recast by modernism into a new version of England precisely using the rural vocabulary—or to use

[17] Trilling, p. 128.

[18] Martin J. Wiener, *English Culture and the Decline of the Industrial Spirit, 1850-1980*, 2nd edn (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

[19] Trilling, p. 131.

McCarthy's diction, 'nature's cultural power'.[20] A similar proposition is made by Kristin Bluemel who summarises the interwar artistic representations of the countryside under the seemingly oxymoronic phrase 'rural modernity'. Bluemel's study reveals an alternative aspect of ruralist art that at once challenges and complements Wiener's contention for rurality as being anti-modern and retrogressive. By bringing to light the body of less-nostalgic, non-pastoral, non-revivalist rural art that focuses on the vibrant change and growth of the contemporary English countryside during the 1920s and 1930s, Bluemel takes the oxymoron away from the coinage of 'rural modernity' and calls into question the reductionist equation between rurality and reactionary politics.[21] In his latest study on rural novels, Dominic Head makes a similar observation, contending that the persistence of rural fiction in the twentieth century 'is a considered response to modernity (and often also a critique of it), rather than an attempt to disengage from it'.[22]

The equation between rootedness and reactionary politics, though increasingly challenged, is nevertheless not to be too easily dismissed, as it points squarely at the moral heart of modernism. It not only works on the temporal level regarding the backward nostalgic gaze that depictions of the countryside usually assume, but also the spatial level where the countryside and a rural living are usually taken as synonymous with parochialism, geographical immobility and racial homogeneity. Such criticism is especially

[20] Jeffrey McCarthy, *Green Modernism: Nature and the English Novel, 1900 to 1930* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), p. 21.

[21] Kristin Bluemel, 'Rural Modernity and the Wood Engraving Revival in Interwar England', *Modernist Cultures*, 9.2 (2014), 233-59 (p. 234).

[22] Dominic Head, *Modernity and the English Rural Novel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), p. 3.

at stake where modernism is concerned—late modernism in particular—in the context of the rise of fascism during the interwar period. In his seminal formulation of the spatial implications of modernism, David Harvey minutely lays out the consequences of what he terms as the 'time-space compression' as part of the capitalist modes of production and consumption. As Harvey observes, the development of global capitalism in the mid-1850s creates a certain paradigm shift in human beings' relation to space, where '[t]he certainty of absolute space and place gave way to the insecurities of a shifting relative space, in which events in one place could have immediate and ramifying effects in several other places'.[23] According to Harvey, modernism figures to a degree a reactionary response to such spatial internationalism and temporal synchrony: a unified, abstracted global space makes more urgent the affirmation of social identity, which in turn relies heavily upon the distinct identity of local place (even if such identities needs invention sometimes).[24] Modernism is therefore understood in Harvey's formulation as a localised progeny of internationalism:

> Modernism, seen as a whole, explored the dialectic of place versus space, of present versus past, in a variety of ways. While celebrating universality and the collapse of spatial barriers, it also explored new meanings for space and place in ways that tacitly reinforced local identity. By enhancing links between place and the social sense of personal and communal identity, this facet of modernism was bound, to some degree, to entail the aestheticization of local, regional, or national politics.[25]

[23] David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change* (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1990), p. 261.

[24] Harvey, *Postmodernity*, p. 272.

[25] Harvey, *Postmodernity*, p. 273.

Harvey judges unfavourably the modernist act of privileging local loyalties and place-based identities for their stigmatic associations with theories including nationalism, national socialism, and fascism.[26] For Harvey, 'place' is conceptualised largely as a 'bounded space as if it is a relatively permanent and separable entity' imbued with particular local tradition, history and collective memories, as against the more open 'space' indicating freedom.[27] Harvey instances the case of Martin Heidegger, who associates the authenticity of being with geographical delimitations and prioritises meaningful 'dwelling': a rooted existence in a rural, premodern setting.[28] Geographical rootedness, along with its related countryside and a communal, provincial life, is construed in this context as bearing the stigma of racial and ethnic violence, with Heidegger's Nazi affiliations lurking behind the scene.

Whilst Harvey's critique of Heidegger is to be engaged more thoroughly in the next chapter, the aim of invoking Harvey's argument here is to situate the current study within the larger political landscape where the construction of national identity upon a certain rootedness in the countryside—considered reactionary and symptomatic of modernity and capitalism—in a transnational context. In the meantime, charges made against place-based local identity can also be revisited. To study the 'country' of Eliot, the great expatriate in the modernist diaspora, inevitably involves the investigation of the uncomfortable but necessary juxtaposition between the rural/local (rootedness) and the urban/global (rootlessness). While the 'both/and' of local loyalties and

[26] David Harvey, *Cosmopolitanism and the Geographies of Freedom* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), p. 167.

[27] Harvey, *Cosmopolitanism*, p. 169.

[28] Harvey, *Cosmopolitanism*, pp. 184-87.

cosmopolitanism increasingly becomes a critical commonplace, recent scholarship has shown sustained attention to the details and practicalities of their dynamics. The emphasis on locality as the foundation of identity is, to start with, a result of increased geographical movement, which is an aspect of social reality that largely galvanised the modernist sensibility. To instance Ezra Pound's observation of James's *The American Scene* in 1907, '[t]he desire to see the national face in a mirror may be in itself an exotic'.[29] The other side of the dynamic, which receives increasing critical attention during the last two decades, is how local loyalties circulate to animate a real and viable cosmopolitan experience: a question crucial to the understanding of Eliot's attachment to 'rootedness' as a literary emigré in a transatlantic—if not global—modernist era.[30] While raising a similar question, Harvey takes Raymond Williams to task, whose historical novel *People of the Black Mountains* predicates cosmopolitan concerns firmly upon local geography and experiences:

> If lives and places were being seriously sought, a powerful attachment to lives and to places was entirely demanded. […] At his books and maps in the library, or in the house in the valley, there was a common history which could be *translated* anywhere, in a community of evidence and rational enquiry. Yet he had only to move on the mountains for a different kind of mind to assert itself; stubbornly native

[29] Ezra Pound, 'Henry James', in *Literary Essays of Ezra Pound*, edited and with an introduction by T. S. Eliot (New York: New Directions, 1968), 295-338 (p. 327).

[30] Key figures contributing to this aspect of criticism include Matthew Hart (2010), Kwame Anthony Appiah (2005), and Homi Bhabha (1994), to name only a few. Hart contends for the predominance of a certain 'synthetic vernacular' discourse in modernist poetry, which operates in the space between different local allegiances and dissolves the opposition between the local and the global. This argument rehearses similar earlier proposals of Appiah and Bhabha, who explore ways in which the global is contained in the vernacular. Their contentions will be introduced in greater details in the next section of this chapter. For Hart's argument, see Matthew Hart, *Nations of Nothing but Poetry: Modernism, Transnationalism, and Synthetic Vernacular Writing* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010).

> and local, yet reaching beyond to a wider common flow, where touch and breadth replaced record and analysis; not history as narrative but stories as lives.[31]

Williams's proposition suggests that local and historical particularity, if not materiality, is where the universal needs to be sited, experienced and then realised. This is coherent with many modernist undertakings including those by James Joyce, Samuel Beckett and William Carlos Williams, to name only a few. The trope of 'translation' is important to this formulation, as it hints at a process where local loyalties are affirmed in the course of travelling. In a study on cosmopolitanism (and the corresponding rootless existence) as a manifestation of American identity, Daniel Katz makes fruitful use of the same trope with an understanding of transnational practices in terms of translation. By way of reading Ezra Pound's observation on Henry James, Katz lucidly delineates the dialectic of the universal and the local by identifying what the transnational and translational practices have in common: they are both undertakings that 'immerse' in the foreign while consciously resisting provincialism and prejudice, but their ultimate agenda is the difference—rather than the uniformity—of places and cultures, thus foregrounding instead of eradicating local particularities. As Katz's explanation of Pound's 1917 essay 'Provincialism the Enemy' goes, James's undertaking against provincialism as a task of a translation 'is not to create a duplicate or double of the translated text in an extension of "uniformity"', but instead an endeavour towards an 'accentuation of difference' through the doubling and hence the division of the

[31] Raymond Williams, *People of the Black Mountains: The Eggs of the Eagle,* vol 1 (London: Chatto and Windus, 1989), pp. 10-12; emphasis mine.

translated text.'[32] Viewed in this light, the modernist battle against provincialism is thoroughly coherent with localist concerns and undertakings.

1.3 T. S. Eliot's borderline country

The priority granted to the specificity of different locales, along with the insistence upon a non-provincial ideal, is central to Eliot's cosmopolitan project, too. Tension exists between Eliot's anti-provincialist, cosmopolitan position as part of his voluntary exile and his espousal of a rooted, rural existence especially towards his later career, which constitutes a central problem to which the thesis responds. To start with, the escape from a provincial America is one of the primary incentives that underlie Eliot's exile: at least it was one of the most important ploys Ezra Pound used to talk Eliot's family into his imminent migration to London in 1915. In a letter to Eliot's brother Henry Ware Eliot, Pound appeals to the 'international hearing' London promises ('No one in London cares a hang what is written in America'), and compares it favourably to the more regional Robert Frost who has just 'done a book of New England ecologues [*North of Boston* (1914)]': this book by Frost is dismissed as 'a set of provincial studies, local, a bit dull' for its failure to take on board 'the tone and difficulties of contemporary civilization'.[33] Eliot's own anxiety over his 'provincial' American background is manifest in his judgement, three years later, of his native American soil as the sterile 'granite soil' from which his predecessor Hawthorne harvests but meagerly. The

[32] Daniel Katz, *American Modernism's Expatriate Scene: The Labour of Translation* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), p. 65.

[33] Ezra Pound to Henry Ware Eliot, 28 June 1915, L1, 99-104 (p. 101).

argument is rehearsed in a 1936 lecture when he warns that provincialism is a 'literary vice' that men of letters have the responsibility to disturb.[34]

Meanwhile Eliot also explores the fertile grounds of a rooted existence in rural settings. Such rootedness finds an unusual bedfellow in his antagonism to provincialism, but it is precisely the tension between rootedness and cosmopolitanism that opens up the possibility of reading Eliot and arguably the location of modernism in a comparatively new light. Contrary to the fame Eliot accrues through his earlier works as an astute forager of the urban grotesque, culminating in *The Waste Land*, his post-conversion works, commentaries and social engagements as a publisher demonstrate a distinct rural sensibility—so much so that he has been discussed as an 'agrarian sentimentalist'.[35] On the publishing front, Faber and Faber under Eliot's directorship published a wide range of titles concerning land fertility in the 1930s into 1940s, including *Why the Land Dies* (1931) by William Beach Thomas, *Horn, Hoof and Corn: The Future of British Agriculture* (1932) and *Alternative to Death* (1943) by Viscount Lymington, *The Rape of the Earth* (1939) by G. V. Jacks and R. O. Whyte, *The Plough-Up Policy and Ley Farming* (1939) and *The Land* (1942) by R. G. Stapledon, *England Herself* (1943) by Rolf Gardiner, *The Living Soil* (1944) by E. B. Balfour, and *Journal of a Husbandman* (1944) by Ronald Duncan. His own *Notes Towards the Definition of Culture* emphatically considers culture as 'defined', and the 'definition' in the title is specified as 'the setting of bounds; limitation (rare), 1483—Oxford English Dictionary':

[34] T. S. Eliot, 'Tradition and the Practice of Poetry', in *T. S. Eliot: Essays from the* Southern Review, ed. by James Olney (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), 7-26 (p. 18).

[35] Craig Raine, *T. S. Eliot* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), p. 161.

the tone of the book hence set to be one concerning the details and dialectic of containment.[36] The book then lays out three important conditions of culture that goes with the boundary-setting implied in the title: socially it should be organic and growing from a certain continuity of class structure; geographically it should be local; and spiritually it should strive towards a balance of unity and diversity in religion.

Many of these authors are in one way or another associated with the Anglican Church and its wide array of agricultural revivalist movements: most notably the Chandos Group behind the organic husbandry movement in 1930s, the Christendom Group, and the Council for the Church and Countryside. At the time, *Christendom* (founded along with the eponymous group in 1931) and *New English Weekly* (founded in April 1932) were the two platforms for the movements.[37] Eliot was a prolific contributor to *Christendom,* which sought to counter industrialism with the religious supremacy found in the medieval world, and to restore social order with inspirations from the dictate of nature.[38] He contributed to the group's Malvern Conference in 1941, which nostalgically evoked the spirit of a 'true community' only available in an 'Old England' with an agricultural economic basis.[39] The *New English Weekly* saw Eliot serve on

[36] NDC, p. 5.

[37] A detailed account of Eliot's engagements with the two journals can be found in Chapter 1 of Steve Ellis, *British Writers and the Approach of World War II* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015); Diaper, Jeremy, 'The New English Weekly and the British Organic Husbandry Movement: A Reassessment', *Agricultural History*, 88 (2014), pp. 336–53; Philip Conford, *The Origins of the Organic Movement* (Edinburgh: Floris, 2001).

[38] Conford, p. 206.

[39] *Malvern, 1941: The Life of the Church and Order of Society* (London, 1941), quoted in Wiener, pp. 117-8 with the comment that 'The church remained a reservoir of rural romanticism'. For an account of Eliot's involvement in the Malvern conference, see G. I. T. Machin, *Churches and Social Issues in Twentieth-century Britain* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1998), p. 128.

its editorial committee, give it the last three of his *Four Quartets* to publish, test out his ideas for the *Notes Towards the Definition of Culture* on the journal since 1943, and dedicate the completed book to its editor Philip Mairet. Mairet, a fellow Anglican involved in the Council for the Church and Countryside, suggested that man's work on nature and their spiritual salvation are 'one and the same, inside and outside of the one great redemptive work', which is coextensive with Eliot's own assertion that 'a wrong attitude towards nature implies […] a wrong attitude towards God' and that 'religion, as distinguished from modern paganism, implies a life in conformity with nature.[40]

Such intense Anglican ties makes Eliot's ruralist sentiments especially susceptible to readings that exclusively foreground the English context and the establishment that Anglicanism embodies. In identifying Eliot's 'Englishness', these studies generally scrutinise the less favourable aspect usually associated with Eliot's ruralism: his elitist reactionary politics. Donald Davie, for instance, follows F. R. Leavis's argument in *The Living Principle* and tendentiously condemns Eliot's version of England as pro-Establishment and 'offensively metropolitan'. He sees Eliot's Anglicanism as part of this patrician mentality, and his vision of England as showing 'disabling ignorance' (using Leavis's diction) about the real working life of people—workers rural or industrial.[41] Similarly, David Gervais, though more patient with the details of Eliot's ruralist texts, compares Eliot's patronising regionalism unfavourably to F. R.

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[40] Philip Mairet, 'Bailiff for God's Estate on Earth', quoted in Conford, p. 194; ICS, pp. 62, 61.

[41] Donald Davie, 'Anglican Eliot', in *Eliot in His Time: Essays on the Occasion of the Fiftieth Anniversary of 'The Wasteland'*, ed. by A. Walton Litz (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973), p. 182; F. R. Leavis, *The Living Principle: 'English' as a Discipline of Thought* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1975), p. 195.

Leavis's version of 'organic community', which Gervais judges to be for the 'masses'.[42] For Gervais, it is precisely the 'non-pastoral sides' of 'East Coker', which figures Eliot's failure in depicting the lived-in reality of a georgic England, that makes his version of England and Leavis's fundamentally 'incompatible' for the different class consciousness they each embody: an argument John Xiros Cooper later expands in his criticism of the 'mandarin' Eliot.[43]

As for Eliot's engagement with Anglican organicists and their reactionary suspicion of anti-semitism (especially that of Viscount Lymington), studies by critics including Roger Kojecky, David Matless and Alexandra Harris have variously provided details and their respective assessments. Matless, for example, reads into Eliot's concerns over the 'significant soil' a limited degree of parallel with the 'physically grounded Englishness' inherent to the discourse of the Anglican organicists and their anti-progressive ideology. Nonetheless, he meticulously warns against reading Eliot's poetry—*Four Quartets* in particular—as organicist manifestos.[44] While Matless (along with Gervais and Steve Ellis whose works on Eliot's Englishness will be discussed shortly) refuses to identify Eliot categorically with the pastoralism and paganism of the organicists whom he published and with whom he mingled, Alexandra Harris in *Romantic Moderns* readily embraces this identification. Harris's study re-pastoralises Eliot's soil-bound 'Englishness' in the context of both

[42] David Gervais, *Literary Englands: Versions of 'Englishness' in Modern Writing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 134-5.

[43] John Xiros Cooper, *T. S. Eliot and the Ideology of* Four Quartets (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

[44] David Matless, *Landscape and Englishness* (London: Reaktion Books, 1998), pp. 105, 128-132.

organicist writings and other English modernist literary or artistic creations that foreground agriculture and horticulture, discussed under the rubric of 'the homecoming of a nation's arts'.[45] Like Kristin Bluemel cited above, Harris seeks also to vindicate ruralist art forms from escapist or retrogressive accusations and incorporate them with forces of modernity, but her argument is based loosely upon nationalistic premises. It features an uncritical acceptance of geographical rootedness and the nostalgic retrieval of a nation's past as replenishing and redemptive. This arguably works in the context of the wartime England the study evokes, but should be applied with extra care where Eliot's own poetry is concerned: an aspect that Harris's study does not address quite adequately.[46]

Given the different aspects of truth these studies disclose of Eliot's 'Englishness' in relation to his ruralist sentiments, their truth is only partial. They remain true only so far as their mononational scope is relevant: they generally either neglect or alienate the transatlantic geographies Eliot spends his life navigating, and fail to take heed of the fact that his anti-provincialist position paradoxically underlies his favourable assessment of small communities rooted in rural locations. In fact, even though Eliot's ruralist writings were mainly produced after conversion, are decisively situated upon the English soil, and show affinity to the discourse of a rural insularity towards the construction of an English identity in the 1930s, they also almost equally reverberate with the poet's American origin. One of Eliot's most cited

[45] Alexandra Harris, *Romantic Moderns: English Writers, Artists and the Imagination from Virginia Woolf to John Piper* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2010), pp. 227-28.

[46] Harris, pp. 201-05.

statements about rootedness (one that receives extensive treatment in the following chapters) is that 'it would appear to be for the best that the great majority of human beings should go on living in the place in which they were born', and that a small-scale Christian society emphatically parochial and rural is an optimal form of civilisation.[47] The statement is frequently associated with his much criticised remarks in the 1933 Page-Barbour lectures in Virginia published as *After Strange Gods*, concerning the undesirability of 'any large number of free-thinking Jews' in society.[48] One tempting and plausible reading is to combine the two statements (and the context of a Virginia audience) with the American Southern Agrarians infamous for their far-right traditionalist tendency with potential anti-semitic implications. Cleanth Brooks, for instance, recognises the connection of Eliot's agrarianism with the Southern Agrarians, but meticulously disentangles them from anti-semitic accusations.[49] Kenneth Asher, reaching out into the same American tradition, discusses Eliot's retrogression to a 'feudalistic agrarianism' as part of the poet's new critical project that sees modernity and progress as historical rupture.[50]

The critics and schools discussed above, who restore Eliot to either English or American ruralist traditions (with some revealing the potential hazards of these rural ideals), are also largely coextensive with Harvey's critique of prioritising the 'place' of reactionary politics over the 'space' of freedom and contestation. However, part of the contention of this thesis is to show Eliot's

[47] NDC, p. 52.

[48] T. S. Eliot, *After Strange Gods: A Primer of Modern Heresy* (London: Faber and Faber, 1934), p. 20.

[49] Cleanth Brooks, 'T. S. Eliot and the American South', in *T. S. Eliot: Essays from the Southern Review*, ed. by James Olney (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), pp. 60-63.

[50] Kenneth Asher, *T. S. Eliot and Ideology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

rural sites in post-conversion poetry—with the help of his social and political criticism—as potentially liberating non-places carrying the promise of geographical freedom. This will be the subject of investigation in Chapter 2. The utopian (no-place) vision of humanity's rootedness upon these rural sites is, in Eliot's case, to a large extent contingent upon its negotiation with contiguous territories: nation with subnational loyalties (Chapter 3) and with other nations (Chapter 4). In this light, the study of Eliot's 'country' does not simply involve taking sides between countries (America or England) or continents (America or Europe) of Eliot's dual identities and investigating how representations of the countryside engage with each. Rather, the thesis shows that the actual location of Eliot's 'country' is the boundary between nations which allows for the foregrounding of rurality in Eliot's post-conversion works.

Steve Ellis's *The English Eliot* is a pioneering predecessor in this regard. Ellis is among the first critics who provide a thorough account of Eliot's ruralism and attachment to place in both poetic and prose writings, and who connects the ruralism to a broader geography as against prototypical readings which associate it with reactionary politics. Ellis usefully identifies a grain of internationalism in Eliot's English allegiances. Despite its apparent insular scope, Ellis's study defines England and Englishness with a liberating borderland state that is arguably only available in a transnational context: a pan-European ideal to be precise. Like Gervais, Ellis also engages with the non-pastoral landscape of Eliot's countryside (especially in the poetic works, 'East Coker' in particular) but does not dismiss it too hastily as a symptom of

Eliot's elitism. Instead, by comparing it to neo-romantic nature writings of the 1930s, Ellis distinguishes Eliot's version of England from the idyllic, nostalgic eulogy of a non-homocentric vision, and aligns it to a classical design of austerity that means for Eliot the supranational Europe (Virgil, Dante).[51] Ellis furthers this argument in his most recent project, *British Writers and the Approach of World War II*, in which Eliot's rural writing is contextualised within works by Anglican ruralists—usually accused of their complicity with antisemitism—during the outbreak of the war in 1939.[52] Both studies recognise the possibility in Eliot's works for rurality and geographical rootedness to be transnational, mediated, as Ellis argues, through the redeeming grace of Christianity's inherent universality. However, Ellis, especially in *The English Eliot*, also points out the distance between the poet's belief in the agency of 'localisation' in the universal ideal and his poetic practice in *Four Quartets*, which, as Ellis argues, is emphatically a series of 'anti-local' poems with English locations and landscapes distilled into abstraction.[53]

While in dialogue with Ellis's valuable arguments, this project questions the underlying binarism between universality and locality that implicitly makes an assertion on 'anti-locality' necessary for the universalist argument. Instead, the thesis reads Eliot's post-conversion works including *Four Quartets* as still primarily local, but places this locality within a diasporic context. In so doing,

[51] Steve Ellis, *The English Eliot: Design, Language, and Landscape in* Four Quartets (London: Routledge, 1991).

[52] Steve Ellis, *British Writers and the Approach of World War II* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

[53] Ellis, *The English Eliot*, pp. 26-28.

the thesis shows how Eliot's cosmopolitan project comes into fruition through local specificities. Such a position is informed by recent theoretical advances both in broader critical territories—Homi Bhabha ('vernacular cosmopolitanism'), Kwame Anthony Appiah ('rooted cosmopolitanism') and Richard Rorty ('antiuniversalist cosmopolitanism')—and in the more specific 'transnational turn' that modernist studies have been undergoing.[54] These theorists and scholars have been working in the past two decades on the agency and moral implications of local loyalties in transnational projects, which are also often understood in 'translational' terms.

Taken as a whole, these critical endeavours challenge understandings of national identity as in any way essentialised and authentic, with its essence and authenticity often associated with and evoked by local specificities and rural landscape. Such challenge does not aim to annihilate the cultural potency of rurality-based national symbols and images, but view the necessary sense of belonging founded thereupon as being integral to rather than inhibited by geographical displacement. Homi Bhabha, for example, undoes the authority of a uniform national identity by shifting his primary focus to the 'interrogatory, interstitial spaces': vernacular sites where identity is constructed and performed through the confrontation between different cultures.[55] According to this line of argument, globalisation does 'begin at home' as Bhabha suggests,

[54] The first critics to have observed the 'transnational turn' in the field are Douglas Mao and Rebecca Walkowitz, who coined the phrase to describe the collective critical attention to new modernist models of transnational community that counterbalance colonialism and old Eurocentric versions of modernism. Along with their own important works on transnational modernism, works by Jessica Berman, Laura Doyle, Susan Stanford Friedman and Jahan Ramazani also made significant contributions to the field. For other works and critics associated to the 'transnational turn' of modernism, see Douglas Mao and Rebecca L. Walkowitz, 'The New Modernism Studies', *PMLA*, 123.3 (2008), 737-48 (pp. 738-40).

[55] Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (Abingdon: Routledge, 1994), p. 5.

but the local site of home, or the vernacular in Bhabha's diction, becomes the ground of contestation where the most vibrant process of identity-making is enacted.[56] Therefore, the 'vernacularisation' of the cosmopolitan is by no means its domestication, but home-making in the wake of its being the liminal space *between* cultures:

> … the 'vernacular' shares an etymological root with the 'domestic' but adds to it—like the 'Un' that turns *heimlich* into *unheimlich*—the process and indeed the performance of translation, the desire to make a dialect: to vernacularize is to 'dialectize' as a process; it is not simply *to be* in a dialogic relation with the native or the domestic, but it is to be on the border, *in between*, introducing the global-cosmopolitan 'action at a distance' into the very grounds—now displaced—of the domestic.[57]

Bhabha's enterprise brings the cosmopolitan home by divesting home and locality of authority and an essentialised identity. A similar endeavour in reconciling locality with cosmopolitan projects is manifest in Appiah's notion of 'rooted cosmopolitanism'. According to Appiah, cosmopolitanism does not mean interference with or effacement of one's individualised 'Blut-und-Boden' partialities. Indeed, these are instrumental in the coexistence of transnationalism and rootedness in Eliot.[58] Localism, and to an extent imagined nationhood, are in this light 'an instrument to achieve universal ideals, universal goals'.[59] One element important to Appiah's 'rooted

[56] Bhabha, *Location*, p. xv.

[57] Homi K. Bhabha, 'Unsatisfied: Notes on Vernacular Cosmopolitanism', in *Text and Nation: Cross-Disciplinary Essays on Cultural and National Identities*, ed. by Laura Garcia-Moreno and Peter C. Pfeiffer (Columbia: Camden House, 1996), 191-208 (p. 202).

[58] Kwame Anthony Appiah, *The Ethics of Identity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), p. 239.

[59] Appiah, p. 242.

cosmopolitanism' is, as with Bhabha, the need to retain root's cultural values while unfastening it from spatial stability: one's roots are not necessarily associated to one's geography of nativity, and can be multiple and include that of one's adopted countries.[60]

Such understanding of roots, as both liberated from nativeness and coexistent with transnational movements, constitutes a collective response to George Orwell's important criticism of transnational modernism in 'Inside the Whale' (1940), in which numerous references are made to Eliot's conservative (if not 'irresponsible') politics.[61] For Orwell, expatriate writers are punished for their rootless existence by their only glibly caricatured, largely homogeneous and metropolitan characters. Their surface existence in their adopted countries borders upon living 'inside the whale', which 'is the penalty of leaving your native land. It means transferring your roots into shallower soil […]. Short of being dead, it is the final, unsurpassable stage of irresponsibility'.[62] Orwell's challenge is relevant, as by identifying himself as a 'metic'—a resident alien inhabiting only the urban territory—Eliot finds himself confronted by a similar impasse, and his post-conversion emphasis on rurality and rootedness can be read as a self-conscious correction to expatriation's inherent culpability. The same challenge underlies recent critical enterprises enumerated above on transnational modernism, and their answers gravitate away from Orwell's inclination to oppose nativeness against cosmopolitanism, and towards investigating existing modernist projects that

[60] Ibid.

[61] George Orwell, 'Inside the Whale', in *Collected Essays* (London: Mercury Books, 1961 [1940]), 118-59 (p. 138).

[62] Orwell, 'Inside the Whale', p. 152.

allow for the coexistence of 'roots' and 'routes'—the direction at which Susan Stanford Friedman nods through her 'planetarity'.[63] The current thesis does not evade the challenge lodged by Orwell, but proposes—through enlisting insights from studies on transnational modernism—to supplement contemporary rehearsals of his argument by contending that the search for geographical rootedness can also result from transnational movement, as Eliot's post-conversion poetics and politics reveal. Furthermore, the thesis draws upon insights from advances in transnational modernism in that it sees local roots not only as crucial sites of cosmopolitan dynamisms, but as portable and in constant re-construction throughout their confrontation with destination cultures. Viewed in this light, Eliot's proposal of humanity's desired rootedness 'in the place in which they were born' may simply be because there is no other way of existence: we are bound to be partial to our geographical roots no matter how cosmopolitan we grow to be.[64] Meanwhile, one's roots—geographical or cultural, native or acquired—are made portable and instrumental to cosmopolitan projects of which Eliot's constitutes an example.

1.4 Thesis overview

The thesis advances its arguments about the dynamism between the local (the rooted, regional, rural) and the global (the cosmopolitan, the transatlantic and transnational) through a series of close readings of Eliot's post-conversion poetry and prose. It considers Eliot's modernism along with—rather than in

[63] Susan Stanford Friedman, *Planetary Modernisms: Provocations on Modernity across Time* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015), p. 77.

[64] NDC, p. 52.

spite of—its (pseudo-)reactionary elements, from a spatial perspective. The study focuses on the post-conversion works for two reasons. This approach sets up a dialogue with recent Eliot studies which problematise late modernism in relation to the construction of English national (and imperial) identity. These studies tend to contextualise Eliot within the construction of a rural England in the 1930s, a period that coincides with his post-conversion period. Studies that exemplify this approach include Alexandra Harris and Steve Ellis's recent research, as well as Jed Esty's *A Shrinking Island.* By way of reading Eliot as part of modernists' collective anglocentric turn attendant upon the decline of the British Empire, Esty recognises the nativist elements in Eliot's 'The Rock', *Four Quartets*, and his later social treatises. However, for Esty, Eliot's later nativism is judged to be more as a hiatus from, rather than continuation of, his early metropolitan poetry.[65] In addition, in examining Eliot's national (in these cases English) identity, these studies leave gaps surrounding the full connotations of Eliot's conversion, which as I contend is as much a religious act as it is socio-political. The conversion, as a critical moment in Eliot's life and career, not only ushers in Eliot's more determined foray into the cultural fabric of his adopted nation, but also heralds a stage where his migration still looms as an unresolved problem refusing to be appeased by the decade of expatriation that precedes the moment. Eliot's later turn to ruralism and rooted existence requires examination in the light of conversion and the transnational movement that underpins it.

[65] Jed Esty, *A Shrinking Island: Modernism and National Culture in England* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004).

With the focus on the post-conversion Eliot, especially his ruralism and its related reactionary politics, the thesis also advances current criticism on Eliot's presumed anti-semitism and imperialism, which has largely revolved around Eliot's pre-conversion quatrain poems. This project, with a primary focus on Eliot's nationhood, does not aim to counter directly these anti-semitic charges lodged by the vexed critics and writers—Christopher Ricks, Cynthia Ozick, and Anthony Julius, to name only a few.[66] However, it nevertheless engages with the spatial aspect of Eliot's suspected antisemitism, one that is related to nativism and rootedness. In the anti-semitic context, the values of geographical rootedness has often been associated with either Heidegger's (in)famous concept of 'dwelling', or the Nazi's slogan of 'Blood and Soil' ('Blut und Boden'). To engage with such charges requires a closer investigation into his desire for rootedness that predominates his post-conversion career.

Such are the underlying concerns that drive the discussions in Chapter 2. The chapter interrogates the reactionary ideology usually associated with rurality and rootedness. It shows details of Eliot's agrarian sentiments following his conversion: prose and creative texts including 'Journey of the Magi' (1927), 'Ash-Wednesday' (1930), *Sweeney Agonistes* (1932), and his church pageant *The Rock* (1934). Taking stock of this textual evidence, this chapter demonstrates how such agrarianism, being inflected by the reality of geographical movement, functions differently to the nostalgic pastorals of an insular England, and how local and rural roots can in this light be otherwise

[66] Christopher Ricks, *T. S. Eliot and Prejudice* (London: Faber and Faber, 1988); Cynthia Ozick, 'T. S. Eliot at 101', in *What Henry James Knew and Other Essays on Writers* (London: Vintage, 1994), pp. 10-68; Anthony Julius, *T. S. Eliot, Anti-semitism, and Literary Form* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

construed as a reliable base for cosmopolitan projects. This chapter also shows how the tension between protracted expatriation and the desire to 'dwell' inspires Eliot with a whole set of poetic vocabulary on their coexistence, with the process enacted in Eliot's only translation project: St-John Perse's *Anabase* (1924). Both the translation and the text of 'Ash-Wednesday' with its allusion to the Book of Ezekiel tacitly inspect the possible restoration of one's ancestral 'inheritance' from a distance following one's exile. Viewed in this light, roots become part of the cosmopolitan condition. Transnational movement renders the search for roots especially pressing, and at the same time transfers roots into a relational spacetime in David Harvey's sense—place that is along with its sensations and memories liberated from the spatial and temporal specificities of its inception, remaining potent everywhere and perpetually reconfigured by moments both past and the present (of expatriation).[67] Such a reading extricates Eliot's transnational rootedness—conditioned by and coextensive with cosmopolitan practices—from a more reactionary account of roots, embodied in Martin Heidegger's concept of 'dwelling' and its fascist connotations.

Chapter 3 furthers the thesis' engagement with the fascist undertones of which writings on rootedness are usually accused, the 'Blut und Boden' discourse in particular. This chapter examines Eliot's verse play *Murder in the Cathedral* (1935) in the context of contemporary British surrealist writings, especially Herbert Read's surrealist novel *The Green Child* (1935) and Dylan Thomas's surrealist texts published in the *Criterion* during the late 1930s.

[67] Harvey, *Cosmopolitanism*, pp. 133-46.

Association between Eliot and the British surrealists has been a subject of increasing critical attention, exemplified by Ellis and Harris's respective studies that connect Eliot's ruralism to the neo-romantic sentiments to varying degrees. My chapter, drawing on these studies, reads the politics of writings on the land from perspectives other than that of a rurality-based Englishness. Rather, the chapter investigates a shared regionalist, devolutionary agenda at work in both *Murder in the Cathedral*—a surrealist text as I contend—and the British surrealist texts: one that makes fruitful uses of the local land in resistance to a unifying nationalist discourse. The British surrealists resolve their anxiety over 'going modern' and 'being British' by evoking the vital destablising force of the local land in its primitive, local landscapes.[68] Their combination of land/soil with blood, prominent in the British surrealist works published in the *Criterion*, also enters the bloodstained language of the chorus in Eliot's play: the chorus' political awakening towards as well as questioning of a uniform national identity are only conditioned by a 'foul' land 'defiled with blood'. Read's *The Green Child* and Dylan Thomas's surrealist texts illuminate Eliot's verse play, as they all feature important homecoming plots where home is rendered uncanny (*unheimlich*). Yet, in all these texts, from the abjection of one's home/local landscape emerges a resistant political ordering alternative to the centralising nationalist Leviathan state looming not far in the horizon in the 1930s. The modernist and surrealist texts discussed in this paper thereby turn the 'Blood and Soil' slogan of Nazi Germany on its head using its own vocabulary. In the renegotiated boundary between the human body and

[68] Paul Nash, *Room and Book* (New York: Soncino Press, 1932), p. 7.

the land, nature assumes a subversive cultural power through which the national socialist discourse of order is rewritten.

The fourth and final chapter continues the argument surrounding the decade of Eliot's conversion in Chapter 2, taking it into war-time texts including *The Family Reunion* (1939) and *Four Quartets* (1936-42). As with Chapter 2, this chapter also sheds light upon Eliot's double gesture where his ruralism is concerned. These texts show the poet at once desiring a rooted, rural existence and refusing its nostalgic, idyllic or sentimentalised representation. What it furthers from the earlier chapter is its investigation into the imperialist involvements of a 'metic' poet: a resident alien, and a barbarian in the centre of civilisation. The rose-garden, which dominates the landscape of these works, is historicised within the country-house discourse popularised in the collective enterprise of constructing Englishness. Meanwhile, with its allusion to Rudyard Kipling and to Frances Hodgson Burnett's *The Secret Garden* (1911), the garden in the quartets emerges as imbricated with imperial undertones, functioning as an imperial centre. Like Esty, the chapter also situates the English garden—the enclosed space being the master trope for an insular England—within the context of late modernism and the decline of the empire. I show the limitations in Esty's conclusion of a subsequent centripetal turn to the colonial centre. As the chapter contends, *The Family Reunion* and *Four Quartets* engage and interfere with efforts heritagising and essentialising a rural England, and figure the process where powers from various marginalised territories make inroads into and rewrite the centre. The dismantled binary between the centre and its peripheries is reflected in the

hedgerow that ultimately replaces the rose-garden and becomes the dominant imagery in the final quartet. The hedgerow, demarcating while connecting landscapes, cultures and nations, is read as part of the quartets' overall agenda of ousting the cultural authority of the privileged imperial centre and restoring the location of culture to the borderlands, where contagion, contestations and identity-making take place.

This final chapter could be seen as a testing ground for the compatibility between imperialism and cosmopolitanism in the modernist period: both being transnational practices, they can be paralleled only when one admits that imperialism largely thinks through the centre/periphery hierarchy and commits violence in its name. My study does not deny the presence or even predominance of the centre in Eliot's thinking; nor does it harbour the illusion that Eliot's version of cosmopolitanism—which is to a great extent still Eurocentric—is identical to what is expected from our contemporary context. Nevertheless, the thesis aims to locate Eliot in the intersection between imperialism and cosmopolitanism with their shared need of a centre. By showing through Eliot's works how the centre is part of a highly dynamic spatial ordering in which it moves and is counterpointed by other emerging centres in the making, the thesis seeks not to justify the imperialist enterprise, but to remind that what is usually termed as 'reactionary' should not be too hastily dismissed, as hopes of resistance may be found precisely in its own constitution.

CHAPTER II
AN EXPATRIATE'S NATIVE DREAM:
ELIOT IN THE POST-CONVERSION DECADE

2.1 Introduction

Soon after the success of *The Waste Land* in the United States, Eliot wrote to Richard Aldington, stressing that the poem 'is a thing of the past so far as I am concerned and I am now feeling toward a new form and style'.[1] Conrad Aiken, Eliot's Harvard friend, also observed a similar break on Eliot's part from the past. In a letter to Maurice Firudski he remarks that 'Tom says he is now out of humour with *The Waste Land*, *Portrait of a Lady*, *Prufrock*, *Gerontion*, and in short almost everything except the *Preludes*. He has been doing some new things'.[2]

One of the 'new things' since *The Waste Land* is the launch of the *Criterion*, Eliot's own journal of critical review. In the summer of 1921, Eliot made the acquaintance of Lady Rothermere, who was soon to be the founder and patron of the *Criterion*. The publication started as a leading literary journal, with *The Waste Land* in its first issue and its gaze primarily on the literary scene across Europe. A critical turn, however, took place around 1926-1927: the journal's literary focus shifted and was transformed into, as Bonamy Dobree observed, a 'Religio-Political Organ'.[3] In other words, a certain disinterestedness for literary reviews, which had still appeared a valid creed for Eliot in early 1926, was swiftly exchanged for the readiness to engage with the

[1] T. S. Eliot to Richard Aldington, 15 November 1922, L1, p. 596.

[2] Conrad Aiken to Maurice Firudski, 15 December 1924, quoted in TP1, p. 712.

[3] Bonamy Dobree to Herbert Read, 9 April 1929, quoted in Jason Harding, *The Criterion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 178.

socio-political climate of the time.[4] Every 'literary' review worth its salt, as Eliot believed only a year later, must have a political interest.[5] The *Criterion* henceforth became the intellectual battleground of ongoing socio-political contestations, including communism and fascism, and, more predictably, church politics. One other noticeable change of a similar streak is that from 1926 onwards, Eliot started to take a new interest in the 'function' of his business: not to his literary peers but to a wider, enlarged social readership. From 'The Function of a Literary Review' (1926), to *The Use of Poetry and Use of Criticism* (1933), 'The Function of Criticism' (1939), and 'The Social Function of Poetry' (1945), the two decades that follow register Eliot's conscious endeavours to 'connect'.

What happened, then, in 1926, that made the poet reach out from his clique to the world and its people? What, then—one is entitled to ask—is its relation to Eliot's own conversion in 1927 and his naturalisation as a British subject? In retrospect, Eliot recognised that it was only from 1926 that

> the features of the post-war world begin clearly to emerge—and not only in the sphere of politics. From about that date one began slowly to realize that the intellectual and artistic output of the previous seven years had been rather the last efforts of an old world, than the first struggles of a new.[6]

The demarcation was clear, yet Eliot did not provide any explanation for the precise timing. Critics tend to explain such demarcation in terms of public

[4] T. S. Eliot, 'The Idea of a Literary Review', *Criterion*, 4 (1926), 1-6 (p. 1).

[5] T. S. Eliot, 'A Commentary', *Criterion*, 5 (1927), 283-86 (p. 283).

[6] T. S. Eliot, 'Last Words', *Criterion*, 18 (1939), 271-75 (p. 271).

events, such as the launch of the *New Criterion* and the General Strike.[7] Relatively few, however, have noticed that the change might not have been rooted in external events, but can be more private and mean rather a change in how Eliot himself perceived the post-war world. It has been recorded that from early the same year, Eliot was regularly attending early-morning communions, which ultimately led to his conversion in 1927.[8] It might be less that the post-war world underwent a major metamorphosis in 1926, and more that Eliot himself started to perceive it differently with his new Christian mentality and its corresponding sense of calling. In other words, religion may have supplied Eliot with new approaches to post-war problems, which he at best satirised in *The Waste Land*, and which he now sought to address with a new awareness of the land, rurality, and a native Christian community. On this point I am indebted to Steve Ellis who usefully unravels Eliot's turn to rootedness and land as being part of the interwar intellectual climate (the 'post-Munich' years in particular) that braids politics and Christianity together: a sentiment most prominent in the agrarian proposals by his 'Christian-ruralist' contemporaries, John Middleton Murry and other members of the Chandos Group for instance.[9]

In addition to the fact that Eliot's religious growth was part of his growing socio-political involvement, which constitutes this chapter's central premise, his conversion also inaugurates a phase in his career whereby the preceding decade of overseas inhabitation finally consolidated into an (almost) irreversible reality. With the conversion comes perpetuated expatriation. What

[7] Jason Harding, *The* Criterion (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 14-15.

[8] Lyndall Gordon, *The Imperfect Life of T. S. Eliot* (London: Virago, 2012), p. 219.

[9] Steve Ellis, *British Writers and the Approach of World War II* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015), pp. 38-39.

the conversion brings about therefore, attested to by Eliot's post-conversion works, is less a hearty embrace of the adopted national identity than a mentality painfully undergoing the tug-of-war between his two lands. As Ronald Schuchard observes, '[t]he journey of the exile begins but does not end in *Ash-Wednesday*', for which contention he usefully cites Eliot's own remarks in a letter to Paul Elmer More in 1929 that 'it [is] rather trying to be supposed to have settled oneself in an easy chair, when one has just begun a long journey afoot'.[10] The tension between a desired homeward turn and the cultivation of a new root in his adopted homeland thus importantly underlies and inflects the works in Eliot's post-conversion decade.

With this renewed spatial perception of Eliot's conversion, this chapter reads the works in the long decade of conversion between *The Waste Land* and *Four Quartets*, and identifies the idea of a rural, local Christian community in works from 'The Hollow Men' (1925) through 'The Rock' (1934) as part of the poet's diasporic sensibility inherent to the reality of conversion and expatriation. It begins with Eliot's translation project *Anabasis* (1930), contending that the leitmotif of expatriation and finding of roots is accentuated and persists into Eliot's own works of the post-conversion decade, especially 'Ash-Wednesday' and 'The Rock'. Viewed in this light, Eliot's intellectual development, especially his shift from the metropolitan to a suburban and agrarian scene, is understood not as a rupture but a coherent modernist project. His growing belief in the regenerative power of the land is attendant upon his conversion, and both, as will be contended, naturally result from his exile,

[10] Ronald Schuchard, *Eliot's Dark Angel: Intersections of Life and Art* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 160; T. S. Eliot to Paul Elmer More, 3 August 1929, L4, p. 567.

which once exhilarated him with its cosmopolitan illusions but now drives him towards settlement and community. Eliot's Christianity, importantly, is thus understood as not turning away from the world. Instead, with the acceptance of Christianity, the poet is now burdened with the reality of the post-war world and almost finds in it his calling. Whimpers do not help: the conversion did not make him a hermit, but instead, a preacher and a man of a rooted community.

2.2 *Sweeney Agonistes*, *Anabasis*, and diasporic sensibility in translation

Among the earlier products of the period are the two fragments which later became *Sweeney Agonistes* (1932). Published in the *Criterion* in September 1926 and January 1927 and entitled 'Fragment of a Prologue' and 'Fragment of an Agon' respectively, the two fragments register some of Eliot's first attempts at popular theatre. Both fragments are haunted by an ominous sense of horror and anxiety, which presumably would have culminated in the murder of Doris were the play completed. Apart from the underlying murder plot, however, what contributes to this sinister ambience is a sense of 'estrangement' (as Doris's cards foretell in 'Fragment of a Prologue') attendant upon displacement and the loss of spatial and national identity.[11] It is noticed by Michael North, through an analysis of the variants of English used in this fragment, that it 'is almost completely concerned with arguments about home and homelessness'.[12] The scene takes place in London where none of the characters feel truly at home: among the three veterans, Sam Wauchope used to

[11] T. S. Eliot, 'Fragments of a Prologue', TP1, p. 117, l. 68.

[12] Michael North, *The Dialect of Modernism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), p. 88.

serve in the Canadian Expeditionary Force, whereas Klipstein and Krumpacker are both Americans—the two names belong to people from Eliot's school days and Harvard years respectively.[13] In contrast, Dusty and Doris, the only two real 'Britisher[s]', manifest a certain uneasiness about their local identity.[14] They are noticeably self-conscious about their British English: as North observes, Dusty stresses the word '*flat*' over the phone, the British variant for the American word 'apartment'.[15] Also, their inquisitiveness about the three foreigners' impressions of London betrays their nervous awareness of being the hostesses, which pushes the conversion towards the problematics of home. The scene is thus led to the dramatic irony of the ending, in which Sam the foreigner is mistaken for the 'Britisher' 'at *home* in London'.[16] Such misplacement adroitly undoes the idea of a solid spatial and national identity, and drives home a shared homelessness that reinforces the uncanniness (*unheimlichkeit*) already pervasive in the scene. The sense of homelessness, along with the identity crisis caused by displacement, seems a familiar continuation from 'Mélange Adultère de Tout'. However, the distinct pathos in *Sweeney Agonistes* suggests that the anxiety over prolonged exile may have started to sink in. From this point on, Eliot's representations of land and diasporic experiences are never the same again. The change, however, germinated concurrently with the composition of *Sweeney Agonistes*.

[13] Otto H. Schwarz to T. S. Eliot, 5 March 1950, with Eliot's reply on 20 April 1950. Quoted in TP1, p. 808.

[14] Eliot, 'Fragments of a Prologue', l. 156.

[15] North, *Dialect*, p. 89.

[16] Eliot, 'Fragments of a Prologue', l. 158.

In early 1926, Eliot accepted a commission from Marguerite Caetani, a cousin of his who was also a patron of art in Paris, to translate French poet St-John Perse's *Anabase* (1924) into English. He worked intensively on the translation from September to the end of 1926, and submitted it for the author's review in January 1927.[17] These few months also saw him baptised in a small village church in the Cotswolds while composing the second fragment of *Sweeney Agonistes*, which appeared in the *Criterion* the same month the translation was completed. The translation indicates a seminal yet often neglected moment in Eliot's intellectual development: its significance rests not only with the influence of Perse on Eliot's own writing, which is remarkable, but more importantly with the way Eliot interacted with Perse's text from which a different perception of land started to emerge. Such changing perceptions, both resulting from and complicated by the fact of his conversion, are ultimately crystallised in Eliot's other creative endeavours of this period. In these works, the poet started to envision the fruitfulness of expatriation by returning to the land: its fertility and, increasingly, its inexorable destination of being rooted and sited.

Perse's poem imagines a military march inland from the coastline, conducted by a group of itinerant exiles building new cities in a foreign land and dwelling there, before they 'dream of departing again'.[18] Of all the legacies this translation might have left, Eliot seems to be most particular about that of Perse's imagery. While still working on it, Eliot confessed his difficulty

[17] T. S. Eliot to Marguerite Caetani, 27 September 1926, L3, p. 282; T. S. Eliot to Alexis Saint Léger Léger (St-John Perse), 15 January 1927, L3, pp. 372-73.

[18] St-John Perse, *Anabasis* (London: Faber and Faber, 1930), tr. by T. S. Eliot, pp. 65-67, henceforward referenced as *Anabasis* (1930).

wrestling with the 'cumulative succession of images' and getting them right: 'one *cannot* simply translate the images. One must find equivalents'.[19] On a later occasion, Eliot reminded critics of the influence *Anabasis* exerted on some of his works written after its translation: influence of 'the imagery and perhaps also of the rhythm'.[20] However, it will not be far from the truth to claim this imagery in translation as actually Eliot's own, already dormant in his thoughts, provoked by Perse, and later filtered into his own poetic diction. Even though Eliot's translation is regarded as being largely faithful, there still remains a perceivable distance between the original and some of his interpretive treatment of certain images.

One of the most striking images in *Anabasis* is that of the seed, winged, constantly travelling, carrying earth with it.[21] However, the prevalence of this image is the consequence of Eliot's conscious reworking. C. E. Nelson has drawn attention to Eliot's poetic license when translating 'la terre sans amandes' into 'this seedless earth': diction of *The Waste Land*, not *Anabase,* as Nelson points out.[22] As this particular phrase only appears in the editions of 1938 and onwards, while the 1930 edition still reads as 'this husk of earth', its being an echo of *The Waste Land* remains dubious. Nevertheless, Nelson is correct in detecting this discrepancy between the original and Eliot's translation. Appearing at the beginning stanza of the long poem, the 1938 revision into 'this seedless earth' apparently sees Eliot's deliberation in setting

[19] T. S. Eliot to Marguerite Caetani, 27 September 1926, L3, p. 282.

[20] T. S. Eliot to Jean Paulhan in response to the latter's invitation (21 October 1949) for Eliot's contribution to a memorial issue of NRF, 7 December 1949, quoted in L3, p. 372, n. 2.

[21] *Anabasis* (1930)*,* pp. 21, 41, 69.

[22] C. E. Nelson, 'Saint-John Perse and T. S. Eliot', *Western Humanities Review*, 17 (1963), 163-71 (pp. 169-70).

the tone for the poem by pairing up 'seed' and 'land'.[23] It is worth noting that these two keywords, which predominate in *Anabasis*, do not feature as prominently in Perse's original poem. As suggested by the letter to Madame Caetani cited above, Eliot was indeed translating on the level of imagery, rather than of the specific wordings. As it happens, he condensed a few images in the original to hone the coordination between the two. He translated both 'semences' and 'graines' into 'seeds'.[24] Meanwhile, he opted for the 'land' (instead of the 'country') everywhere 'le pays' appears, and 'gens de peu de poids dans la mémoire de ces *lieux*' was also translated into 'men of little weight in the memory of these *lands*'.[25]

If the seeds symbolise the marching travellers in exile, the land is then the natural location for them to take root and grow. In his translation, Eliot seems to be especially attentive to such needs that he recognises in those in exile. Halfway into the poem, the speaker depicts their itinerant destiny with the image of 'this folk squatting on the slopes, horsemen unhorsed, *tillers of the earth*', manifesting a certain departure from Perse's original 'cavaliers démontés dans les cultures vivrières'.[26] It is later rephrased into 'horsemen dismounted among the food crops' in the revised edition in 1938, a more literal version.[27] For the speaker's interlocutor, his location is an index of his identity: a native that tills and belongs to the land. By bringing this to the fore, Eliot's

[23] Perse, St-John, 'Anabasis', tr. by T. S. Eliot, revised edn, 1938, 1949, in *Collected Poems* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971), pp. 102-141, henceforward referenced as 'Anabasis' (1938, 1949).

[24] *Anabasis* (1930), pp. 20, 22; pp. 40, 54, 68.

[25] *Anabasis* (1930), pp. 20-21, emphases mine.

[26] *Anabasis* (1930), pp. 44-45, emphasis mine.

[27] 'Anabasis' (1938, 1949), p. 121.

early translation points to the suppressed anxiety that underlies the traveller's confession on his expedition: they keep building, rebuilding, pressing on to the next destination, having only superficial engagement with this land, or any land.

Meanwhile, the land itself is emphatically fertile. Throughout the poem the speaker witnesses barley harvests, and gives accounts of the land in most sensual details. This fertility is already inherent in Perse's verse, but is carefully preserved and accentuated in the translation, harking back to the corresponding imagery of *The Waste Land*. In the following verse paragraph taken from the penultimate section of the poem, the speaker makes successful advances into the new country, and prophesies its fecundity:

> I foretell you the time of a great blessing and the felicity of leaves in our dreams.
>
> Those who know the springs are with us in this exile; those who know the springs will they tell us at evening
>
> beneath what hands pressing the vine of our wombs
>
> our bodies are filled with spittle? (And the woman has lain down with the man in the grass; she rises, arranges the lines of her body, and the cricket makes off on blue wing.)
>
> [Je t'annonce les temps d'une grande faveur et la félicité des feuilles dans nos songes.
>
> Ceux qui savent les sources sont avec nous dans cet exil; ceux qui savent les sources nous diront-ils au soir
>
> sous quelles mains pressant la vigne de nos flancs
>
> nos corps s'emplissent d'une salive? (Et la femme s'est couchée avec I'homme dans I'herbe; elle se lève, met ordre aux lignes de son corps, et le criquet s'envole sur son aile bleue.)][28]

[28] *Anabasis* (1930), pp. 56-57.

These lines almost literally recapitulate certain passages of *The Waste Land*, most distinctly the opening stanzas of 'The Burial of the Dead' and 'What the Thunder Said'. What evokes the parallel are certain images including the springs, grass and the cricket. 'Criquet', for example, was on a different occasion translated as the 'locust', but recast here as the 'cricket' to conjure up the right association.[29] The line 'the springs are with us in this exile' preserves the original meaning of 'les sources', which means 'eau qui sort de la terre'. Taken as a whole, by summoning the spectre of a familiar 'stony rubbish' and frustrated sexuality (not least of the hyacinth garden), this revitalised landscape is unmistakably *The Waste Land*'s reversion and redemption.

Compared to *The Waste Land*, *Anabasis* is more explicitly a poem of exile—and, arguably, its fruitfulness, which is augmented in the translation. 'The springs are with us in this exile' is indicative of the gratification such fertility inspires. However, the allure of settlement upon the land is counterbalanced and ultimately overpowered by the traveller's urge to push on with the exploration. The traveller, 'who has travelled far and dreams of departing again', is aware of his divided duty: he constantly reminds himself that '[w]e shall not dwell forever in these yellow lands, our pleasance', and even on leaving for new destinations he is still yearning for his '[p]lough-land of dream'.[30] The word 'dwell' is a significant choice: amongst its three appearances in the translation, one corresponds to the word 's'habiter' and two to 'vivre'.[31] Originally meaning 'to hinder and delay', the word adds to the

[29] *Anabasis* (1930), pp. 24-25.

[30] *Anabasis* (1930), pp. 65-67, 49, 71.

[31] *Anabasis* (1930), pp. 48, 58, 66.

original a tension between departing and detaining, and hints at the difficulty of the traveller in wrenching himself from the fertile land and the cultivating activity. Meanwhile, the word is also telling of the speaker's awareness of being the 'stranger' to the land: he and his fellow travellers have no claims upon the land as the natives do.

Such observation illuminates the overall framing of the poem. In the beginning of the poem the conqueror envisions building a life together with the natives. This dream is revisited at the end of the poem, only as the travellers depart again for the sea. In the 1930 version, one of the opening lines '[a]ux ides pures du matin que savons-nous du songe, notre aînesse' is translated as '[a]t the pure ides of day what know we of our entail of dream'.[32] In later versions a more literal translation replaced the important word 'entail', which means 'the settlement of land possession' and corresponds to the hint at 'birthright' the word 'aînesse' invokes. It is the use of 'entail' that lends potency to Steven Matthews's argument, who believes this earlier translation to be more 'intuitively sympathetic', or closer to St-John Perse's understanding that the 'origins of settlement derive from a restless and unresolved wandering within and across unassimilated landscapes'.[33] Taken as a whole, the 1930 translation is more consistent in its emphasis given to the land, owing to Eliot's reorganisation of imagery and the liberty he took with certain wordings. These

[32] *Anabasis* (1930), pp. 18-19. Eliot went through a few details regarding translation with Edouard Roditi, another translator of Perse's *Anabase*. On receiving Roditi's recommendations on a more faithful translation of this line, Eliot insisted on his own translation of 'entail' and refused to render it in a more 'faithful' way till the 1938 version. This fact also demonstrates the significance of the word. See the correspondence between Eliot and Roditi in August 1929, L4, p. 599-600.

[33] Steven Matthews, 'Provincialism and the Modern Diaspora: T. S. Eliot and David Jones', *English*, 58 (2009), 57-72 (pp. 68-70).

give initial indications to Eliot's changing conception of the dynamics between exile and the land: the allure of fertility and settlement concomitant with, and resulting from, the experience of exile. Viewed from this perspective, *Anabasis* significantly contextualises Eliot's thoughts on this front immediately following the translation, most prominently in 'Ash-Wednesday' (1930) and 'The Rock' (1934).

2.3 'Ash-Wednesday': restored faith in nature's agency

The continuation from *Anabasis* to 'Ash-Wednesday' is evident. Within the two years of the former's completion and revision, Eliot finished three short poems which were to become the first three sections of 'Ash-Wednesday'. Among the three, 'Perch'io non spero…' and 'Som de l'escalina' ('Ash-Wednesday' I and III respectively) were first published in *Commerce*: Madam Caetani's magazine in Paris with its title taken from the first section of *Anabase*.[34] The influence of Perse on these poems was so intense that Eliot himself felt the imperative of its acknowledgement. As he later confessed on recommending Perse for the Nobel Prize, 'with Perse, I have felt rather an influence which is visible in some of my poems written after I had translated *Anabase*'.[35] Nevertheless, as has been suggested, Eliot had taken certain liberties in translating *Anabase* so much so that the translation borders upon a palimpsest of the original. The 'influence' therefore cuts both ways. The nature

[34] 'je lui fais peu crédit au commerce de l'âme' ('I trust him little in the commerce of the soul'), *Anabasis* (1930), pp. 20-21.

[35] T. S. Eliot's explanation for nominating St-John Perse as the Nobel Laureate of 1960, quote in L3, p. 910. For another extensive study on Perse's actual influence on Eliot's poetics, see Richard Abel, 'The Influence of St-John Perse on T. S. Eliot', *Contemporary Literature*, 14:2 (1973), pp. 213-39.

of translation determines that poetic license, applied with a diasporic sensibility, still had to function on a limited scale in *Anabasis*. However, the themes explored in Perse's poem that were especially accentuated by Eliot's translation were more fully developed in Eliot's works to come, starting from 'Ash-Wednesday'. Viewed in this light, the poem is to a degree Eliot's variation on the theme of *Anabase*.

The germination of 'Ash-Wednesday' is already visible in the translation. In the 1930 version of *Anabasis*, a line quietly anticipates the second section of 'Ash-Wednesday': 'And at noon, when the juniper tree breaks the tomb-stone, man closes his lids and cools his neck in the ages'.[36] There is no sign of the 'juniper tree', however, in Perse's original. The obvious equivalent for 'l'arbre jujubier' is the 'jujuba tree', which Eliot went for in later versions of the translation.[37] By risking mistranslation and substituting the jujube with a similar species of the bush family, Eliot is apparently speaking his own symbolic language. The juniper tree, which was set 'in the wasteland' together with 'the fir and the cypress' according to Isaiah's prophesy, is a sign of everlasting grace and the resurrection of the desert.[38] The insertion of 'juniper tree' in *Anabasis* is therefore consistent with Eliot's overall understanding of the text: the fertile land of exile with its promises of settlement.

The juniper tree predominates the landscape in 'Ash-Wednesday' II, originally published as 'Salutation'. In Eliot's poem, the scattered bones nourish the growth of the juniper-tree and are resurrected by a certain 'Lady of

[36] *Anabasis* (1930), p. 51.

[37] 'Anabasis' (1938, 1949), pp. 126-7.

[38] Isaiah 41:19, 55: 13 (New International Version).

Silences', a compound figure of the Virgin Mary and Beatrice. Denis Donoghue rightly points out that 'Ash-Wednesday' is the 'redemption' of *The Waste Land* and 'The Hollow Men'.[39] It is so not only from stylistic points of view—which is the main thrust of Donoghue's argument—but from the point of view concerning the poetic landscape, too. In the union of the bones the desert is turned into a garden: the desiccated Gethsemane in 'What the Thunder said' has now assumed a certain edenic quality. The corpse planted in Stetson's garden is also sprouting into a juniper-tree, which symbolically rejuvenates the dead land with divine grace. In effect, this scene in 'Ash-Wednesday' counts towards the first genuine edenic scene in Eliot's poetry.

Here, however, is Eliot's point of departure from *Anabasis*. Unlike Perse, whose traveller relishes the eternal bounty of the land (which is at once edenic and tilled by worldly labourers), Eliot depicts the land in an arguably more rarefied manner. With some of the earliest verses written after Eliot's conversion, 'Ash-Wednesday' is a poem with an acute postlapsarian awareness. It starts with the concession that after the exile, the gap between 'here' (the world) and 'there' (the edenic vision) is simply irreconcilable: 'I cannot drink | There, where trees flower, and springs flow, for there is nothing again': Eden is no longer readily available.[40] There is, therefore, a hierarchy—more precisely a purgatorial one—of landscapes inherent to the structure of 'Ash-Wednesday', which boils down to the route from the fallen pastoral to the beatific vision of Eden. Readers of *Anabasis* are therefore in for a familiar scene where the

[39] Denis Donoghue, *Words Alone: The Poet T. S. Eliot* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), p. 155.

[40] T. S. Eliot, 'Ash-Wednesday' I, TP1, p. 87, ll. 14-15

alluring fecundity is ultimately denied, and where the lush landscape—a true pastoral scene—is evoked first before submitting to a higher order of landscape.

'Ash-Wednesday' III is where the difficult denial is staged. Its original title 'Som de l'escalina' is taken from *Purgatorio* XXVI, where Dante and Virgil climb the last terrace of Purgatory: lust. This section is organised around the central image of climbing the spiritual staircase to which other sections of 'Ash-Wednesday' loosely conform. It closely approximates the purgatorial vision before reaching the earthly paradise, the main vision of 'Ash-Wednesday' IV. Standing at the third and final stair, both the speaker and the readers are confronted, quite unexpectedly, with a vivid pastoral scene:

> At the first turning of the third stair
> Was a slotted window bellied like the fig's fruit
> And beyond the hawthorn blossom and a pasture scene
> The broadbacked figure drest in blue and green
> Enchanted the maytime with an antique flute.
> Blown hair is sweet, brown hair over the mouth blown,
> Lilac and brown hair;
> Distraction, music of the flute, stops and steps of the mind over the third stair,
> Fading, fading; strength beyond hope and despair
> Climbing the third stair.[41]

The grisly landscape of the preceding second stair is suddenly enlivened. Not only is there the fertile land, but the account is also orchestrated with intense sensuality that behoves the theme of lust. The vocabulary and imagery here are evocative of the temptation of youthful bliss that confronts Thomas Becket in *Murder in the Cathedral*, where the First Tempter appeals to '[f]luting in the

[41] Eliot, 'Ash-Wednesday' III, ll. 12-21.

meadows, viols in the hall, | Laughter and apple-blossom floating on the water'.[42] In the poem, Pan's provocative flute is grouped together with the eroticised imagination of 'blown hair'—reminiscent of both the sweeping girls' hair of 'La Figlia Che Piange' and the brown hair of Emily Hale, his one-time lover in America with whom there had been renewed contact since 1927.

However, like the human love represented by the 'blown hair', the sensuous pastoral scene is also regarded as 'Distraction' and is to be relinquished for 'the unread vision in the higher dream'.[43] The denial here of a sweet pastoral is a toned-down version of a familiar scene from 'A Game of Chess': 'As though a window gave upon the sylvan scene | The change of Philomel, by the barbarous king | So rudely forced'.[44] While evoking the bucolic tradition closely attached to nightingales, the figure of Philomela subverts the tradition at once by laying bare the violent, deadly passion sustaining such idyllic myths yet usually suppressed. The sweetness of the pastoral therefore also means that 'some "infinitely gentle, infinitely suffering thing", to quote one of Eliot's earlier poems, is somehow done to death', as Eliot's contemporary Edmund Wilson observes.[45] By revealing the brutality of the 'sylvan scene', Eliot is being unforgiving about the fallenness of nature.

In both scenes from *The Waste Land* and 'Ash-Wednesday', the sensuous pastoral is viewed from a human edifice through a 'window'. Windows, according to Gillian Beer's fruitful formulation, are suggestive of a certain

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[42] T. S. Eliot, *Murder in the Cathedral*, CPP, p. 246.

[43] Eliot, 'Ash-Wednesday' IV, l. 20.

[44] T. S. Eliot, 'The Waste Land' II, TP1, p. 58, ll. 98-100.

[45] Edmund Wilson, *Axel's Castle* (New York: Collier Books, 1991), p. 108.

liminality that at once connects and differentiates the inside and the outside.[46] In *The Waste Land* the venomous passion in 'the sylvan scene' mirrors the couple trapped in 'the room enclosed', whose violent exasperation is probably the result as well as re-enactment of their one-time passion.[47] The window sets apart two worlds where passion destroys differently, but with equal vehemence. The footsteps that 'shuffled on the stair' in *The Waste Land* leads to the third stair in 'Ash-Wednesday', where the domestic nightmare behind the window becomes part of the purgatorial journey.[48] This time the slotted window is 'bellied like the fig's fruit'—yet another symbol for female sexuality—which communicates an ironic awareness: to judge the idyllic tradition through an already eroticised and inaccurate lens and to denigrate it on such premises might not be doing it justice. Hence the subtle challenge to nature's fallenness, yet nature and its sensuality are nonetheless the last hurdle to clear before the vision of the earthly paradise is made available.[49] To concede that nature's fallenness could be a view constructed or distorted, even on a minuscule scale, is indicative of a restored belief in nature's agency from which the land's regenerative force could be possible. In other words, to have faith in the land is the first step towards the Fisher King's ideal to 'set my lands in order'.[50] As the result of this sympathetic denial, the polarity between the ineffable Eden and our fallen land—on which the pastoral is staged—is softened, and in its place is the ambivalence that pervades the text.

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[46] Gillian Beer, 'Windows: Looking In, Looking Out, Breaking Through', in *Thinking on Thresholds,* ed. by Subha Mukherji (London: Anthem, 2011), 3-16 (p. 5).

[47] Eliot, 'The Waste Land' II, l. 106.

[48] Eliot, 'The Waste Land' II, p. 59, l. 107.

[49] Eliot, 'Ash-Wednesday' III, l. 13.

[50] Eliot, 'The Waste Land' V, l. 425.

Among other things, 'Ash-Wednesday' is a text defined by acceptance in negation, with the figures in the tableau walking the vast expanses of 'betweenness'.[51] Where Eden and the fallen nature are concerned, the sensuality suppressed on the third purgatorial stair re-emerges in the divine landscape in the fourth section: it is communicated through the evocation of Arnaut Daniel in 'Sovegna vos', the fiddles and the flutes, and the garden god of fertility adjacent to the yews. It has also been suggested that by the end of the poem, the difficulty of self-abnegation is even greater than where the poem starts. The structure of double verb, such as 'I do not strive to strive towards such things' and 'I do not wish to wish these things', appears in the first and final sections respectively.[52] According to Denis Donoghue, the structure that reappears towards the end of the poem is subject to even greater pleasures and temptations, and therefore indicates a greater challenge.[53] At the heart of this challenge is the poet's sedulous exploration of nature's real agency as beyond the familiar paradigm of the Eden/nature antithesis: the restoring promise of the native land. As it turns out, this exploration is going to dominate Eliot's socio-political theory in the two decades that follow.

2.4 The renunciation of nostalgia

Alongside physical and spiritual elevation, one other movement central to 'Ash-Wednesday' is that of turning. Besides the third section of the poem, the first and last sections are also crucial sites for the dramatisation of this

[51] Eliot, 'Ash-Wednesday' IV, ll. 1, 2, 12, 14, 23; V, ll. 29, 32, 33.

[52] Eliot, 'Ash-Wednesday' I, ll. 5; VI, l. 7.

[53] Donoghue, *Words Alone*, p. 154.

symbolic movement. The 'turn' is frequently associated with Eliot's conversion (which literally means 'turning round') and is ascribed to the movement towards God and away from the world. Nevertheless, the ambivalence that pervades the text, in which the deconstruction of the Eden/nature dichotomy is included, suggests further gradations to this movement of turning. The experience of exile joins, instead of sets apart, the divine and the worldly.

'Ash-Wednesday' opens with this turning movement. However, there is more hesitancy than assertion in the speaker's statement. F. R. Leavis, among other critics, observes that Eliot's effects 'depend a great deal upon ambiguity' and identifies in such ambiguity Eliot's 'paradoxical precision-in-vagueness'.[54] Such 'precision-in-vagueness' is demonstrated in the first lines of the poem:

> Because I do not hope to turn again
> Because I do not hope
> Because I do not hope to turn
> Desiring this man's gift and that man's scope
> I no longer strive to strive towards such things
> (Why should the agèd eagle stretch its wings?) [55]

Beginning *in media res* with 'Because', the first sentence places the speaker in a defensive position, which presumes charges or temptations. By placing the negation upon the word 'hope', instead of the actual turning movement, the sentence acquires a certain syntactical awkwardness and can be interpreted both ways: either that the speaker is affirming the resolve of not going back, or the improbability of this prospect: that it is quite beyond hope. The sentence

[54] F. R. Leavis, *New Bearings in English Poetry* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1963 [1950]), pp. 86, 119.

[55] Eliot, 'Ash-Wednesday' I, ll. 1-6.

repeated a few lines down with only a local change of diction is no less dubious: 'Because I *cannot* hope to turn again'.[56] These two readings jostle against each other, as they imply diametrically different attitudes on the part of the speaker: one determined to stay on and one looking wistfully at the way back. The turn is therefore equally valid in both directions. The self-annihilating nature of the opening sentences is also echoed by the intricate rhyme scheme of the first two stanzas of the poem, which ends where it started ('again'/'reign', 'again'/'again'). The rhyme scheme itself, implying an agenda of return, seems to negate the negation made in the opening lines. These first lines therefore sound farther away from a denial and closer to an equivocation.

The question that naturally follows is 'where to', if there are options of turning (and turning round). Frank Kermode reminds us that 'Ash-Wednesday' requires to be looked at 'spatially'.[57] He points in the right direction, as one of the overarching questions 'Ash-Wednesday' asks is that of location, or to be more precise, the tension an expatriate feels between locations. Part of the poem's spatial ambivalence comes from the intense native pull inherent to the poem's organisation. Published in Spring 1928, the first section of 'Ash-Wednesday' is originally entitled 'Perch'io non spero', which is taken from Guido Cavalcanti's 'Ballata' written in exile in Saranza.[58] This context of spatial displacement sets the tone for the poem, with geographical movement therefore involved in the turning. Another unadopted title for this opening section gives further hints. Eliot once went for 'All Aboard for

[56] Eliot, 'Ash-Wednesday' I, l. 23.

[57] Frank Kermode, *Romantic Image* (New York: Chilmark, 1961), p. 163.

[58] Carol Muske, 'Something Upon Which to Rejoice: The First Section of *Ash Wednesday*', in *T. S. Eliot: Essays from the* Southern Review, ed. by James Olney (Oxford: Clarendon, 1988), 331-33 (p. 333).

Natchez Cairo and St. Louis' as the section's title, which refers to stops on the paddlesteamers' route up the Mississippi from New Orleans to St. Louis, Eliot's birthplace.[59] What is going on here is a homecoming agenda that is denied articulation, consciously distanced, but which keeps haunting the lines nonetheless.

Such desire for homecoming is revisited in the final section of the poem, which is yet again inflected by the overall context of conversion and the 'turn'. The extended wings of the 'agèd eagle', alluding to the eagle lectern in Anglican churches, now stretch to a different landscape to which the eagle equally belongs. Looking through another window, there is this time the New England seascape, where the young Eliot used to spend long summers with his family:

> Although I do not hope to turn again
> Although I do not hope
> Although I do not hope to turn
>
> Wavering between the profit and the loss
> In this brief transit where the dreams cross
> The dreamcrossed twilight between birth and dying
> (Bless me father) though I do not wish to wish these things
> From the wide window towards the granite shore
> The white sails still fly seaward, seaward flying
> Unbroken wings.[60]

The change of '[b]ecause' into '[a]lthough' is indicative of a yielding gesture, and possibly an ultimate (re)turn: this time to one's childhood memory in America. However, the scene is staged in a way that suggests its being the final

[59] TP1, pp. 732-33.

[60] Eliot, 'Ash-Wednesday' VI, ll. 1-10.

and arguably most challenging temptation to overcome, rather than an endorsement of the indulgence in pleasurable reminiscence. The childhood memory of the harbours in Massachusetts and Maine is phantasmagorically situated in a 'dreamcrossed twilight'. The reader may be reminded of Eliot's contemporaneous essay on 'Dante' (1929), where the poet laments the modern loss of the ability of seeing visions and discerns the difference between vision and dream. For Eliot, vision 'was once a more significant, interesting, and disciplined kind of dreaming', where dreams as implied are their modern unimaginative substitute.[61] Visions are closer to divine revelation, while dreams are taken as springing 'from below: possible the quality of our dreams suffers in consequence'.[62] On this showing, where visions assume certain transcendental reality in Eliot's belief, the dream of childhood memory in this section appears to be less than real.

The whole scene, like the pastoral scene ultimately dismissed, is viewed from a distance imposed through a window. The wings once 'agèd' are now 'unbroken', indicating a perpetual youthfulness existing only in fantasy. On encapsulating the nostalgic fantasy, the speaker's 'blind eye creates | The empty forms between the ivory gates'.[63] Here, Eliot alludes to Virgil's *Aeneid* where dreams reach the human mind through two gates: those that pass through the ivory gate are delusive while the ones through the polished horn contain truth.[64] The depiction of the New England memory as not only 'empty forms', but also looming from 'ivory gates', is tantamount to their renunciation,

[61] T. S. Eliot, 'Dante' [1929], SP, p. 209.

[62] Ibid.

[63] Eliot, 'Ash-Wednesday' VI, ll. 17-18.

[64] For Eliot's use of the allusion, also see 'Sweeney Among the Nightingales', TP1, p. 51-2; and 'The Waste Land: An Editorial Composite', TP1, p. 335, l. 352, and pp. 661-2.

even though the verb structure 'I do not wish to wish these things' indicates the wrenching difficulty. The denial of nostalgia, evinced by this last section of 'Ash-Wednesday', has been discussed by various critics. Robert Crawford, for instance, argues that the regression into childhood and innocence is less desirable to Eliot when not controlled in favour of a higher goal.[65] Gabrielle McIntire has also recently reiterated that much of Eliot's dramatic tension occurs 'because his speakers repeatedly strive to convince themselves that there is no surplus benefit to maintaining an emotional cathection to the intensest desires of the past'.[66] Both, however, mainly address the temporal dimension inherent to nostalgia, while as has been suggested, the nostalgic sentiment dismissed here in 'Ash-Wednesday' is as much temporal as it is spatial. It involves a certain degree of homecoming—to the New England granite coastline—immortalised by the distance of time in the memory of an expatriate. In fact, at the time of conversion and composition of this section in 1928, Eliot was also turning over his American birth and identity in his mind. In his Preface to *This American World* by Edgar Ansel Mowrer in the same year, Eliot made the following announcement regarding his own Americanness:

> …I have a background which Mr. Mowrer would recognize, and which is different from that of the native European and from that of many Americans. My family were New Englanders, who had been settled—my branch of it—for two generations in the South West—which was, in my own time, rapidly becoming merely the

[65] Robert Crawford, *The Savage and the City in the Work of T. S. Eliot* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1987), p. 189.

[66] Gabrielle McIntire, 'You Can't Go Home Again: Ambivalent Nostalgia in T. S. Eliot's Poetry', in *Modernism and Nostalgia: Bodies, Locations, Aesthetics*, ed. by Tammy Clewell (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 54-70 (p. 54).

> Middle West. The family guarded jealously its connexions with New England; but it was not until years of maturity that I perceived that I myself had always been a New Englander in the South West, and a South Westerner in New England; when I was sent to school in New England I lost my southern accent without ever acquiring the accent of the native Bostonian. In New England I missed the long dark river, the ailanthus trees, the flaming cardinal birds, the high lime-stone bluffs where we searched for fossil shell-fish; in Missouri I missed the fir trees, the bay and goldenrod, the song-sparrows, the red granite and the blue sea of Massachusetts.[67]

The ailanthus trees, goldenrod and granite enumerated here—tokens of memory for both his birthplace of Missouri and for New England—variously make their way into 'The Dry Salvages', while in the last section of 'Ash-Wednesday' where the speaker combats nostalgic sentiments, only New England seascape appears.[68] Such regional distinction matters when it comes to Eliot's theorisation of landscape and identity. Critics, Lyndall Gordon among others, have generally equated Eliot's Americanness with his New England ties, be they ancestral, scenic or romantic, and these tokens are usually decisive for such readings.[69] However, Eliot's confession above is closer to taking issue with a lack of uniform American identity than an affirmation of it: this preface has already indicated his 'Americanness' as somewhere in between locations, as wherever he is, he is already in the other place, with the notion of 'home' indefinitely postponed. Between the two American regions that both define Eliot's existence to some extent, one involves more ancestral imagination, emotional investment and sentimental recollection, whereas the

[67] T. S. Eliot, 'Preface to *This American World*, by Edgar Ansel Mowrer', in CP3, p. 492.

[68] More on this point in section 4.6 of the thesis.

[69] This underlying argument prevails Lyndall Gordon, *The Imperfect Life of T. S. Eliot* (London: Virago, 2012), most explicitly in pp. 11, 235.

other feels the more visceral: native, as he puts it in this Preface. Accordingly, throughout 'Ash-Wednesday' there are two landscapes where homecoming is concerned. One is the nostalgic dream of New England that is painfully dismissed. The other, which is at once sited and transcendental, is the conceptualised version of the native land hinted at by the original title of 'Ash-Wednesday' I, which includes Eliot's own birthplace St. Louis and resounds with the American vernacular ('All aboard!').

Seen in this light, the distanced effect created by the 'window' in the poetic account of New England emerges as all the more important, as what we consider as Eliot's 'home' base is already in itself a framed image viewed from Eliot's native South, and the meaning of what is native and home can be further implicated if the transcontinental scope of the poem is taken into view. The window sees the enactment of the poem's double gesture: it at once sets landscapes apart and ties them up in a relational bond where the notion of locale (especially that of nativity) is constantly rewritten by distant landscapes of memory or inhabitation. This point is also hinted at by Sarah Kennedy, who in a recent assessment of the poem significantly observes the co-presence of what she calls 'an internal logic of distances' and 'an overarching principle of adjacency' in the poem, the window's liminality instrumental to both.[70] For Kennedy, the window serves as part of the poem's key element of 'dissociations and displacements' while allowing for the 'the interpenetration of "here" and "beyond" with its inherent porosity. This dialectic revealed by

[70] Sarah Kennedy, '"Let These Words Answer": *Ash-Wednesday* and the Ariel Poems', in *The New Cambridge Companion to T. S. Eliot*, ed. by Jason Harding (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2017), pp. 89-102 (p. 94).

the image of the window, in which the native land—one's inheritance—is inflected by expatriation, is the subject of the second section of 'Ash-Wednesday'.

2.5 The return of the native: inheritance as 'our entail of dream'

'Ash-Wednesday', as discussed above, is a poem intensely informed by a postlapsarian sensibility: the speaker looks wistfully towards a home never to be regained in which he was perhaps never 'at home' to start with, as the preface to Mowrer suggests. Also being part of this sensibility, however, is the recognition of the actual time and place, and the cultivation of this fallen world that we inhabit. Thus declares the speaker in the opening section: as there is no hope going back to an edenic innocence, 'I rejoice that things are as they are'.[71] The poem is, in this sense, one that is 'torn on the horn'.[72] If the ivory represents the delusive nostalgia, then the horn is the palpable, the realistic, the everyday wrestle 'between season and season, time and time, between | Hour and hour, word and word, power and power'.[73] Critics who argue that the poem denounces the worldly in exchange for the divine, as to be expected from the fact of conversion, are missing out on the rich dimensions of the real world represented in 'Ash-Wednesday'. The poem is more than a crudely polarised litany, but rather the soul's painful search in the world we live, culling redemptive possibilities from their similar yet deceptive counterparts and forging again this world's bond with the divine. Viewed in this light, the

[71] Eliot, 'Ash-Wednesday' I, l. 20.

[72] Eliot, 'Ash-Wednesday' V, l. 22.

[73] Eliot, 'Ash-Wednesday' V, ll. 22-23.

tornness of the speaker's being in the world involves a great deal of hairsplitting efforts, in telling apart the 'vanished power of the usual reign' from 'The one veritable transitory power', the common word from 'the Word within | The world and for the world', and above all, the chimeras of pastoral and nostalgic sentiments from the real promises of the native land.[74]

As has been contended above, though having conquered the allure of fallen nature and its pastoralised representations, Eliot at the same time acknowledges nature's agency in man's possible redemption. The only genuine scene of redemption in 'Ash-Wednesday' takes place in its second section, where the scattered bones are reunited and redeemed in their land of 'inheritance'.[75] A closer look reveals, however, that the regenerative force of the native land is contained in a larger context of exile, including but not limited to what it inherits from *Anabasis*. This second section of the poem is almost entirely modelled upon the Book of Ezekiel, one of the prophetic books primarily concerned with diasporic experience. Among critics of the poem, some have addressed the weight of the word 'inheritance' and the tension it creates with the poem's exile motif. Kinereth Meyer, for example, provides a rather gloomy reading of the text, arguing that the 'inheritance' might as well be another exile and what is on offer here is far from a vision of salvation.[76] Despite Meyer's meticulous reading, what seems to be missed here is the important undertone of nativeness inherent to both Ezekiel's prophesy and 'Ash-Wednesday'. Taking

[74] Eliot, 'Ash-Wednesday' I, ll. 8, 13; V, ll. 5-6.

[75] Eliot, 'Ash-Wednesday' II, l. 54.

[76] Kinereth Meyer, 'The "Otherness" within "Ownness": Reading T. S. Eliot's "Ash-Wednesday"', *Christianity and Literature,* 51 (2002), 425-53 (pp. 440-41).

that into account, the redeeming promise of the section may start to reveal itself.

The Book of Ezekiel records the aftermath of the momentous Babylonian deportation of 597 BCE when a group of political elites were exiled from Judah to Babylonia, and ultimately came back to reclaim and restore the land (the nation of Israel) that had been occupied by the Jerusalemites in their absence. They are in effect the diaspora in its literal sense. Ezekiel is importantly one of these deportees, and naturally so is the implied audience of his prophesy. He prophesied, as Eliot does in the second section of 'Ash-Wednesday', the resurrection of the bones. The scene is most impressive for the vista of a crowd undergoing metamorphosis, taking place in a desert, with the connotation that 'the land that was desolate is become like the garden of Eden; and the waste and desolate and ruined cities are become fenced, and are inhabited', as Ezekiel had prophesied.[77] The resurrection, with the prospect of turning a desert of despair into a garden of fertility and hope ('the desert in the garden the garden in the desert'), is a continuation of the Christian tradition of building the holy upon the unholy.[78]

Similarly, the resurrection of the bones for Ezekiel is allegorical of the restoration of 'the whole house of Israel'.[79] One essential step of such an undertaking is to claim ownership of the land. The second section of 'Ash-Wednesday' ends on a momentous note:

This is the land which ye

[77] Ezekiel 36:35.

[78] Eliot, 'Ash-Wednesday' V, l. 34.

[79] Ezekiel 37:11.

> Shall divide by lot. And neither division nor unity
> Matters. This is the land. We have our inheritance.[80]

These lines give Ezekiel's prophesy almost verbatim.[81] Inherited land forms the basis of God's covenants with men. In the context of the Book of Ezekiel, it gives legitimacy to the returned exiles over the land of Judah, instead of to those Jerusalemites who remained. By appropriating Ezekiel's prophesy as well as its diasporic context, Eliot turns this passage of scripture into an almost self-revealing moment of hope. 'And neither division nor unity | Matters' is the poet's insertion which functions almost like an aside: physical dispersion of the people does not matter as long as they hold the same birthright to the land. The poet's own protracted expatriation further drives home the point: for a poet in exile whose separation from homeland seems almost unending (Eliot did not properly return home until 1932-33), it is a solace to think that one's 'inheritance' remains unaffected by the protracted term of exile. By emphatically modifying Ezekiel's prophesy into 'We *have* our inheritance', instead of the original 'for inheritance', the last line carries a solemn sense of reassurance that is only warranted by the fact of possession by birthright.

However, the poem's craving for one's native inheritance should not be hastily taken as the poet's defection from the Anglican Church to which he had just converted. Rather, the suggested ties to one's homeland or any homeland indeed figure as the inceptive moment of Eliot's contentious claim on a rooted Christian society, best articulated in *Notes Towards the Definition of Culture* (1949) as 'it would appear to be for the best that the great majority of human

[80] Eliot, 'Ash-Wednesday' II, ll. 52-54.

[81] Ezekiel 48:29.

beings should go on living in the place in which they were born'.[82] Critics have either dismissed this homecoming proposition of Eliot's as politically facile or at least incongruent with his migrant identity. Jed Esty's study on Eliot's anglocentric turn, for example, has never attempted to regard the poet's conflicting identities as an expatriate and a nativist in an equal light.[83] Eloise Knapp Hay pits Eliot's conversion—which she equates with England—against his American birth, arguing that in the poems written during the conversion his native land and people are 'no longer hospitable'.[84] However, judging from 'Ash-Wednesday' and the Book of Ezekiel as its subtext, what appeared as a paradox turns out to be only logical. In the Book of Ezekiel, the claim over inheritance is precisely contingent upon the reality of displacement. The right to one's own land—here Jerusalem upon which Israel is to be built—is not granted to those who remained, but to those in exile who are not after heathen gods. As an earlier chapter of The Book of Ezekiel goes:

> Therefore say, Thus saith the Lord God; Although I have cast them far off among the heathen, and although I have scattered them among the countries, yet will I be to them as a little sanctuary in the countries where they shall come. Therefore say, Thus saith the Lord God; I will even gather you from the people, and assemble you out of the countries where ye have been scattered, and I will give you the land of Israel.[85]

Inheritance, in other words, is less a product of geographical stability than that of faith. It is also for this reason that scholars, including Max Weber and

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[82] NDC, p. 52.

[83] Jed Esty, *A Shrinking Island* (Princeton University Press, 2004), p. 108.

[84] Eloise Knapp Hay, 'Conversion and Expatriation: T. S. Eliot's Dual Allegiance', in *The Fire and the Rose: New Essays on T. S. Eliot*, ed. by Vinod Sena and Rajiva Verma (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), p. 10.

[85] Ezekiel 11:16-17.

Antonin Gausse, have contended that exile makes the Jews less an ethnic group than a religious one.[86] Viewed in this light, neither division nor unity | [m]atters': one is entitled to one's divine inheritance despite physical distance.[87]

That said, the poem does not stop where one remotely clings to the idea of inheritance and where an imaginary homecoming (the 'entail of dream', as was put in *Anabasis*) is enacted poetically.[88] Eliot apparently initiates something more substantial:

> Because I cannot hope to turn again
> Consequently I rejoice, having to construct something
> Upon which to rejoice.[89]

The double reality of the Fall and his own exile ('cannot hope to turn again') thus urges the poet to 'construct', which is perhaps the next best thing. Its resonance, of constructing an actual parish church upon which a local religious community is predicated, will not be picked up again until 'The Rock' (1934). The word literally means to heap and fit parts together, and here in 'Ash-Wednesday' it has yet less to do with the actual construction process with rocks and bricks than with the idea of 'construction', of the gathering of dispersed things and men in an otherwise atomised society. When considered along with other relevant imagery throughout 'Ash-Wednesday' and works from the same period, such 'construction' in this world suggests another turn in

[86] Andrew Mein, *Ezekiel and the Ethics of Exile* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), p. 40.

[87] Eliot, 'Ash-Wednesday' II, ll. 53-54.

[88] *Anabasis* (1930), pp. 18-19.

[89] Eliot, 'Ash-Wednesday' I, l. 23-25.

Eliot's works crucial to his intellectual development: the building of a community.

2.6 'The Rock': building, dwelling, and arriving at the communal

If 'Ash-Wednesday' is concerned with Ezekiel's return and retrieval of his 'inheritance', then Eliot's first and only church pageant 'The Rock' (1934) is on this land's restoration and preservation. As with 'Ash-Wednesday', 'The Rock' is structured around the prophesy of Nehemiah, another homecoming figure who travels from Persia to Jerusalem 'with the sword in one hand and the trowel in the other', rebuilding and bringing the dilapidated city back to its glory.[90] 'The Rock' itself is also essentially a play about building. Premiered on 28 May 1934 in Sadler's Wells and commissioned by Rev R. Webb-Odell in the previous year, the play was created to help fund the actual building of forty-five new churches in the north London suburban dioceses, this being also its subject matter.

In the Book of Nehemiah, what is being built is as much the Church itself as a whole way of life it embodies and implies. While rebuilding the city wall, the prophet also carries out a series of social and political reforms to reinforce the local community. He takes away land and vineyards from wealthy officials, restores land possession to their original owners, summons people back from exile to settle, and helps the local families and returners to rebuild their community and re-establish their Jewish identity.[91] The community he builds

[90] T. S. Eliot, 'Choruses from "The Rock"' IV, TP1, p. 164, l. 19. Also see 'The Rock' V, l. 4; Nehemiah 4: 17-18.

[91] Nehemiah 5: 11-12, 7: 4-5,

is very much a parochial one with its limited size, self-sufficiency and ultimate authority of God. As the biblical account goes, he ordains the reconstructed community to be socially secluded and economically self-sufficient. No intermarriage with non-sectarian Israelites is allowed. Economic activities (production, exchange and debts included) are reduced on sabbatical days and holy days.[92] All these are for the renewal of the people's covenant with God.

Building is therefore intricately related to the lived reality of dwelling. It has been argued that in Eliot's translation of *Anabasis*, the tension between building and dwelling—not merely to occupy space but to stay there—is already present and carefully amplified with Eliot's deliberation in diction. Related to this tension is Eliot's intervention as a translator who brings the desire to be settled into full play, discussed earlier on in this chapter. While underscoring the powerful allure of settlement that promises fruitfulness and prosperity, Eliot's translation draws attention to the spatial and temporal hiatus between building and dwelling. Being the starting and ending note of *Anabasis*, the building activity and its association with dwelling is increasingly called into question in the deepening reality of displacement. The opening of the poem still sees, as in the biblical tradition evoked by Nehemiah, an age where the building activity is closely linked to the cultivation of man, and a good life upon the earth in compliance with God's Law (Eliot's capitalisation as against Perse's 'loi'):

[92] Nehemiah 10: 28-31.

> I have built myself, with honour and dignity have I built myself on three great seasons, and it promises well, the soil whereon I have established my Law.[93]

Whenever the travellers conquer one city, they build the local infrastructure, and enjoy the transitory bliss of settlement before pushing on to the next destination. The separation between building and dwelling culminates in the end of the poem, where the juxtaposition of the land's beckoning and the traveller's itinerant existence creates forceful tension:

> Plough-land of dream! *Who talks of building*?—I have seen the earth parcelled out in vast spaces and my thought is not estranged from the navigator.[94]

By now, the travellers have decided to venture into the sea, where both activities of building and dwelling are relegated to annihilation ('dream', '[w]ho talks of'). Nevertheless, by italicising and thus accentuating the whole question, the translation deliberately brings the ending of the poem to a disconcerting note, turning it into more of a problematic than a resolution. The concluding sentence recapitulates such discordance: though cast out to the sea, the speaker is again confronted with the vast expanses of the land, and this time finds it difficult to orient himself without the need to either build or dwell: hence the importance of the navigator. In the later 1938 revision Eliot again went for a safer translation, editing the last sentence into 'my thought is not heedless of the navigator' (ma pensée n'est point distraite du navigateur).[95]

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[93] *Anabasis* (1930), pp. 18-9.

[94] *Anabasis* (1930), p. 71.

[95] 'Anabasis' (1938), pp. 140-41.

However, the deliberate choice of the word 'estrange' in 1930 appositely communicates the sense of estrangement attendant upon not only the disentanglement of building from dwelling, but also the prospect of jettisoning them both as a result of further exile.

'The Rock', with its evocation of the prophesy of Nehemiah, could in this context be read as an attempt to re-establish the ties between building and dwelling. As the chorus goes, 'We build in vain unless the LORD build with us', and the presence of God, as we are informed, is primarily for the instillation of the communal spirit into the reality of collective dwelling:

> A colony of cavies or a horde of active marmots
> Build better than they that build without the LORD.
> [...]
> Though you have [...]
> sanitary dwellings with numbered doors
> Or a house a little better than your neighbour's
> When the Stranger says: 'What is the meaning of this city?
> Do you huddle close together because you love each other?'
> What will you answer? 'We all dwell together
> To make money from each other'? or 'This is a community'?
> And the Stranger will depart and return to the desert.[96]

What is cited above sees Eliot redressing the widespread misconception where community is concerned. It is not, as Eliot mentions elsewhere in the pageant, 'honeyless hives' where people live in close clusters without the occurrence of real intersubjectivity in the course of dwelling.[97] To comprehend what Eliot means by 'community' here, some back-pedalling should be allowed to trace the development of Eliot's notion of community leading up to this moment.

[96] Eliot, 'The Rock' III, ll. 41-56.
[97] Eliot, 'The Rock' II, l. 5.

In *The Idea of a Christian Society* (1939), Eliot envisages a Christian society based on small local parish communities, and hammers home the primacy of community over individuals. Where a Christian society is concerned, Eliot 'insisted upon the communal, rather than the individual aspect: a community of men and women, not individually better than they are now, except for the capital difference of holding the Christian faith.'[98] Many of the ideas in the book date back to 1932, when Eliot was contributing a series of theological discussions to *The Listener* under the title 'The Modern Dilemma'. In these articles, Eliot proffers Christianity as the antidote to some of the modern obsessions, including communism, science, psychological determinism, and eugenics. Even before that, germination of the communal idea had already existed in Eliot's works leading up to, and concomitant with, his momentous conversion.

When compared to *The Waste Land*, Eliot's poetry composed around the time of conversion may seem at first glance a breach of his own decree of impersonality. Unlike in the polyphonous *The Waste Land*, a confessional 'I' starts to emerge and becomes prominent in the poems that followed. *The Waste Land* starts with the painful awakening and the spiritual starvation of 'us': the plurality of identities persists throughout the poem, without a stable presence of an 'I'. 'The Hollow Men'(1925), which includes the first handful of poems written after *The Waste Land*, still seems the barren produce of a 'dead land' with 'stone images' of *The Waste Land*. It also opens with a collective voice, a

[98] ICS, p. 60.

group of scarecrows: '*[w]e* are the hollow men'.[99] However, what distinguishes its voice from *The Waste Land* is the entrance of a distinct 'I' in the second section, a scrupulous worshipper waiting to catch a glimpse of a divine vision, an interior monologue that intimates the authorial voice. Importantly, this emerging 'I' ushers in a more confessional stage in Eliot's creation. The detached observer in *The Waste Land* and the earlier urban, sardonic verses give way to a more personal voice. With its shift from the incantatory voice, this individualised voice entering in the second section also seems distanced from the 'we' that opens the first section. The third section of 'The Hollow Men' temporary leaves the 'I':

> This is the dead land
> This is cactus land

The syntactic parallelism with the opening lines '[w]e are the hollow men' suggests this section's return to the collective 'we'. Taken as a whole, the first four sections of 'The Hollow Men' thus show an alternating pattern between a poetic 'I' and a hollow 'we'.

However, despite the appearance of the confessional 'I', 'The Hollow Men' is arguably one step forward from *The Waste Land* as far as a communal spirit is concerned. As the alternation between 'I' and 'we' goes on, the divide between them becomes less categorical and arguably closes up towards the end of the poem. The confluence starts to evince itself soon after the entrance of the poetic 'I', who decides to disguise as a fellow hollow man ('Let me also wear |

[99] T. S. Eliot, 'The Hollow Men' I, TP1, p. 81, l. 1, emphasis mine.

Such deliberate disguises | Rat's coat, crowskin, crossed staves').[100] The fourth section, bearing the hallmarks of the 'I' in search of a divine visitation, starts to assume the collective identity of 'we' ('We grope together | And avoid speech | Gathered on this beach of the tumid river'), together dreaming of a vision while conscious of the futility of such hopes.[101]

The communal spirit, hinted at by the reconciliation of 'I' and 'we', is reinforced by their shared postlapsarian awareness. Throughout 'The Hollow Men' there is a sense of distance represented as the long shadow cast between the praying 'we' and God's kingdom, which serves as an explanation of the broken prayers towards the end of 'The Hollow Men'. It is worth noting that the distance is completely self-inflicted to a degree that it sounds almost like the result of a prayer: 'Let me be no nearer | In death's dream kingdom'.[102] Such supplication on the speaker's part importantly concurs with the moment of his alignment with the 'hollow men': in the second section, the speaker assumes their disguise in '[r]at's coat, crowskin', recognising his own fallen brokenness. Hence a certain solidarity from a shared recognition of the transcendental reality and its perpetual deferral, along with the frustration and hopes.

In 'Ash-Wednesday', Eliot's poem of conversion, the idea of community as a result of the fallen reality is further advanced. In the poem, the '[m]ultifoliate rose' in 'The Hollow Men' proliferates and becomes 'the Garden'; the scattered bones who 'did little good to each other' are 'united | In the quiet of

[100] Eliot, 'The Hollow Men' II, ll. 14-17; I, ll. 6-10.

[101] Eliot, 'The Hollow Men' IV, ll. 7-9.

[102] Eliot, 'The Hollow Men' II, ll. 11-12.

the desert'.[103] Among everything, the poem features a connecting endeavour: not only to connect the fragmentary voices and experiences of *The Waste Land* or the solitary imagery in 'The Hollow Men', but also to reach out to the 'people' and, in so doing, forge again their shared connection with God. Such endeavour is most visible in 'Ash-Wednesday' V. As is in 'The Hollow Men', the speaker who chooses to 'renounce the blessèd face | And renounce the voice' becomes part of the public, mixed with 'those who avoid the face' and 'those who walk among noise and deny the voice'.[104] If, to borrow Raymond Williams's comment on the fragmentary characterisation of James Joyce's *Ulysses*, that '[t]heir interaction but also their lack of connection is the tension of the composition of the city itself', then what Eliot does in 'Ash-Wednesday' is to mend the lost connection in the city and propose an alternative way of social organisation.[105]

However, the community hinted at in 'Ash-Wednesday' is not without tension itself. The word 'those', instead of 'we', suggests that in identifying with the people and with his own fallenness, the speaker is also consciously alienating them. That considered, the rest of the section, especially the frequent reference to a spatial 'between'ness, could be read as an explanation why community is taken as the only viable strategy. As the most prominent spatial marker in 'Ash-Wednesday', the word 'between' reveals the speaker's difficulty in locating himself in this fallen world, with his final discovery that his identity could only be relational. He is between the people and the Lady

[103] Eliot, 'Ash-Wednesday' I, ll. 32-33, 49, 51-52; 'The Hollow Men' IV, l. 13.

[104] Eliot, 'Ash-Wednesday' I, ll. 21-22; V, ll. 18-19.

[105] Raymond Williams, *The Country and The City* (London: Paladin, 1975), p. 293.

(God's agent on earth), in the way that the Lady is between them all and God. The difference between himself and the people, like all other differences inherent to the fallen world as the speaker enumerates ('season and season, […] word and word, power and power'), is still prominent.[106] However, with the pressing postlapsarian reality, the importance of such difference is discounted, and the speaker is instead prompted to reconcile with a larger unity. There will be no Eden on earth. What will be had is '[t]he desert in the garden the garden in the desert', where the scattered bones are united on their inherited land, and where the foundation of a secular country is to be laid and preserved.[107]

The same communal aspiration, as a result of a fallen consciousness, is recapitulated in *The Idea of a Christian Society*. In the book, Eliot associates the communal vision with an apocalyptic reality of the world. It is

> not a society of saints, but of ordinary men, of men whose Christianity is communal before being individual. [...] We have to remember that the Kingdom of Christ on earth will never be realised, and also that it is always being realised; we must remember that whatever reform or revolution we carry out, the result will always be a sordid travesty of what human society *should be*'.[108]

Such a bleak view of fallen humanity accounts for the priority given to the social organisation on the supra-human level and rigorous governance, thus his criticism of liberalism.[109] As Eliot puts it in one 1932 article in *The Listener*, '[n]o perfect scheme can work perfectly with imperfect men', and that '[y]ou

[106] Eliot, 'Ash-Wednesday' V, ll. 22-24.

[107] Eliot, 'Ash-Wednesday' V, ll. 34

[108] ICS, p. 59, emphasis mine.

[109] For Eliot's attack on liberalism, see ICS, pp. 17-22.

can eliminate the difficulties of the individual by eliminating individuality'.[110] To offset such imperfection, immediate control over individuals is needed, which is not too remote to prevent individuality from being unleashed again to an undesirable degree. Hence Eliot's highly parochial imagination of an ideal Christian society.

The community Eliot evokes in 'The Rock' through Nehemiah is very much a parochial one, which coincides with the more elaborated and systemic formulation of community in *The Idea of a Christian Society*. Admittedly, the book voices Eliot's disaffection with the current primacy of secular government over the Church, and demonstrates his wish to restore the authority of the Church on the national administrative level. However, what is truly at stake beneath the tug-of-war between Church and State is the tension between central administration and regional agency. *The Idea of a Christian Society* is based upon a regional model that challenges not only the national, but the cosmopolitan alternatives in terms of social organisation. In Eliot's proposition, the basic unit of this Christian society is the local parish, a notion already obsolete in Eliot's own times due to rapid urbanisation.[111]

This is a deliberate choice, as the parish is 'a community small enough to consist of a nexus of *direct* personal relationships'.[112] Such vision poses as the reverse side of national and cosmopolitan models of society. Nations are 'imagined' communities according to Benedict Anderson's widely-accepted observation. They are so primarily due to the absence of the direct personal

[110] T. S. Eliot, 'Christianity and Communism', *The Listener*, 7.166 (1932), 382-83 (p. 383).

[111] ICS, p. 29.

[112] ICS, p. 31, emphasis mine.

contact that Eliot advocates: 'even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet, them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion'.[113] Similarly, cosmopolitanism, on an even larger scale, is most often questioned for its viability, since the local and familial loyalties inevitably override more abstract universal cares and values, posing moral dilemmas. The contentions among these models are age-old and still ongoing. What Eliot does is propose his communitarian model of society that privileges community over forms of social organisation on a broader scale, hence the promotion of a local, regional allegiance to counterbalance nationalism on the rise. As he implies, a local existence is the mainstay of 'social tenacity and coherence'.[114] His criticism of a national Church, with its danger of devolving into a nationalistic Church, arises from the same rationale. According to Eliot, a national Church betrays the ideal of a universal Church on the conceptual level, and more importantly, it easily becomes prejudiced and even irrelevant, its top-down structure lending institutional supports to the churchmen who are out of touch with the 'native' culture of the local people.[115]

One needs to ask, first, what it is that makes the community 'cohere'. In other words, what makes a community *community* rather than a meaningless cluster of residents in 'honeyless hives', a 'colony of cavies' or 'a horde of active marmots'?[116] Second, where does the tenacity come from? The answer to these questions lies with Eliot's emphatic use of the word 'neighbour' in

[113] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London: Verso, 1991), p. 6.

[114] ICS, p. 34.

[115] ICS, p. 53. For more thorough discussion on this subject, see 3.2 of this thesis.

[116] Eliot, 'The Rock' II, l. 4; III, l. 41; ICS, p. 21.

'The Rock'. Meaning 'to dwell nearby', the everyday existence of neighbours contains promises that Eliot believes to be the first building block towards a real community. It is worth noting that familial ties, one's most immediate relationship in life, are minimised in both Eliot's social writings and 'The Rock'. Eliot seems to be primarily concerned with the structure of communication among strangers, and the key to such communication is an emotional bond predicated upon spatial proximity and direct contact. Eliot condemns bogus communities, large or small, whose basis is primarily economic: people who 'dwell together | To make money from each other'.[117] He reminds his audience of the preachings whereby one needs to 'love thy neighbour': 'How can we love our neighbour? For love must be made real in act'.[118]

To secure, reinforce and perpetuate such direct interpersonal communication, where love among strangers could be fostered, a community needs to be of a fairly small size to start with, and only a limited degree of spatial movement could be allowed to preserve such mutual geniality. As put in 'The Rock', '[m]an without GOD is a seed upon the wind': it is the trope of the seed and land again as in *Anabasis*, and this time, Eliot spells out that the seed needs 'lodgement and germination': it needs to be meaningfully rooted.[119] The agricultural metaphor of rootedness dictates spatial stability for the propagation of faith and good governance within community. For this reason, the preservation of a communal spirit in 'The Rock' is associated with the

[117] Eliot, 'The Rock' III, l. 53.

[118] Eliot, 'The Rock' II, l. 8.

[119] Eliot, 'The Rock' VII, l. 3.

denunciation of motor cars, along with the mobility they represent. The suburbanites

> live dispersed on ribbon roads,
> And no man knows or cares who is his neighbour
> Unless his neighbour makes too much disturbance,
> But all dash to and fro in motor cars,
> Familiar with the roads and settled nowhere.[120]

In 'The Rock', the suburban dwellers bear the brunt of Eliot's critical acerbity for being the progeny of urban sprawl, a subject that will receive more thorough treatment shortly. Where these lines are concerned, the topical 'ribbon-road' is taken issue with for being emblematic of spatial mobility. Ribbon roads, being the arterial by-pass roads linking the suburbs to the main city, had undergone such rapid development in the decades leading up to 'The Rock' that a 'Restriction of Ribbon Development Act' was passed in 1935. The development of suburbia and residences along the ribbon roads is accompanied and facilitated by the development of motor cars, which allow people to live on the outskirts of the city. Eliot's awareness of, and distaste for, such development can be seen over many years. In *Anabasis* Eliot knowingly mistranslated Perse's 'de chemins en lacets' [winding roads] into 'ribbon roads', orienting his English readers with present relevance. Also, in a letter to A. L. Rowse (a regular contributor to the *Criterion*) in 1931 Eliot vented his disaffection with the motor car industry and the urban way of life that it represents:

[120] Eliot, 'The Rock' II, ll. 44-48.

> When one observes the By Passes of London: mile after mile of suburban houses each [*sic*] its attendant Private Garage: this is merely planting out clerks and functionaries in places in which they could not possibly live unless each had his Small Car; it seems to me that the whole present settlement of England is being made to encourage the motor car industry.[121]

The motor cars on the ribbon roads drive both ways. They render the suburbs an extension of city life by connecting the two, while also taking the city dwellers and suburbanites in the opposite direction to 'Hindhead, or Maidenhead', both being popular weekending destinations in the country.[122] By criticising the objectification of the countryside in the weekending activities, 'The Rock', along with other poems from this period, exemplifies the rural turn of Eliot's career.

2.7 The location of community: Eliot's radical ruralism

In *The Fate of Place*, Edward Casey rightly observes that discussions on the nature of community almost inevitably involve a certain degree of 'implacement'.[123] Despite being a pageant created for the suburban parish and preoccupied with suburban matters, 'The Rock' has as its underlying tenet their transformation in compliance with an idealised version of rural life. 'The Rock' is therefore deeply rooted in the rural soil, as with Eliot's overall vision of the Christian community. It is hard to imagine the almost anachronistic visions of either *The Idea of a Christian Society* or *Notes Towards the Definition of Culture* to be viable in an urban society. If anything, both treatises feature

[121] T. S. Eliot to A. L. Rowse, 7 March 1931, L5, p. 506.

[122] Eliot, 'The Rock' I, l. 29.

[123] Edward Casey, *The Fate of Place* (University of California Press, 2013 [1997]), p. xiv.

Eliot's public repudiation of the 'mechanised, commercialised, urbanised way of life'.[124] Any representation of the (sub)urban life has therefore Eliot's presupposition of an idealised, timeless rural community as its superior. In so doing, Eliot is not isolating either rural or (sub)urban predicaments, but placing them in a larger structure where they are allowed to account for and confront each other.

The countryside for Eliot is the contested field where an assumed pre-industrial rural society is ravaged by the 'urbanisation of mind'.[125] In a *Criterion* commentary in 1938, Eliot instances the 'Music and Drama Bill', proposed by the British League of Audiences in the same year, for espousing the same urban mentality. In order to curb the widespread rural exodus into the city, the Bill sets out to bring urban entertainment to the doorsteps of farmers. For Eliot, despite the fact that it identifies the right problem, the Bill offers the wrong prescription because its implicit urban logic will accelerate the rural degeneration and urban sprawl. His critique is directed at the socio-economic structure underlying such proposals:

> I wonder how many of the people who advance schemes for 'improving the amenities' of village life and inducing people to stay in villages, are themselves in any real sense villagers? How many of our legislators can really be called 'country gentry'?—I mean, people who have been brought up in the country, whose substance comes from the cultivation of the land—people who are, economically, as much bound to the land as their tenants or their tenants' labourers: I do not mean retired bankers and industrialists who have become landowners or who own land maintained out of dividends from the City.[126]

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[124] ICS, p. 62.

[125] T. S. Eliot, 'A Commentary', *Criterion*, 18 (1938), 58-62 (p. 60).

[126] T. S. Eliot. 'A Commentary', *Criterion*, 17 (1938), 478-85 (p. 482).

This is, to start with, a position very much in sympathy with Raymond Williams's basic stance in *The Country and the City*, which tears down the country/city binary by identifying the same capitalist structure that unites, instead of severs, the two in a post-industrialist reality.[127] What sets Eliot apart from Williams is the supremacy he grants to the class of an idealised 'country gentry': the rural landed class presumably rooted upon the local earth, which is the socio-economic rallying point of a self-sufficient rural community and whose revenue depends completely upon the agricultural labour of his tenants. According to Williams, such nostalgic vision is only possible because poets largely assume the viewing point of the landed: 'the social condition of poetry […] is the idealized pastoral economy'.[128] In this pastoral and poetic mode, what is visible in the urban society scenes as well as literary representations or formulations are more often the landed gentry than cottagers or labourers.[129] In Eliot's case, real labourers are more often abstracted into pure agricultural labour that symbolises land fertility, communal stability and an organic life. The absence of rural labourers in either Eliot's social or creative writings is to receive fuller treatment in Chapter 4 by way of *Four Quartets*. It suffices to say for the moment that the idealised 'country gentry' constitutes the secular embodiment of the biblical 'inheritance', its lineage functioning on a conceptual level as the guardian angel of the continuity and stability of a rural community.

[127] Williams, *The Country and the City*, pp. 79, 137.

[128] Williams, *The Country and the City*, p. 99.

[129] Williams, *The Country and the City*, pp. 70-71.

This sense of historical continuity filtered through rural labour is essential to Eliot's conception of the land and rurality in general. As Eliot pronounces in an earlier commentary,

> the beauty of England is not primarily that of the more remote hills and moors which men have not yet found it worth their while to disfigure, but is to be found in the ordinary countryside which is largely the work of generations of humanizing labour.[130]

In other words, Eliot's notion of countryside is as remote from the Wordsworthian wilderness and moors as possible. As with the Romantics, nature can be a place where divination takes place, as Eliot spells out elsewhere, 'a wrong attitude towards nature implies […] a wrong attitude towards God', affirming nature's agency in a Christian context.[131] However, what concerns Eliot is less a sublimated nature independent of human existence than man's fate of being inextricably entangled with it through land cultivation and the construction of a live community thereupon: the original meaning of 'culture'. The word 'generations' is reminiscent of another remark Eliot makes on Rudyard Kipling's 'nearness to the past'.[132] According to Eliot, it is precisely the sense 'of the number of generations and peoples who have laboured the soil and in turn been buried beneath it' that gives the past its 'contemporaneity'.[133] The rural land is therefore the site invested with diachronic memories of a particular household, pedigree, tribe, village, or in

[130] T. S. Eliot, 'A Commentary', *Criterion*, 14 (1934), 86-90 (p. 88).

[131] ICS, p. 62.

[132] T. S. Eliot, 'Editor's Introduction', *A Choice of Kipling's Verse*, ed. by T. S. Eliot (London: Faber and Faber, 1941), 5-40 (p. 32).

[133] Ibid.

other words, tradition. In *The Idea of a Christian Society*, it is precisely tradition that sets a working community apart from a 'mob', the latter defined as 'bodies of men and women-of all classes-detached from tradition, alienated from religion and susceptible to mass suggestion'.[134] Appositely enough, the antidote Eliot prescribes for them is that 'all classes [...] should be settled in the country and dependent upon it'.[135]

From here emerges a distinction crucial to Eliot's ruralism: one between a lived countryside as against that of an objectified and modern consumerist tourism. The distinction is already visible when Eliot draws the line between 'humanizing labour' and 'disfigurement': man's two activities on earth. As Eliot rightly observes, the lived countryside is afflicted by the 'urbanisation of mind' lurking behind the weekending activities, yet the rural degeneration as a result will give rise to the latter, thus the vicious circle: with 'the decay of the English rural community', England 'will become divided into three parts: industrial areas (elevated or depressed), suburbs, and beauty-spots'.[136] 'The Rock', in essence, is a work informed with a painful awareness of such division. In another *Criterion* commentary in 1934, by way of questioning the National Trust's popular campaigns of setting aside natural 'preserves', Eliot again points out the mentality of such division. What the National Trust busies itself with, Eliot contends, is turning the English countryside into 'beauty spots', thus debilitating a working countryside into an aesthetic object:

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[134] ICS, p. 21.

[135] T. S. Eliot, 'A Commentary', *Criterion*, 18 (1938), 58-62 (p. 60).

[136] T. S. Eliot, 'A Commentary', *Criterion*, 15 (1936), 663-68 (p. 663).

> For one thing, we do not want to feel that we are protecting beauty spots against the needs of the people. And for another, the amount of preserving that could be done is quite indefinite. Some parts of England are more beautiful than others; some, because of their natural configuration, are quite exceptional; but there is very little of rural England that is not beautiful and worthy of protection. Some of the wilder and more romantic spots may be quite unsuited for tilth, grazing, or other legitimately profitable uses; these are rightly to be protected against the hotel on the hilltop, the week-end bungalow on the slope, the 'roadhouse' in the valley, the golf course on the downs, the pavilion on the beach.[137]

By adopting the diction of 'beauty spots', Eliot partakes in the preservationist discourse of his time. The preservationists sought to thwart the undertaking that turns rural England into a heritage industry, which is congenial to Eliot's plea that the countryside should be 'preserved *alive*'.[138] In the same year of Eliot's commentary, Cyril Joad, the illustrious preservationist of the time, published *A Charter for Ramblers: The Future of the English Countryside* (1934). The book bemoans the countryside's commodification and heritagisation: its beauty 'may be embalmed and preserved', but only as 'an exhibit in the form of beauty spots, with price of admission at so much per head'.[139] Respectively, Eliot and Joad spell out different forms of rural disfigurement by urban forces. Joad sees the profit-driven economy as the culprit for the expansion of the weekending industry and the acceleration of rural degeneration. Eliot, in comparison, is more concerned with materialised disfigurement in the form of the weekending infrastructure—hotels, bungalows, roadhouses.

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[137] T. S. Eliot, 'A Commentary', *Criterion*, 14 (1934), 86-90 (pp. 88-89).

[138] Ibid.

[139] C. E. M. Joad, *A Charter for Ramblers: Or The Future of the Countryside* (London: Hutchinson and Co., 1934), p. 14.

Apart from these material traces of encroachment, the urban sprawl into the countryside also manifests itself in the filth the weekenders leave behind, which for Eliot and his preservationist contemporaries constitutes yet another target for criticism. 'The Rock' satirises weekenders who travel to Hindhead or Maidenhead, '[p]lotting of happiness and flinging empty bottles'.[140] The criticism is directed at the ravage incurred by the weekending activities that surged from the end of the First World War, with the expansion of car ownership, bus travel and the already sound rail system. Forster's 'Abinger Pageant' (1934), produced in the same year with Eliot's own pageant, ends with a lament for the idyllic English landscape transfigured by mass tourism: 'Houses and bungalows, hotels, restaurants and flats, arterial roads, by-passes, petrol pumps, and pylons—are these going to be England?'[141] His later pageant *England's Pleasant Land* (1940) registers such adulteration in further details: the countryside is defined by 'motor cars, motor bikes, motor buses, paper and empty tins', where tourists on the bus 'shriek and wave to the families in the bungalows'.[142] The novel *South Riding: An English Landscape* (1936) by Winifred Holtby registers in more extensive detail the ordeal of the English countryside, in the Holderness coast of Yorkshire's East Riding:

> In winter the adjacent ground was trampled mud [...]. In summer the worn and shabby turf was littered with paper, stale bread, orange skins, chicken food, empty bottles, and the droppings of three goats, four dogs, one donkey, three motor-bicycles, thirty-six hens and two babies. The Shacks hummed with exuberant human life. Young men rattled down at

[140] Eliot, 'The Rock', III, l. 69.

[141] E. M. Forster, 'The Abinger Pageant', *Abinger Harves*t (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1976 [1934]), p. 384.

[142] E. M. Forster, *England's Pleasant Land* (London: Hogarth Press, 1940), p. 78.

> weekends on motor-bicycles from Kingsport. Young women tumbled, laughing and giggling and clutching parcels, from the buses.[143]

Similar accusations were also made by Cyril Joad in his wartime proposal to rectify the wrongs done to the English countryside. In 'The Face of England' written in 1942, Joad enumerated instances where the tourist 'invaders' killed the 'quiet' of rural England: 'its road became maelstroms of traffic along which cars hurled their inert occupants to the coast, its valleys came out in a rash of angry pink; every hilltop had its villa, every village its multiple store, while the sacred peace of the downs was broken by the snorts of motor-bicycles and the hoots of straining cars'.[144] Such is the preservationist context in which Eliot's 'The Rock' and his other ruralist writings are to be situated.

The material disfigurement of litter, filth, and urbanised infrastructure as the result of the modern consumption of the countryside is hinted at in Eliot's 'Journey of the Magi', the first of the *Ariel Poems*. Published in August 1927, this poem, rather than 'Ash-Wednesday' as is commonly believed, is in effect the first poem following Eliot's conversion. The dramatic monologue of the Magi's pilgrimage in a wintry setting almost rehearses the sterile landscape in *The Waste Land*. What makes it different, however, is the fact of its departure from the urban scene. The readers are invited to follow the sore-footed Magi through their journey, and are hence jolted to a country-city dyad:

> And the cities hostile and the towns unfriendly
> And the villages dirty and charging high prices:

[143] Winifred Holtby, *South Riding* (London: Collins, 1979 [1936]), pp. 43-44.

[144] C. E. M. Joad, 'The Face of England: How It Is Ravaged and How It May Be Preserved', *Horizon*, 5.29 (1942), 334-48 (p. 334).

A hard time we had of it.[145]

The hostile cities are already a familiar scene in Eliot's poetic imagination, but the specificities of 'dirty' villages and 'high prices' are apparently out of context for a religious pilgrimage. Partly by way of explication, in a letter to Alan Porter on 13 December, 1927, Eliot implies a certain realism—less of the Magi's times than of his own—at play in the poem: 'As the whole story of the Magi is not, I believe, an essential matter of Christian doctrine, I felt a certain liberty to treat it according to my own fantasy of realism'.[146] It is easier to understand the realism of dingy pricey villages in terms of the weekending activities: they are popular in Eliot's time, criticised by him in the following decade through social and creative writings including 'The Rock', and have a tradition to be described as 'pilgrimages' in contemporaneous travel writings. As cultural geographer David Matless observes, country leisure is regularly presented as pilgrimage in the travel discourses of the early twentieth century. In support of the claim, Matless cites H. V. Morton's *In Search of England* (1927) and Vaughan Cornish's *The Scenery of England* (1932) respectively, with the former comparing the writer's 'real pilgrimage' to the 'sheep-like pilgrims' of the masses.[147]

One way of reading Eliot's 'Journey of the Magi' is therefore to place it within this context of weekending as pilgrimage, along with the larger problem of rural degeneration as the result of urban sprawl. Appositely, the destination

[145] T. S. Eliot, 'Journey of the Magi', TP1, p. 101, ll. 14-16.

[146] T. S. Eliot to Alan Porter, 13 December, 1927, quoted in TP1 p. 760.

[147] Matless, *Landscape and Englishness*, p. 86.

of the pilgrimage is revealed to be a highly iconographical and idealised landscape, which is also fascinatingly English:

> Then at dawn we came down to a temperate valley,
> Wet, below the snow line smelling of vegetation,
> With a running stream and a water-mill beating the darkness,
> And three trees on the low sky.
> And an old white horse galloped away in the meadow.
> Then we came to a tavern with vine-leaves over the lintel,
> Six hands at an open door dicing for pieces of silver,
> And feet kicking the empty wine-skins.[148]

The verse features a distinctly biblical landscape, with the 'white horse' indicating the sign of God according to the Book of Revelation. However, the landscape is not tied to Bethlehem and the location is greatly open to interpretation.[149] In fact, this symbolic landscape is conflated with that of the English countryside, as the 'white horse' galloping away 'in the meadow' is also intensely redolent of the Uffington White Horse in Berkshire. The text situates the 'old white horse' in a tranquil, timeless milieu redolent of the English rural landscape, with its iconic temperate topography and expansive meadows. The delineation of the rural scenery here figures almost an ekphrasis of paintings by Eric Ravilious, known for his visual representations of the Uffington White Horse, most notably 'The Vale of the White Horse' (1939) and 'The Westbury Horse' (1939). These images are frequently associated by critics with the landscape painters of the 1930s and the *Shell Guides* popularised in the 1940s and 1950s, all part of a collective effort of

[148] Eliot, 'Journey of the Magi', l. 31.

[149] In a letter to his mother on 25 October 1927, Eliot mentions with a note of mischief that a friend, on reading 'Journey of the Magi', told him that if 'I [Eliot] meant it to be accurate, my geography of the country about Bethlehem was completely wrong! There are no snow mountains anywhere about, it appears. The poem has sold very well' (L2, p. 776). This shows that Eliot did not follow strictly the geography of Bethlehem and the landscape could be modeled upon a different location.

representing a changeless rural idyll that deliberately erases the presence of human figures from the scene, be they agricultural workers or swarming tourists.[150]

If at the heart of these artistic representations of (mostly southern) England is the politics of place-making, which asserts the importance of certain locations by attaching symbolic values to them, then the same process is enacted through the 'white horse' landscape in the poem. As the poem spells out, the Magi's journey is about 'finding the *place*; it was (you may say) satisfactory'.[151] The subjectivity of the value judgement ('satisfactory') suggests the constructed nature of the 'place' found, be it the destination of the Magi or the weekender. Nevertheless, the poem also reveals the cultural potency of these symbolic locations and landscapes, however distilled or removed from reality they are: notice the symbolic landscape's temporal ('[t]hen at dawn'), spatial ('we arrive') and stylistic (in much less realistic details) distance from the commodified villages and the weekending activities in the preceding verse paragraph. From here the irony of an idealised representation of rural England starts to emerge. The Magi later 'returned to our *places*, these Kingdoms | But no longer at ease here', their home and own people becoming 'alien' in their transformed perception.[152] In other words, on returning from the search for authenticity, the real places one once inhabited in the old kingdom are reduced to less-than-places, while the supposedly

[150] Denis Cosgrove, *Social Formation and Symbolic Landscape* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1984), pp. 264-67; Steve Ellis, *The English Eliot: Design, Language, and Landscape in* Four Quartets (London: Routledge, 1991), pp. 111-12.

[151] Eliot, 'Journey of the Magi', l. 31, emphasis mine.

[152] Eliot, 'Journey of the Magi', ll. 40-42.

authentic ‘place’, in comparison, is not in real existence. On this showing, the two countrysides in Eliot’s categorisation cited earlier, namely the aestheticised ‘beauty spots’ and the idealised rooted community embodying ‘humanized labour’, are integrated in the same paradox of placelessness. The paradox is more vividly enacted in ‘The Rock’, where the specific, actual living environment of the suburbs is lambasted for having betrayed the idea of (and an idealised) parochial community. ‘The Rock’, in this light, continues the leitmotif of navigation through displacement in *Anabasis*, ‘Ash-Wednesday’ and ‘Journey of the Magi’. The pageant’s preoccupation with a rooted, rural existence and the moral implications of such preoccupation need also be assessed along with the diasporic sensibility: one that forcefully underlies its text.

2.8 A ‘native’ in exile

‘The Rock’ is explicitly engaged with suburban life. What Eliot attempts through ‘The Rock’, however, is to turn suburbia back into the countryside by instilling into it the essence of rurality: a communal spirit rather than an ersatz connection with the earth that either weekending or the tilling of suburban gardens represents. The pageant is thus endowed with a rural heart. Though it barely contains any direct reference to the countryside, the craving for authentic rurality lurks beneath its every critique of suburbia, in the very rationale of building as well as the play’s claim upon a communal spirit: the essence of dwelling.

As mentioned earlier, the unity of building and dwelling is manifest in the pageant's central reference to Nehemiah the prophet. The conflict between Nehemiah and the local officials who thwart his reform—'Sanballat the Horonite and Tobiah the Ammonite and Geshem the Arabian'—figures a fight against wealthy landowners: those who are not native to the soil of Israel but allied with leading families within the city.[153] At the heart of this fight, as Walter Brueggemann observes about the Book of Nehemiah, is 'a dispute between two models of community ordering, one conventional after the manner of every highly ordered economic community, the other a radical vision of covenant'.[154] In other words, Eliot may have found in Nehemiah a kindred spirit because his own battle is not all that different: remember, he identifies as archenemy an 'urbanisation of mind' espoused by those who are not real 'country gentry', and regards the contestant field of the countryside as a last stronghold for a self-sufficient working community rather than a commodified object under the urban gaze. In the context of a rural community, building and dwelling are essentially the same thing as tilling the earth, hence the chant of urban workmen in 'The Rock' who yoke the two into one synthesis:

> *Chant of* WORKMEN *again.*
> The river flows, the seasons turn
> The sparrow and starling have no time to waste.
> If men do not build
> How shall they live?
> When the field is tilled

[153] Eliot, 'The Rock' V, ll. 1, 2.

[154] Walter Brueggemann, *The Land: Place as Gift, Promise, and Challenge in Biblical Faith* (Fortress Press, 1977), p. 156.

And the wheat is bread
They shall not die in a shortened bed
And a narrow sheet.[155]

It has been argued that Eliot remains critical of the weekending activities—to 'Maidenhead' and 'Hindhead'—for their betrayal of a working rural community. Eliot was only one of many intellectuals who vented their indignation at the sprawl of suburbia in the 1930s. In a 1937 poem 'Slough', John Betjeman condemns suburbia to death and summons bombs to fall upon 'Slough', his word for suburbia, for its 'synthetic' life. According to this critique the suburban dwellers receive everything second-hand: birdsong from the radio, countryside by weekending, and history channelled through bogus Tudor bars. An authentic life scares them like the real stars up above:

It's not their fault they do not know
The birdsong from the radio,
It's not their fault they often go
To Maidenhead

And talk of sport and makes of cars
In various bogus-Tudor bars
And daren't look up and see the stars
But belch instead.[156]

The crassness of the verses figures yet another burlesque of suburban inauthenticity. Louis MacNeice, writing from 1935, also lampoons suburban life and its connotations in 'Sunday Morning'. His satire is nevertheless more sympathetic with Eliot's representation in the 'Rock' in terms of its imagery and demonstrated pathos:

[155] Eliot, 'The Rock' I, ll. 109-16.

[156] John Betjeman, 'Slough', *John Betjeman's Collected Poems,* ed. by The Earl of Birkenhead (London: John Murray, 1958 [1937]), 21-23 (p. 22).

Down the road someone is practising scales,
The notes like little fishes vanish with a wink of tails,
Man's heart expands to tinker with his car
For this is Sunday morning, Fate's great bazaar;
Regard these means as ends, concentrate on this Now,

And you may grow to music or drive beyond Hindhead anyhow,
Take corners on two wheels until you go so fast
That you can clutch a fringe or two of the windy past,
That you can abstract this day and make it to the week of time
A small eternity, a sonnet self-contained in rhyme.

But listen, up the road, something gulps, the church spire
Opens its eight bells out, skulls' mouths which will not tire
To tell how there is no music or movement which secures
Escape from the weekday time. Which deadens and endures.[157]

The poem is a self-conscious sonnet whose form parodies its subject matter. Living in a suburb is like being trapped in a self-contained sonnet with a monotonous, unimaginative rhyme scheme. The message is communicated through the intricate coordination between the form and the imagery used. The scales that are practised and heard, with their repetitious monotony and rotating pattern, mirror the weekending activity ('you may grow to music *or* drive beyond Hindhead anyhow'), both representing a life 'bound upon the wheel' as Eliot once puts it a manuscript for *The Waste Land*.[158] The wheels that carry the weekending suburbanites to Hindhead, which are also the wheel of fate, already symbolise the futility of such escape out of its entrapment in the present. Again, weekending is depicted with the subtext as not only a travel across distance but an attempt to recover the 'past' with its assumed authenticity preserved by the rural land. Through such excursions, one can at

[157] Louis MacNeice, 'Sunday Morning', *Eighty-Five Poems: Selected by the Author* (London: Faber and Faber, 1959 [1933]), p. 50.

[158] Eliot, 'The Waste Land: An Editorial Composite', TP1, p. 335, l. 340.

most lay hold of 'a fringe or two of the windy past'. The present, which preoccupies the suburban mind, figures a rupture in history, severed from the past and alienated from the future: which means but bleak death. The church spire could have figured the only hope for transcendence, but its 'eight bells' prove no different from the insipid scales. All that are churned out from these bells are 'skulls' mouths' which, like the self-contained form of the sonnet, engulf the suburban dwellers along with the readers into a dark hollow. The suburban dwellers are each aware of their own discrete fates, but live in ignorance of their shared fate, of being caught up and consumed in a 'timekept' reality Eliot describes in 'The Rock':

> I journeyed to London, to the timekept City,
> Where the River flows, with foreign flotations.
> There I was told: we have too many churches,
> And too few chop-houses. There I was told:
> Let the vicars retire. Men do not need the Church
> In the place where they work, but where they spend their Sundays.
> In the City, we need no bells:
> Let them waken the suburbs.
> I journeyed to the suburbs, and there I was told:
> We toil for six days, on the seventh we must motor
> To Hindhead, or Maidenhead.
> If the weather is foul we stay at home and read the papers.[159]

The 'River' is the same river that 'sweats' in 'The Fire Sermon' which links the city to its suburban areas of Highbury, Richmond and Kew, witnessing sexual depravity.[160] Both the degenerate city and the suburbs are 'timekept', bound to the humdrum routine of weekdays and newspapers. They are mentioned and judged against an alternative temporality of the assumed rural

[159] Eliot, 'The Rock' I, ll. 19-30.

[160] Eliot, 'The Waste Land' III, l. 266.

community in Eliot's formulation, namely the integration of past, present and future upon the native soil. In citing Frank Kermode's differentiation between 'chronos' (time as 'mere successiveness') and 'kairos' (non-linear time), Jed Esty in his critique of Eliot's temporality contextualises such choice within the modernist collective counter-discourse against the grand narrative of progress and a linear understanding of time.[161] Making fruitful use of the interrelation between time and space embodied in Bakhtin's chronotopic perspective, Esty importantly considers his contemplation on what he terms 'metropolitan standard time' also in spatial terms: the fractured life of the European capitals in *The Waste Land*, for instance, is interpreted as the poem's informed response to the draining linearity that divests time of its meaning.[162] Viewed in this light, the critique of the 'timekept' nature of (sub)urban areas in 'The Rock' is also as much about time as being a contestation over the use of *space*. The 'standard metropolitan time' in Esty's phrasing is turning the (sub)urban areas into alien places or places housing foreign trade, as indicated by the 'foreign' flotations of the Thames. The word 'foreign' assumes a 'home' location ironically evoked by the presence of 'toil', which poignantly reminds of the conspicuous absence of tilling. It is against the presumed home of a rural community that the abuse of the land is judged—chop-houses rather than churches, beauty spots catering to weekending people, and all suburban amenities inclusive:

> A Cry from the North, from the West and from the South
> Whence thousands travel daily to the timekept City;
> Where My Word is unspoken,

[161] Esty, p. 116.

[162] Esty, p. 116.

In the land of lobelias and tennis flannels
The rabbit shall burrow and the thorn revisit,
The nettle shall flourish on the gravel court,
And the wind shall say: 'Here were decent godless people:
Their only monument the asphalt road
And a thousand lost golf balls'.[163]

Here, (sub)urban greens, as the space closest to the countryside in ideas (or rather planned with its imitation in mind) are critiqued through the golf balls and lobelias. Lobelias are often found in the flower beds of suburban gardens, which represent yet another piece of land defiled by the 'urbanisation of mind'. In their all too convenient, synthetic connection to the land they let slide the spirit of a genuine lived countryside: a rural community. Through the evocation of a suburban garden and other forms of suburban greens, Eliot is proposing an alternative scheme of non-linear time by redressing the wrongs of suburban space management, again judged against the idea of the timeless rural ideal that preoccupies his imagination.

Though possessing the potential of fertility, the suburban gardens and other forms of urban greens are thus relegated to yet another form of the waste 'land'. Such distaste for suburban gardens on Eliot's side dates back to the years leading up to *The Waste Land*, when he was relishing the evil in the back streets of Paris and London, scavenging in their degeneration for poetry. Looking at and beyond the city, Eliot naturally cast his gaze upon the cluttered suburban dwellings. However, without the parameter of a rural community in mind, the spatial representations then are still remarkably distinct from those in 'The Rock'; so with the underlying message. As early as in May 1917, Eliot

[163] Eliot, 'The Rock' III, ll. 28-36.

published his only attempt at prose fiction in the *Little Review* entitled 'Eeldrop and Appleplex' (1917), Eeldrop being his alias.[164] For Eeldrop, a suburban garden is emblematic of his own humdrum living as a bank clerk—not because they are 'commonplace, respectable' or 'domestic', but because they are 'too well pigeon-holed, too taken-for-granted, too highly systematized'.[165] Here, another suburban garden is evoked, but for different reasons than in 'The Rock':

> The suburban evening was grey and yellow on Sunday; the gardens of the small houses to left and right were rank with ivy and tall grass and lilac bushes; the tropical South London verdure was dusty above and moldy below; the tepid air swarmed with flies. Eeldrop, at the window, welcomed the smoky smell of lilac, the gramophones, the choir of the Baptist chapel, and the sight of three small girls playing cards on the steps of the police station.[166]

The passage is suffused with a fetid smell oozing from the gardens. The unkempt, overgrown gardens turn inside out the smooth, decent surface of suburban life, of lilacs (when well grown) and gramophones. As in 'The Rock', a parameter of comparison is also at work here, where the suburban gardens are judged against their well-maintained counterparts whose upkeep can be costly, presumably of those old country house gardens belonging to the land-owning classes. In this case, the suburban gardens here also calls a certain ruralism to mind, but are at this stage still tinged with an intense upper-class complacency usually attached to the ruralist nostalgia. The stink that pervades the scene, therefore, is more of an intellectual kind.

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[164] CP1, p. 525. In her biography of Eliot, Lyndall Gordon cites Donald Gallup and suggests Eeldrop and Appleplex to be Eliot and Pound respectively: Gordon, p. 109 n.

[165] T. S. Eliot, 'Eeldrop and Appleplex', *The Little Review*, 4 (1917), in CP1, p. 526.

[166] Eliot, 'Eeldrop and Appleplex', in CP1, p. 528.

As with MacNeice's 'Sunday Morning' and 'The Rock', this passage from 'Eeldrop and Appleplex', with its setting on a supposedly church-going Sunday, also takes issue with the disintegration of church communities manifest in the secularisation of daily life. In the passage, however, the critique on this front is still moderate. Instead, the depiction of the sultry suburbs provokes a number of senses, with the sound of gramophones and chapel choir, the sight of girls playing cards, and not least the reeking smell. In other words, the suburb here is still very much a lived place. That said, it is still worth noting how a suburban atmosphere is often counterbalanced by a sense of itinerancy and displacement, demonstrated by examples enumerated above: texts where the unwelcome and disarranged mobility brought about by motor ways and automobiles is foregrounded and depicted in different degrees of disparagement. Here one is also reminded of Virginia Woolf, who in a 1924 letter to *Nation and Athenaeum* denounces the proliferation of motor cars for ruining the old 'English road' with its 'flowery and untidy hedges; its quiet; its ancient and irregular charm'.[167] In comparison to a supposedly meaningful building or the right way of dwelling, the suburbs in these literary representations cited are almost relegated to the non-places in Marc Augé's formulation: motorways, airports and hotel chains that are failures or unwanted excesses of place if the latter is to be defined as relational, historical, or identity-making.[168] In reducing the suburbs to non-places, what takes place in 'The Rock' figures as what David Gilbert and Rebecca Preston summarise as a

[167] *The Essays of Virginia Woolf*, Vol 3 (1919-1924), ed. by Andrew McNeillie (London: Hogarth Press, 1991), p. 440.

[168] Marc Augé, *Non-Places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity*, tr. by John Howe (London: Verso, 1995 [1992]), pp. 77-78.

wide-spread 'English anti-suburban rhetoric' in which the actually highly variegated suburbia is often dismissed as 'nowhere' and a betrayal of the notion of Englishness.[169] In the pageant, Eliot designates the suburban dwellers with a certain foreignness and displacement, despite their being at home. Such displacement (or even de*place*ment) is reflected through the sense of alienation that informs the depiction of the suburbs in the pageant. In the 'timekept City' 'the River flows, with foreign flotations'.[170] The opening of the second chorus repeats almost verbatim Ephesians 2: 19-20, leaving out only the starting apostrophe 'ye are no more strangers and foreigners'. The omission itself insinuates the conspicuous displacement of the suburbanites. The point is reinforced by an accusation that tightly follows, taking issue with their looking towards 'foreign lands' in vain.[171] For Eliot, even though the suburbanites take residence in a house along ribbon roads, they are still 'settled *nowhere*'.[172]

The suburb is condemned as the non-place in comparison to an idea of a rural community. The location of this rural ideal, however, is no less problematic. In a note to the word 'idea' in the title of *The Idea of a Christian Society*, Eliot concedes the somewhat anachronistic and utopian nature of his vision of a rooted parochial society by clarifying emphatically that he was arguing for the 'conception of a thing, which is not abstracted from any

[169] David Gilbert and Rebecca Preston, '"Stop being so English": Suburban Modernity and National Identity in the Twentieth Century', in *Geographies of British Modernity: Space and Society in the Twentieth Century*, ed. by David Gilbert, David Matless and Brian Short (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2003), 187-203 (pp. 188-89).

[170] Eliot, 'The Rock' I, ll. 19-20.

[171] Eliot, 'The Rock' II, l. 6.

[172] Eliot, 'The Rock' II, l. 48, emphasis mine.

particular state, form or mode'.[173] In other words, the rural community is also located nowhere: it is grounded upon and is likely to be materialised on a large scale in no specific country, region, or point in history. The community itself figures as a non-place less in Augé's sense this time, but more as a 'nowhere' on earth, or utopia in its literal sense.

It is here that Eliot's notions of building and dwelling, as represented in 'The Rock', are fundamentally different from those of Martin Heidegger, despite their being congenial in many important ways. Eliot's familiarity with his German contemporary is observed in one *Criterion* commentary in 1932. Heidegger, by this time, had not yet produced his philosophical investigation of 'Building Dwelling Thinking', but had already proposed the situatedness of human existence in *Being and Time,* which Richard Shusterman associates with Eliot's own recognition of man's bounded existence 'in particular places and at particular times'.[174] The shared emphasis on situatedness came to fruition, albeit separately, in their almost parallel theories about a rooted existence. Heidegger's proposition on building and dwelling is in many ways sympathetic to that in 'The Rock', where Eliot unites the building and dwelling in the single image of 'trowel' that evokes its rural and agrarian undertone. In his definition, Heidegger gives 'dwelling' an ontological importance by identifying it with living itself: 'The way in which you are and I am, the manner in which we humans *are* on the earth, is *Buan*, dwelling. To be a

[173] ICS, p. 67.

[174] T. S. Eliot, *The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism*, 2nd edn (London: Faber and Faber, 1964), p. 142; Richard Shusterman, 'Eliot as a Philosopher', in *The Cambridge Companion to T. S. Eliot* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), ed. by A. David Moody, 31-47 (p. 42).

human being means to be on the earth as a mortal. It means to dwell.'[175] It involves place-making where space is 'let into its bounds'.[176] Dwelling, therefore, figures man's identity-giving to the 'vacant places' and 'open places': the presumably primal space '[w]aste and void' as are put in 'The Rock'.[177] Nevertheless, such meaningful place-making is much more than occupying a space:

> The truck driver is at home on the highway, but he does not have his shelter there; the working woman is at home in the spinning mill, but does not have her dwelling place there; the chief engineer is at home in the power station, but he does not dwell there. These buildings house man. He inhabits them and yet does not dwell in them. […] In today's housing shortage even this much is reassuring and to the good; residential buildings do indeed provide shelter; today's houses may even be well planned, easy to keep, attractively cheap, open to air, light, and sun, but—do the houses in themselves hold any guarantee that *dwelling* occurs in them?[178]

These lines, which differentiate mere inhabitation from dwelling, are intensely reminiscent of the similar differentiation in 'The Rock' where suburban lodgings are denied the status of meaningful dwelling. With a same communal and rural spirit as in 'The Rock', Heidegger qualifies dwelling as 'to cherish and protect, to preserve and care for, specifically to *till the soil*, to cultivate the vine'.[179]

In 'Building Dwelling Thinking', Heidegger then fleshes out this idea of dwelling—in its entirety as a sited, rural and thereby rooted existence—by

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[175] Martin Heidegger, 'Building Dwelling Thinking', *Poetry, Language, Thought,* tr. by Albert Hofstadter (New York: Perennial Classics, 2001 [1951]), 141-60 (p. 145).

[176] Heidegger, 'Building Dwelling Thinking', in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, p. 152.

[177] Eliot, 'The Rock' I, ll. 79, 97; VII, ll. 1, 6, 17, 40.

[178] Heidegger, 'Building Dwelling Thinking', in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, pp. 143-44.

[179] Heidegger, 'Building Dwelling Thinking', p. 145, emphasis mine.

instancing a real lived place with geographical specificity, of 'a farmhouse in the Black Forest, which was built some two hundred years ago by the dwelling of peasants'.[180] The self-sufficient, closed community is not dissimilar to the rooted parochial society in Eliot's conception. The critical difference, however, rests with the fact that Heidegger had indeed partaken in the lived experience in the rural community he later philosophised: an experience which lasted for almost a year from winter 1932-33 till the autumn of 1933. His own account of life in Black Forest is informed with vivid details, of experiencing instead of merely observing the seasonal cycles, and of conversing with local peasants on quotidian details of husbandry and familial trivialities. According to Heidegger, it is precisely this lived experience in the rural cabin among local peasants, rather than anything else, that animates his philosophy. In 'Why do I Stay in the Provinces' (1934), reminiscing on his rural dwelling experience, Heidegger asserts that

> …This philosophical work does not take its course like the aloof studies of some eccentric. It belongs right in the midst of the peasants' work. When the young farmboy drags his heavy sled up the slope and guides it, piled high with beech logs, down the dangerous descent to his house, when the herdsman, lost in thought and slow of step, drives his cattle up the slope, when the farmer in his shed gets the countless shingles ready for his roof, my work is of the same sort. It is intimately rooted in and related to the life of the peasants.[181]

and

> The inner relationship of my own work to the Black Forest and its people comes from a centuries-long and irreplaceable rootedness in the

[180] Heidegger, 'Building Dwelling Thinking', p. 147.

[181] Martin Heidegger, 'Why Do I Stay in the Provinces', in *Heidegger: The Man and the Thinker*, ed. by Thomas Sheehan (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2011 [1934]), p. 28.

> Alemannian-Swabian soil. […] At most, a city dweller gets 'stimulated' by a so-called 'stay in the country'. But my whole work is sustained and guided by the world of these mountains and their people.[182]

These remarks, substantiated by the philosopher's own lived experience, make a piquant counterpoint to Eliot: a self-conscious city dweller even at his most belligerent moments where rural matters are concerned. In the *Criterion* commentary cited above regarding the 'Music and Drama Bill' 1938, Eliot's own pleading of guilt tightly follows his criticism of the urbanisation of mind among legislators and the bogus 'country gentry': 'I should myself find it as difficult to live in the country as to give up smoking—more difficult, for my urban habits are of much longer standing than the habit of smoking: they are, indeed, pre-natal'.[183] In an earlier letter to John Middleton Murry, Vivien Eliot also voiced her observation of a similar strain: 'Tom […] never seems to really *like* the country, or to know what to do with it'.[184] These facts make Eliot's position vulnerable to Heidegger's attack on the 'dishonest chatter about "folk-character" and "rootedness in the soil"'.[185]

The fact of Eliot's physical absence from real rural communities, along with his intellectual detachment from the non-places of (sub)urban areas, potentially opens up a new dimension of understanding rootedness in the diasporic context in which Eliot most firmly locates himself. As an idea, a rooted community is criticised by many critics for its reactionary undertone. Hannah Arendt, schooled in Heidegger's philosophy, is suspicious of her old master's appeal to

[182] Ibid.

[183] T. S. Eliot, 'A Commentary', *Criterion*, 17 (1938), 478-485 (p. 482).

[184] Vivienne Eliot to John Middleton Murry, 30 August 1926, L3, pp. 267-68.

[185] Heidegger, 'Why Do I Stay in the Provinces', in *Heidegger: The Man and the Thinker*, p. 29.

the 'volk' and any attempt to establish identity upon grounds of ethnic community. For Arendt, such allegiance to one's home or homeland is debilitating in both spatial and political terms, as they preclude the renewal of the 'common world': public spheres of free action and deliberation.[186] David Harvey, while contending for a 'geography of freedom' of a similar strain as Arendt's, privileges spaces open to vibrant contestations over compartmentalised closed places. For Harvey, any place-based theory which lays emphasis on locality is potentially answerable for the rise of nationalism, fascism, and neoliberal individualism.[187] Heidegger bears the brunt of Harvey's criticism: being a prominent exponent of a rooted existence and place-based identity, his involvement with the Nazi Party concurred with his dwelling in the Black Forest. Harvey does not instance Eliot in particular in his criticism, but his point is ready: the closed, local, rooted parochial community of Eliot's conception has attached to it reactionary and even scandalous political connotations, fascism included.

However, the poet and pilgrim of Eliot in 'The Rock' assumes an almost spectral existence traversing the non-places. This persona, as a generic outsider living out the 'transcendental homelessness' as György Lukács puts it, fits his own expatriate identity.[188] A fact often neglected about 'The Rock' is that the whole pageant is organised around the observations of a traveller ('I journeyed to London, to the timekept City'), a Stranger, who comes from 'the desert',

[186] Hannah Arendt, *Between Past and Future* (New York: Viking, 1961), p. 196.

[187] David Harvey, *Cosmopolitanism and the Geographies of Freedom* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), pp. 198-99.

[188] György Lukács, *The Theory of the Nove*l, tr. by Anna Bostock (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1971), p. 41.

intervenes in the suburban life, and 'who knows how to ask questions'.[189] This is where *Anabasis* becomes relevant again: a poem organised around the observations of a traveller, a foreigner, a 'Stranger. Who passed' ('Étranger. Qui passait'). The steadfast rootedness of 'the Rock'—upon which 'I will build my church'—is thereby found located in a context of constant passing, a geography of movement and displacement.[190] By the time of creating 'The Rock', Eliot had already been trying to body forth this dialectic between rootedness and movement. 'Ash-Wednesday' sees Eliot's first attempt to visualise this dialectic:

> Against the Word the unstilled world is still whirled
> About the centre of the silent Word.[191]

In 'Triumphal March' (1931), the first of the two unfinished *Coriolan* poems, Eliot adapts his earlier poem 'Hidden under the heron's wing' written in the early 1910s before he left Boston, while adding to it the same imagery. This time the word 'centre' turns into a spatially neutral 'point', which is again placed amidst a world of movement:

> O hidden under the dove's wing, hidden in the turtle's breast
> Under the palm tree at noon, under the running water
> At the still point of the turning world. O hidden.[192]

It is worth noting that the development of the imagery concurs with Eliot's own conversion and naturalisation as a British citizen. Viewed in this light, the

[189] Eliot, 'The Rock' I, l. 19; III, ll. 52, 56-57.

[190] Matthew 16:18.

[191] Eliot, 'Ash-Wednesday' V, ll. 8-9.

[192] T. S. Eliot, 'Triumphal March', *Coriolan*, TP1, p. 131, ll. 32-34.

image is appositely related to the paradoxes (or 'tornness') that predominate in the texts from 'Ash-Wednesday' through 'The Rock', where the yearning for the native inheritance coexists with a newly-acquired allegiance to the Anglican Church and its country, and where 'the Rock' for rooted existence in a parochial community is laid out by an itinerant 'Stranger'/foreigner. That Eliot represents both the native rural community and suburbia (the 'urbanisation of mind' being the culprit for its ugliness) as 'non-places' also becomes understandable in this context. The quandary of inhabiting the mundane while craving for an imagined, transcendental home rooted deeply in one's ancestral soil—with the craving turning both locations less real—is yet another trope for the diasporic reality in which Eliot finds himself.

It is arguable, therefore, that Eliot and Heidegger's ostensibly similar narratives about rootedness are propelled by different rationales and espouse different aspects of identity politics. Unlike Heidegger who self-consciously locates his own existence as a philosopher upon the geographical specificity of 'the Alemannian-Swabian soil', Eliot's own identity in relation to places is far more dubious, be they London, New England, or an imaginary pre-modern pre-revolutionary English countryside. Two years before the production of 'The Rock', Eliot had started his actual homecoming by taking up the Norton professorship in Harvard for the academic year of 1932-33. He confessed to Pound in complete confidentiality that America is doing him good, so much so that in the Spring of 1933 he felt 'torn' between America and England.[193] This 'tornness', along with the metaphor of the window Eliot twice resorts to in

[193] Quoted in Gordon, *The Imperfect Life*, p. 247.

'Ash-Wednesday', is revisited by Eliot in a letter to Paul Elmer More on 18 May 1933. In the letter, Eliot describes his life in America as Alice in wonderland:

> My life seems like Alice and the glass table: there is something I want here (domestic affection) and something I want in England, and I can't have both; fortunately the time of choice is long since past. One side of life suffers from dullness, the other from nightmare—the last eighteen years like a bad Dostoevski novel.[194]

Eliot spells out the specific appeal of America as 'domestic affection', but indicates only obliquely the reason for returning to England as 'something'. One of the reasons, as hinted here, is the physical proximity to the moral struggles that are more vividly enacted in England. However, the Alice trope reveals another hidden impetus that underlies his coming back to England. Eliot's primary identity is not defined by any closed place or ethnic/national community, but by his liminality between the two lands, like Alice's by her existence between the two worlds. The world of the solid glass table and that of the dreamlike occurrences vie for his allegiance, with neither being less real than the other.

In his study on Eliot's Europeanisation, Alex Zwerdling implies that Eliot's conversion and his increasing insistence on community are both the offshoot of the sense of belonging attendant upon his prolonged exile.[195] The fact of Eliot's conversion (and perpetuated expatriation) and of a celebration of rootedness (and inheritance of one's native land) is thus united in the single

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[194] T. S. Eliot to Paul Elmer More, 18 May 1933, L6, pp. 583-84.

[195] Alex Zwerdling, *Improvised Europeans: American Literary Expatriates and the Siege of London* (New York: Basic Books, 1998), pp. 305-6.

identity of 'Stranger', an imagery predominant in Eliot's works around the decade of his conversion. As Svetlana Boym observes of Vladimir Nabokov: 'the only way to survive the exile imposed upon him was to mimic it, to improvise constantly on the exilic theme, to write about returns home'—and presumably also to indefinitely postpone the actual homecoming and to write about the sense of displacement even at one's home country.[196] Eliot's insistence, upon people's communal existence on the native land, is therefore farther away from Heidegger's place-based nativism and closer to Boym's own formulation of a certain 'diasporic intimacy'. By evoking the meaning of 'home' and 'familiarity' inherent to the word 'intimacy', Boym locates the collective desire among immigrants to restore a home-like intimacy within its own diasporic context: 'one learns to live with alienation and reconciles oneself to the uncanniness of the surrounding world and to the strangeness of the human touch'.[197] It is precisely in this context that Eliot's works of his post-conversion decade should be understood.

Along with the rhetoric of '(re)turn' in 'Ash-Wednesday', many works of the latter half of Eliot's career foreground a homecoming plot, most importantly that of Thomas Becket in *Murder in the Cathedral* (1935), of Harry in the highly autobiographical *The Family Reunion* (1939), and of the speaker himself in 'The Dry Salvages' (1941). Taking forward the contention that the homecoming urge underlying Eliot's post-conversion texts is largely animated by a diasporic sensibility, where the longing for home is incorporated into a forceful discourse of displacement, the following chapter investigates a

[196] Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia* (New York: Basic Books, 2001), p. 252.

[197] Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia*, p. 254.

different radical aspect of homecoming, in which the uncanny/unhomely (*unheimlichkeit*) sensation evoked by the home territory is given the agency of upsetting the centralising spatial orderings of political power. Hence a new order emerging from a destablised, bloodstained and abject home landscape.

CHAPTER III
ABJECTING THE NATION:
ELIOT AMONG THE BRITISH SURREALISTS OF THE 1930S

3.1 Introduction

In his 1930 speech entitled 'Blood and Soil as the Foundation of Life of the Nordic Race', Richard Darré, Hitler's Minister of Agriculture, suggested that 'the unity of blood and soil [*Blut-und-Boden*] must be restored' to guarantee an authentic Germanness.[1] Here, the purity of blood and its geographical rootedness to the ancestral soil work to justify the racial violence against the nomadic Jewish population. The idea was first introduced by Oswald Spengler in *The Decline of the West* (1918-1922), the second volume of which was reviewed in the *Criterion* by H. J. Massingham in 1930, and critiqued for drawing 'false analogies between biological cycles and the movement of ideas, between the mechanisms of plant-life and the records of human society'.[2]

The 'Blood and Soil' discourse that stresses geographical rootedness and racial homogeneity on a national level is apparently similar to Eliot's own articulation of meaningful dwelling on an inherited land, which is discussed more thoroughly in the preceding chapter. For this reason, Eliot's potential complicity with fascist discourse has lately been subject to discussion as part of the larger accusations regarding Eliot's anti-semitism. Current studies in this regard, however, are generally based upon Eliot's association with right-wing figures connected to the organic husbandry movement in the 1930s. In an

[1] Quoted in Jeffrey McCarthy, *Green Modernism: Nature and the English Novel, 1900 to 1930* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), p. 192.

[2] H. J. Massingham, 'Review of *Decline of the West: Perspectives of World History* by Oswald Spengler', *Criterion*, 9 (1930), 731-37 (p. 737).

influential study on the ideological connotations of the folk movement including the organic husbandry movement in 1930s England, Frank Trentmann hints at the German root of these anti-industrial discourses that promotes the return to the 'true' countryside and agricultural activities.[3] Trentmann's study inspired two decades of scholarly attention to Eliot's association with the far-right tendencies of the ruralist discourse, and in particular those of Viscount Lymington and George Stapledon. One of the most recent studies in this regard is by Alexandra Harris, who concludes a little too hastily from Eliot's correspondence with Lymington that Eliot inherits from the latter 'a rush of blood-and-soil rhetoric, hymning the rootedness of the racial "family"'.[4] Details of Eliot's association with the right-wing ruralists of the organic husbandry movement are unpacked in studies by scholars including David Matless and Jeremy Diaper, though these studies are more dedicated to the factual than the ideological side of the subject.[5]

Matters of such gravity require great subtlety, which critics generally recognise and observe when drawing connection between Eliot's social criticism and the 'Blood and Soil' discourse. Steve Ellis, in a recent study on Eliot and the same group of British right-wing ruralists, situates Eliot within the green discourse of the fascists and the British right-wing ruralists, but calls attention to their fundamental incompatibility. According to Ellis, Eliot finds

[3] Frank Trentmann, 'Civilization and Its Discontents: English Neo-Romanticism and the Transformation of Anti-Modernism in Twentieth-Century Western Culture', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 29 (1994), 583-625 (pp. 594, 602-3, 612, p. 625 n. 118).

[4] Alexandra Harris, *Romantic Moderns: English Writers, Artists and the Imagination from Virginia Woolf to John Piper* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2010), p. 184.

[5] David Matless, *Landscape and Englishness* (London: Reaktion Books, 1998), pp. 115-135; Jeremy Diaper, 'The *Criterion*: An Inter-War Platform for Agricultural Discussion', *Agricultural History Review*, 61 (2013), pp. 282–300.

their vitalism and veneration of nature leaving much to be desired, as nature, for Eliot, is only 'a finite source' 'both materially and spiritually'.[6] Ellis correctly points out that nature, as subsumed under the divine authority in Eliot's vision of dwelling in a Christian society, inevitably involves a certain alienating 'horror' alongside the idealised harmony in the ruralist imagination:

> This [Eliot's] aspect of our relation with nature is of a deeper, more privileged level than that of restoring agriculture or embracing 'the religion of the blue sky, the grass and flowers'. The spiritual knowledge possessed by the Christian fathers, or intuited according to Eliot by D. H. Lawrence, returns us to the presiding idea of the world as fundamentally fallen and alienating, the scene of Kurtzian 'horror' familiar from Eliot's earlier work.[7]

Such an observation corresponds to Eliot's critique of nostalgic pastoralism implied in 'Ash-Wednesday' and, as will be the subject of the next chapter, *Four Quartets* and *The Family Reunion*. It also seconds what Valentine Cunningham observes in his panoramic study of the 1930s, that a ruralist discourse can be of use to intellectuals and writers of all persuasions, right-wing or left-wing.[8] In a like manner, in his recent study on the landed aspect of modernism, Jeffrey McCarthy also cautions against the danger of linking the 'authentic' rural dwelling to fascist right-wing politics. Interestingly, he is lenient with Mary Butts and Ford Madox Ford's backward-looking rural writings at the expense of T. S. Eliot, whom he unforgivingly terms as part of

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[6] Steve Ellis, *British Writers and the Approach of World War II* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015), p. 47.

[7] Ellis, *World War II*, p. 47.

[8] Valentine Cunningham, 'Going Over', *British Writers of the Thirties* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), pp. 211-40.

'reactionary modernism'.[9] In his argument, McCarthy points out that the priority given to efficiency begets the fascist centralising government: 'Fascism dressed its rural roots in gleaming modern efficiencies and stirring technological spectacles, not the hen-coops and gardens of georgic Englishness'.[10] He then situates Eliot within the fascist centralising agenda by picking on the poet's royalist stance and the explicitly hierarchical Christian society he envisions.[11]

This chapter, devised partly as a response to such accusations, sets out to present a more truthful delineation of Eliot's politics related to the land, and more specifically, show how his advocacy of kingship and order departs from, instead of being complicit with, the nationalist socialist ideology of Nazi Germany. Despite having misconstrued Eliot's politics, McCarthy rightly identifies the centralising order and structure at stake in understanding Eliot's position in this debate. By taking the discussion out of its usual context of the right-wing ruralists as part of the organic husbandry movement, the current chapter situates Eliot within another group of associates from the British Surrealist Movement, whose profuse engagement with and representation of the native land have less to do with a pastoral Merrie England than with the land's subversive horror, which Ellis also identifies in Eliot's idea of nature.

Eliot's association with the British surrealists begins in 1934, when the *Criterion* published one section from the surrealist novel *Petron* by Hugh

[9] Jeffrey McCarthy, *Green Modernism: Nature and the English Novel, 1900 to 1930* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), p. 194.

[10] McCarthy, *Green Modernism*, p. 195.

[11] McCarthy, *Green Modernism*, p. 196.

Sykes Davies and four surrealist poems by Charles Madge.[12] From this point on until 1939, when the *Criterion* was discontinued, the journal became an important platform for the literary work of the British surrealists. Apart from the poems by Madge, there were also new works by Hugh Sykes Davies, Roger Roughton, along with several poems and stories by Dylan Thomas. Also appearing in the *Criterion* in 1936 were reviews of two titles by David Gascoyne, poet and English translator of André Breton, father of French surrealism.[13] In June 1936, the International Surrealist Exhibition was held in the Burlington Galleries in London, which aimed to promote British local surrealists alongside their continental predecessors. Herbert Read, among the chief organisers of the Exhibition, was an old friend of Eliot's who showed him around.[14] The event was later publicised and then reviewed in the *Criterion*. It was also Herbert Read who authored one of the few surrealist novels, *The Green Child* (1935).[15] Soon afterwards, Faber published a collection of essays on *Surrealism* (1936) edited with an introduction by Read.

As a cultural movement, British surrealism was in many aspects the progeny of its French predecessor in terms of method and doctrines. As with the French surrealists, British surrealists also challenged the principle of

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[12] Hugh Sykes Davies, 'Banditti (from *The Biography of Petron*)', *Criterion*, 13 (1934), pp. 577-80; Charles Madge, 'Four Poems', *Criterion*, 13 (1934), pp. 600-02.

[13] Janet Adam Smith, 'Review of *Man's Life is the Meat* by David Gascoyne', *Criterion*, 15 (1936), pp. 730-34; Brian Coffey, 'Review of *A Short Survey of Surrealism* by David Gascoyne', *Criterion*, 15 (1936), pp. 506-11.

[14] According to Joseph Bard quoted in James King, *The Last Modern: A Life of Herbert Read* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1990), p. 162.

[15] Most of these figures either belong to the self-proclaimed 'Surrealist Group in England' or are in various ways closely associated to it. A 'Declaration on Spain' was issued in November 1936 by the 'Surrealist Group in England', signed by Davies, Gascoyne, Read, Roughton, Humphrey Jennings (who with Madge founded *Mass Observation*), Henry Moore and Paul Nash. See Paul C. Ray, *The Surrealist Movement in England* (London: Cornell University Press, 1971), p. 184.

rationality and order by tapping into the subliminal power of dreams. They drew upon the Freudian theory of psychoanalysis, in which the substance of dream is identified in daytime occurrences, and dreams, therefore, are understood as the reworking of waking reality complicated by the unconscious. The power of surrealism rests with their dream-images, which work both through re-presentions of dreams and, reversely, through the intrusion of the unconscious into the external world. In order to transcribe the real world into an interior landscape, the surrealists rely upon two methods: automatism and the creation of *objets trouvés*. The device of automatism facilitates the unconscious to break loose in a state of trance. *Objet trouvé*, in comparison, indicates the effect created by placing a familiar object amidst an alienating context, which imitates the erratic juxtaposition of objects and events in a dream and aims at an effect of the 'uncanny' (*unheimlich*). Through these surrealist practices, what is at stake are the established systems of reference and order: language, identity, rationality. They are at once threatened by the unconscious of the dream-image and forced into a more organic unity with it. Distinctions and oppositions between the subject and the object, the real and the imaginary, the logical and the incongruous dissolve in the surrealist dream-images, with these binaries united and integrated into a larger self: as Herbert Read puts it, a 'self' that is largely 'made up of elements from the unconscious'.[16]

Despite their agreement with the French surrealists in their subversion of rational order, the British surrealists are very self-conscious of their distinct

[16] Herbert Read, 'Introduction', *Surrealism*, ed. by Herbert Read (London: Faber and Faber, 1936), 17-92 (p. 27).

national and cultural identity rooted upon the local earth. Even so, the 1936 exhibition in London is named the 'International Surrealist Exhibition'. It is 'international' partly in compliance with the internationalist style of French surrealism and partly because it is properly so: as Paul C. Ray's account of the exhibition goes, the exhibition included almost every prominent Parisian and Continental surrealist in the preceding decade.[17] However, this particular term borders upon a certain sleight of hand, as under the 'international' guise there is nothing less than a gunpowder plot at work, of shifting the centre of French surrealism to Britain. The word 'international', therefore, is suggestive of some vibrant tension between the 'national' and 'international'.[18] Almost every important surrealist in Britain made a declaration of autonomy that is in some way or another based on British cultural attributes. Herbert Read, for example, anglicised *surréalisme* as 'super-realism', indicating the movement's root in its own British romantic tradition.[19] Read's definition of superrealism asserts its English contribution by following the English 'romantic principle': the representation of the irrational, the savage, the dreamscape of the unconscious, and the free rein of imagination.[20] In 'Surrealism at this Time and Place', Hugh Sykes Davies also emphatically 'places' surrealism firmly within the local English tradition: 'the surrealist position is the inevitable natural outcome of the historical situation in England, as elsewhere'.[21] In so doing, surrealism

[17] Ray, *The Surrealist Movement*, p. 136.

[18] For this point I am indebted to Effie Rentzou for her discussion on the 'Surrealist Topographies' Seminar in Maison française, Oxford, 16 April 2016.

[19] Read, 'Introduction', *Surrealism*, pp. 21-22.

[20] Read, 'Introduction', *Surrealism*, pp. 21-22, 88.

[21] Hugh Sykes Davies, 'Surrealism at this Time and Place', in *Surrealism*, ed. by Herbert Read (London: Faber and Faber, 1936), 117-68 (p. 167).

is placed into England's local soil in the same way that *objets trouvés* are placed in an unhomely surrounding but find a natural home there.

The two aspects—of an uncanny dreamscape and an assertion of a place-based identity—are braided into the bloodstained and abjected local landscape emblematic of the movement. Among the works published in the *Criterion*, Roger Roughton's three poems delineate apocalyptic scenes (drought, deluge and fire respectively) where nature's brute force takes hold. The third poem of the series, entitled 'The Stick of Blood', describes the futile flight of the people from their shelters to the sea, driven by a great fire. The poem starts and ends with a breathing tree that hallmarks the landscape, its rooted earth ultimately assimilating human life into the cosmic cycle of creation and destruction: 'blood from the bodies | Climbs into the tree'.[22] Charles Madge's 'Man under Taurus', published in the *Criterion* only two months after the premiere of 'The Rock', features another image of a tree-man symbiosis on a blood-stained landscape, and could be read as the pageant's surrealist pastiche:

> The strain of being man upright in the flat world
> Who tree-like bears to heaven from the parish soil
> Nourished on mud his branches sky-breaking share
>
> A horn of steel exalted from plain land and houses
> Small bushes near where bulls are kept in chains
> And stones between whose cracks his steel foot is planted
>
> Man more than man mechanical skyward genius
> Whose sweat falls, and whose blood, in thirsty drops
> Extending himself in houses and in fields for evermore

[22] Roger Roughton, 'Three Poems', *Criterion*, 15 (1936), 455-57 (p. 457).

Up from the sideways strata of his stepped-upon floor
And the provided openings of death and birth
His eyesight strained upon the beams and spars
A tree whose weighty living is to be not earth.[23]

The poem foregrounds a tree-man rooted upon the parish soil, yet the idyllic harmony of the setting is upset by multiple indications of its being a sky-scraper: a 'mechanical skyward genius' with an 'upright' 'sky-breaking' form. Remember that the Empire State Building, which was to dominate the world's skyline for the next forty years, had only been recently completed in 1931; in 1932, another *Criterion* poem by John Gould Fletcher entitled 'Elegy on an Empty Skyscraper' condemns 'stone blocks bound in glittering steel'.[24] Madge's poem starts with an unnamed 'strain' and ends with an unsettling negation ('not earth'), while the steel structure, though rooted like a tree and 'planted' in the soil, figures rather a defection to the traditional parochialist values. The tree-man's organic blood-tie with its parish soil is subverted: the skyscraper as the embodiment of a bloodthirsty capitalism ('whose, blood, in *thirsty* drops') is going to undo the 'houses' and 'fields': landscape of its own blood. The point, of industrialism being immanent albeit lethal to rural traditions, is also communicated through the poem's form. The thirteen-line poem resembles a sonnet thrown off-balance, and the final lines' attempts at couplets are interrupted by a line that ironically contains the only iambic pentameter in the poem, hinting at tradition's foiled intervention.

[23] Charles Madge, 'Four Poems', *Criterion*, 13 (1934), 600-02 (p. 601).

[24] John Gould Fletcher, 'Elegy on an Empty Skyscraper', *Criterion*, 11 (1932), 439-42 (p. 439).

These surrealist literary experiments with blood and soil challenge the fascist justification of centralised power founded upon the tradition and lineage these images alternatively evoke. Likewise, such re-imaginations of these familiar images also animate the surrealist project including Herbert Read's surrealist novel *The Green Child* (1935) and Dylan Thomas's *Criterion* stories and poems. The chapter situates Eliot's play *Murder in the Cathedral* (1935) within these British surrealist texts by Read and Thomas, arguing for their collective resistance to the fascist slogan of 'Blood and Soil' and the absolutist power it helps sustain. The choice of Read and Thomas will, naturally, not be able to provide a panoramic picture of the British Surrealist Movement. Nevertheless, their texts effectively enact the surrealist undoing of a uniform national identity and dictates of order: the difficult path of asserting a place-based identity (of smaller units of local regions) while denying complicity with nationalism is negotiated in these texts through the uncanniness and abjection of a destablised home landscape. The chapter shall first investigate a shared regionalism that drives both the British surrealist and Eliot's modernist approach to the land, with a special attention to Eliot and Read's shared aversion to the standardising discourse of nationalism. Read's novel *The Green Child*, in particular, is read in this light as an anti-authoritarian critique. The argument proceeds to examine the enabling image of the blood-stained home landscape in Eliot's play along with Read and Thomas's works, and contends that in the chaos nature assumes a subversive cultural power through which the socialist nationalist discourse of order is turned on its head with its own vocabulary.

3.2 A national, not nationalist, art: the *genius loci* and surre(gion)alism

The British surrealists emerged as a group with their self-conscious assertion of national identity. Among the earliest of such attempts was Charles Madge's article 'Surrealism for the English', published in the *New Verse* in 1933. In the article, Madge warned of the danger of regarding English surrealism as merely a 'ten-years-belated imitation of Paris'.[25] According to him, '[c]lose study of the philosophical position of the French surrealists is needed to extract the essential purpose from the formal appearance of their work. But English writers will need something more: namely, a knowledge of their own language and literature'.[26] He then cited a few examples from Edward Young, Coleridge and Alexander Bain to demonstrate the existence of a surrealist tradition native to England.[27] A similar impulse, of making the seemingly internationalist avant-garde organic to England, is also observed of Paul Nash, an already established artist by the time who joined the committee of the London Surrealist Exhibition in 1936. Even back in his Unit One period, Nash was known to have been torn between 'going modern' and 'being British', which also led to his later alignment with the British surrealists. He articulated his painful awareness of such paradox in 1932:

> We are invaded by very strong foreign influences, we possess certain solid traditions. Once more we find ourselves becoming conscious of a renaissance abroad, and are curious and rather embarrassed by the event; at once anxious to participate and afraid to commit ourselves, wishing

[25] Charles Madge, 'Surrealism for the English', *New Verse*, 6 (1933), 14-18 (p. 14).
[26] Ibid.
[27] Ibid.

> to be modern, but uncertain whether that can be consistent with being British.[28]

This famous paradox that confronts Paul Nash was prompted by a series of articles entitled 'What is Wrong with Modern Painting' in early 1932 in *The Studio*, the voice of the art Establishment in Britain at that time. The series starts with an explicit disapproval of foreign influences in art, and stages a fight between national and internationalist (or 'denationalised') art: '[t]here is far too much internationalism in modern painting. Since the war the younger school of painters has increasingly tended to live in exile, to forget its native place and, in consequence, to lose its native flavor'.[29] To address supposed selfsame artistic creations as a result of such internationalist influences, a nationalist and nativist stance is proposed: 'Painters indeed would be better advised to stop at home […]. Britain is looking for British pictures, of British people, of British landscapes'.[30] What Nash finds appalling in such a statement—what he calls 'the blustering denunciation and carping of our own reactionaries'—is not the idea of a native art in itself, but the facile identification of nationalist material with good art.[31]

Nash and his fellow surrealists looked for an alternative national art untainted by nationalism. The 'stay at home' nationalism promoted by *The Studio* takes the national border so seriously that it turns from lending support

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[28] Paul Nash, *Room and Book* (New York: Soncino Press, 1932), p. 7.

[29] 'What is Wrong with Modern Painting: I. Internationalism', *The Studio*, 103.467 (1932), 63-4 (p. 63).

[30] 'What is Wrong with Modern Painting: I. Internationalism', *The Studio*, 103.467 (1932), 63-4 (p. 64).

[31] Paul Nash, 'Going "Modern" and "Being British"', *Weekend Review*, 5.105 (1932), 332-33 (p. 333).

to cultural autonomy into breeding stagnation and stupour. The British surrealists in their art go 'home', too, but their resistance lies in their effort to tap into the 'unhomely' (*unheimlich*), rather than the protection of home landscapes. In the case of Paul Nash, the British surrealist urge to identity the brutal and irrational natural forces in the *genius loci* provided for him a counter-discourse to the nationalist sense of order, system and security of power, which therefore resolved his paradox and draws him to the movement.[32] By the time Herbert Read approached Nash for the International Surrealist Exhibition in London, Nash was already exploring the 'spirit of the place' in relation to the surrealist dream in the megaliths of Avebury on the Wiltshire downs and in Swanage, Dorset, where he was quick to capture in the place a certain 'disquietude' and 'a dream image where things are so often incongruous and slightly frightening in their relation to time or place'.[33] Later in his autobiography he revisited this discovery: the ugly, convulsive, tortuous landscape of Swanage convinced him that 'it was the natural features and spirit of the place that inspired irrational dreams'.[34] As Read observed, these landscapes are precisely the surrealist 'objets trouvés', and '[a] painter so dedicated to the *genius loci* as Paul Nash was never likely to compromise this aspect of reality'.[35] Graham Sutherland, whose works also appeared in the Exhibition, shares the same enthusiasm for the *genius loci* and its alienating yet subversive power. He argues in 1936 commentary that 'the best English work,

[32] Ray, *The Surrealist Movement*, pp. 198-99.

[33] Paul Nash, 'Swanage, or Seaside Surrealism', *Architectural Review*, 79 (1936), 151-54 (pp. 151, 154).

[34] Paul Nash, *Outline: An Autobiography and Other Writings*, preface by Herbert Read (London: Faber and Faber, 1949), p. 241.

[35] Herbert Read, *Paul Nash* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1944), p. 13.

whilst retaining its essential universality, shows definitive native characteristics'.[36] To this end he cites Jean Cocteau who remarks that 'the more a poet sings in his genealogical tree […] the more his singing is in tune'.[37] It is not a homely song that Sutherland sings; rather, a sense of primordial terror predominates his landscape. The typography of rural Pembrokeshire which preoccupies his imagination for life disturbs him with an 'exultant estrangement' and 'element of disquiet' but makes him feel, paradoxically, 'as much part of the earth as my features were part of me'.[38]

The dialectic, of making the unhomeliness of going home part of British surrealism's contention for national identity and artistic autonomy, is most forcefully communicated in Herbert Read's polemical essay entitled 'Why the English Have No Taste'. The essay was published in July 1935 in *Minotaure,* André Breton's high surrealist magazine in Paris. In this essay, Read charges a national obsession with social norms for stifling British art. With the aid of Carl Jung's concept of 'neurosis', Read identifies in such obsession 'an unconscious disturbance of suppressed instincts' that underlie their masks.[39] The English home, as Read emphatically points out, is the place where this neurosis is most intensely felt:

> Those who wish to study our national neurosis must do so on the spot, but it is very doubtful if a foreigner could ever appreciate its ramifications in our society. […] Any daily paper will reveal the more aggressive aspects of our normality: an absolute poverty of ideas, a complete absence of any intellectual interests. But it is only in the

[36] Graham Sutherland, 'A Trend in English Draughtsmanship', *Signature*, 3 (1936), 7-13 (p. 11).

[37] Ibid.

[38] Graham Sutherland, 'Welsh Sketchbook', *Horizon*, 5.28 (1942), 225-36 (p. 230).

[39] Herbert Read, 'Why the English Have No Taste', *Minotaure*, 7 (1935), 67-68 (p. 68).

> English *home*, the Englishman's castle, as he proudly calls it, that the full horror of the neurosis will be revealed.[40]

By singling out 'home' as the location that bears the brunt of his criticism, Read was practising the strategy that the British surrealists were to revisit over and again: the assertion of identity through assimilation, rather than expulsion, of elements of alterity. By instilling the 'full horror of the neurosis' into the English home, the home is made uncanny or *unheimlich* (unhomely), a concept Freud developed in 1919 in reference to a sense of alienation and queasiness in a familiar surrounding, usually as the result of an evocation of suppressed instincts. On identifying the uncanny at home, however, the notion of home is not discounted. If anything, Read's argument accentuates in every way the significance of a home location as the basis of identity, which constitutes the thrust of his polemics. A home perspective is needed, as Read spells out in the paragraph cited above, to fully understand this national neurosis of Britain. Being one of only a few English contributions in a French magazine facing a mostly Continental readership, this article by Read is most self-consciously British. It uses the pronoun 'we' to provide an insider's point of view, and in chastising the British neurosis, the article is fundamentally a plea for a legitimate ground for a distinct British surrealism: an independent progeny of its French predecessor. What lies at the heart of the plea is the unleashing of the repressed unconscious from the 'neurosis' as well as its absorption into a more all-encompassing and eclectic British identity.

[40] Read, 'Why the English Have No Taste', *Minotaure*, 7 (1935), p. 68.

British surrealists declared their national and cultural autonomy precisely by capturing and identifying in familiar (and often native) British regions the existence of primitive horror, which borders upon the unconscious of the landscape. In Herbert Read's novel *The Green Child*, the protagonist Olivero's homecoming journey is propelled by an 'extreme longing or nostalgia for my native country'.[41] The eponymous Green Child, as the novel reveals, is the *genius loci* of Herbert Read's native Yorkshire to which both the protagonist and the author in real life return, and the green people's reverence for rocks is reminiscent of the limestone topography in Yorkshire. The novel's regionalist gesture is also found in Dylan Thomas's two *Criterion* stories, 'The Visitor' (1935) and 'The Orchards' (1936). In both stories, the poet-protagonist Peter (originally named 'Marlais' in the earlier Notebook versions, Marlais being Thomas's own middle name) takes a dream-ramble across the Welsh landscape: in 'The Visitor' he is united in his deathbed visions with the mythical landscape of Jarvis hills and valley, and in 'The Orchards' he traverses the 'ancestral' valley in Wales where his 'fathers, out of their wooden dust and fully of sparrows, wagged at a hill'.[42] Nevertheless, in all these works, as the chapter goes on to reveal, the home landscape is represented in a manner that is unsettling, alienating, if not menacing.

By way of delineating Dylan Thomas's surrealist legacy, John Goodby puts forward the notion of Thomas's 'surre(gion)alism'. The regional focus of his surrealist writings, as Goodby argues, comes from his status as a

[41] Herbert Read, *The Green Child* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1979 [1935]), p. 120.

[42] Dylan Thomas, 'The Visitor', *Criterion*, 14 (1935), 251-59 (p. 257); 'The Orchards', *Criterion*, 15 (1936), 614-22 (p. 619).

self-conscious Welshman writing from the margins. The Welsh landscape is at once his source of inspiration and his ploy to break into the English literary world: his Welshness, from this perspective, is rather a performed 'Anglo-Welshness' in participation with a larger national identity.[43] Like Thomas whose regional identity is imbricated and in constant tension with the larger national identity, the British surrealists are also concerned with the translation of their regional allegiances into a larger claim for the nation's art, which is nevertheless not nationalistic. Surre(gion)alism's non-sentimental dreamscapes, of an irrational, intransigent nature based upon the geographical reality of specific regions, are fundamentally at odds with the unifying discourse of nationalism. In Goodby's summary, such nationalism features 'fetishization of the rural, the language of the community, not to mention its Maurrasian politics': everything clean, orderly, idyllic, systematic.[44]

The rural, the community, and the Maurrasian reactionary politics: all these mentioned above could be easily associated with what Eliot stood for in the 1930s and 1940s as discussed in the preceding chapter.[45] Eliot and the British surre(gion)alists may therefore seem odd bedfellows, and his support for the latter inconsistent. However, if the last chapter settles Eliot's accounts with nativist politics, which proved incompatible with the poet's vision of a rooted rural community, this chapter goes on to delineate a devolving tendency

[43] John Goodby, '"The Rimbaud of Cwmdonkin Drive": Dylan Thomas as Surrealist', in *Dada and Beyond, Vol 2: Dada and Its Legacies*, ed. by Elza Adamowicz and Eric Robertson (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2012), 199-226 (p. 214).

[44] Goodby, '"The Rimbaud of Cwmdonkin Drive"', *Dada and Beyond*, p. 214.

[45] Eliot's political aesthetics, especially his classicism and conservatism, have been held to be largely shaped by Charles Maurras and the long tradition of French reactionary thought. One of the most extensive studies in this field is Kenneth Asher, *T. S. Eliot and Ideology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

central to Eliot's politics. A shared antipathy to nationalism, along with the belief in the decentralisation of state power, lies at the heart of Eliot's association with the British surrealists, or surre(gion)alists.

3.3 Decentralising state power: Eliot's regionalism

Appearing in the same year as Herbert Read's *The Green Child*, Eliot's play *Murder in the Cathedral* was commissioned by the Canterbury Festival and first performed on 15 June 1935. Like *The Green Child*, the play also reaches into the twelfth century for its source of inspiration, when the English martyr St Thomas Becket returned to his home country after a seven-year exile abroad, only to be killed by King Henry II. Before Becket makes his entrance, the play begins with an ominous chorus constituted of the poor women of Canterbury, waiting nervously for the grim fate to befall the Archbishop and themselves. If Becket's exile had been a forced move, his return is voluntary. Like the women in the chorus, Becket is fully aware of the consequences of his homecoming: as the messenger points out he '[i]s not the man to cherish any illusions', and is already prescient that his return surely means death.[46]

Given such understanding, the motive of his return is not made explicit in the play. Critics, when confronted with the question, usually seek its answer in the divine plot of Becket's consecration. Anthony Cuda, among the most recent, neatly describes the momentous decision as part of Eliot's critique of passivity, arguing that to lose one's will in God's will means more of 'an awful daring of

[46] T. S. Eliot, *Murder in the Cathedral*, CPP, p. 242.

a moment's surrender' than occupying any 'secure foothold'.[47] Despite being a reasonable explanation, Cuda along with many critics prioritises the divine plot to such an extent that it becomes the only plot of the play. A fact often neglected is that the secular claims upon Becket, of him being a man of the world if not man of England (or one of the 'Englishmen' as it is put in the play), preoccupy the saint's mind nonetheless. After all, as one early reviewer Edward Shillito observes, the play is about the contention and connection between two kingdoms, 'the kingdom of nature and the kingdom of grace; the state and the church; the prince and the spiritual ruler; the law of man and the law of God'.[48] One may add that even the religious plot, of subsuming man's will into God's will, has to it a secular element of keeping state power in check.

For this reason, one needs to revisit the parallel plot of secular politics, which is often eclipsed by but in fact counterbalances and supplements the divine plot. Part of the driving forces behind Becket's homecoming is communicated through the four temptations in their respective personifications. Apart from the fourth tempter, who tempts with Becket's desire for the glory of sainthood and has received much critical attention, the first three feature secular motives. The first lures him with the nostalgia for an idyllic childhood and a place of youthful memory, which Eliot himself takes the pain to overcome in 'Ash-Wednesday' III.[49] The second talks him into collaboration

[47] Anthony Cuda, 'T. S. Eliot's Etherized Patient', *Twentieth Century Literature*, 50 (2004), 394-420 (p. 405).

[48] Edward Shillito, '*Murder in the Cathedral'*, *Christian Century*, 52 (1935), p. 1636, quoted in *T. S. Eliot: The Contemporary Reviews,* ed. by Jewel Spears Brooker (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 336.

[49] More extensive discussion on this point can be found in section 2.3 of the thesis.

with the King for temporal power. The third, also the most challenging of the three, tempts with a prospect of his colluding, as the deputy of Church power, with the local countrymen (Englishmen) to counter the King. These three tempters, speaking with increasing appeal, test the would-be martyr respectively with his three secret wishes: they need to be at least desirable and fitting partly with the structure of his beliefs to work as veritable temptations.

What is at stake in the third temptation is the degree of regional autonomy allowed in a nation state: an issue fundamental to Eliot's social thinking. The tempter's plea, for a more powerful regional government in contestation with that of the Sovereign, is very compelling considering how close the vision is to what Eliot was to contend in the decade to follow:

> TEMPTER. […] I am no courtier.
> I know a horse, a dog, a wench;
> I know how to hold my estates in order,
> A country-keeping lord who minds his own business.
> It is we country lords who know the country
> And we who know what the country needs.
> It is our country. We care for the country.
> We are the backbone of the nation.
> We, not the plotting parasites
> About the king. Excuse my bluntness:
> I am a rough straightforward Englishman.[50]

It has been mentioned in the preceding chapter that Eliot, while criticising the 'urbanisation of mind', laments the fact that most legislators are not native to the countryside and are thereby a false country gentry.[51] Here, Eliot takes issue with the more authentic country gentry, and ponders the appealing prospect of

[50] Eliot, *Murder in the Cathedral*, CPP, p. 250.

[51] T. S. Eliot, 'A Commentary', *Criterion*, 18 (1938), 58-62 (p. 60).

their representing or even ruling the country. Appealing, when the proximity and familiarity with the local soil almost enacts the utopian society laid out in *The Idea of a Christian Society* (1939), where rural parishes 'small enough to consist of a nexus of direct personal relationships' are envisioned.[52] As Eliot later elaborates in *Notes Towards the Definition of Culture*, these small-scale rural communities constitute the basis of one's identity, where it is important that 'a man should feel himself to be, not merely a citizen of a particular nation, but a citizen of a particular part of his country, with local loyalties'.[53] In a context closer to the composition of the play, in a 1937 *Criterion* commentary, Eliot argues that art is to him neither 'national' or 'international', but is inevitably 'racial and local': 'an art which is not representative of a particular people […] may lose its sources of vitality'.[54]

Given the support Eliot lends to a distinct regional identity, what the third tempter proffers (as with the last temptation) can also be regarded as 'to do the right deed for the wrong reason'.[55] By punning on the word 'country', the third tempter weaves an identification of a regional identity with that of a nation into his beguiling sophistry. The real intention, however, is to overthrow the monarchy and establish political entitlements for local lordships. It is therefore illuminating to see the proposal renounced in the play, which is an index of the degree of subtlety in Eliot's regionalism and its tension with state power. The Christian society Eliot envisages does attach great importance to local specificities, which is also closely associated with Eliot's own ruralism

[52] ICS, p. 31.

[53] NDC, p. 52.

[54] T. S. Eliot, 'A Commentary', *Criterion*, 17 (1937), 81-86 (p. 82).

[55] Eliot, *Murder in the Cathedral*, CPP, p. 258.

provoked by the tempter here. As Eliot was to articulate in 'The Man of Letters and the Future of Europe' published in 1945, industrialism and the expansion of metropolises are to blame for the loss of local and regional character, which is best preserved in the 'ancestral habitat' of a rural setting.[56] Nevertheless, despite the resolve to guard regional specificities, the institution of a national government is never written off in Eliot's political thoughts, even though it is treated more as a necessary evil than something truly desirable. Taking this into view, one is in a better position to understand Becket's denial of the tempter's regionalist appeal. The argument Becket adopts to dismiss the third tempter, for instance, evokes the hierarchical structure within the nation, with state power overruling regional disobedience. Becket appeals to the royal prerogative with Chancellorship its deputy:

> BECKET […] I ruled once as Chancellor
> And men like you were glad to wait at my door.
> Not only in the court, but in the field
> And in the tilt-yard I made many yield.
> Shall I who ruled like an eagle over doves
> Now take the shape of a wolf among wolves?[57]

Becket's denunciation of the third temptation poses as a fascinating parallel with Eliot's own politics in which small-scale rural communities and their cultural geographical particularities are emphasised, and in which the insistence upon state power is presented not without equivocation. In Eliot's utopian Christian society, state power is at once necessitated and reined in by

[56] T. S. Eliot, 'The Man of Letters and the Future of Europe', *The Sewanee Review*, 53 (1945), 333-42 (p. 335).

[57] Eliot, *Murder in the Cathedral,* CPP*,* p. 252.

alternative identities, uncomfortably sitting between while significantly rallying the rooted parochial community and the universal allegiance of Catholicism. The concept of a 'national church', central to Eliot's utopian vision, borders therefore upon the oxymoronic: the idea of a nation state is compatible with neither the sub- nor the supra-national identities as dictates of the Church. However, it is precisely the oxymoron that constitutes the staple to Eliot's social thinking, which rests less with any of these identities than with their tension. As Eliot spells out in *The Idea of a Christian Society*, the Church should be the checking force in 'shielding the community against tyranny'.[58] It is the only social institution that prevents a 'national church' from degenerating into a 'nationalistic church'.[59] If anything, the Church takes the primacy and the nation's growth needs to stay in compliance with the order of the Church, not *vice versa*:

> A usual attitude is to take for granted the existing State, and ask 'What Church?' But before we consider what should be the relation of Church and State, we should first ask: 'What State?' Is there any sense in which we can speak of a 'Christian State,' any sense in which the State can be regarded as Christian? […] What I mean by the Christian State is not any particular political form, but whatever State is suitable to a Christian Society, whatever State a particular Christian Society develops for itself.[60]

To retain the inherited structure of state authority while remaining circumspect about its potential abuse is a central aspect of Eliot's politics. Eliot is known for being constantly on the lookout for the hazards of nationalism and

[58] ICS, p. 48.

[59] ICS, pp. 51-52.

[60] ICS, pp. 11-12.

any centralised secular power. As early as in 1929, in a long *Criterion* commentary 'Mr Barnes and Mr Rowse', Eliot makes clear his apathy to both nationalism and internationalism (respectively in correspondence to the two ideologies of the time, fascism and communism). In the concluding section of the commentary, Eliot emphatically declares his detachment from both by identifying himself as an 'onlooker', while confessing that he 'cannot see very much fundamental difference between Nationalism and Internationalism'.[61] Both to him are heresies, 'the first exalts one particular group of men, the second (in theory) all mankind; and neither of these deities seems to me particularly worthy of worship.'[62] In an earlier commentary, Eliot spells out the reason for his distaste for nationalism as its over-centralisation: Charles Maurras's *Action Française*, for instance, is superior to fascism because 'the aim of fascism appears to be centralization. The theory of the *Action Française* carries decentralization to the farthest possible point'.[63]

The Maurrasian influence on Eliot's social criticism has been frequently chastised in the latter half of the twentieth century for its anti-semitism, with Maurras's unabashed involvement with the neo-fascist government of Vichy France in the 1940s. John Xiros Cooper in a recent review of Eliot's social criticism, for instance, nods in the direction of holding Maurras responsible for a certain 'Manichean' society of the early Eliot.[64] Among Maurras's most stigmatising ideas are his rule of Order and his embrace of '*nationalisme*

[61] T. S. Eliot, 'Mr Barnes and Mr Rowse', *Criterion*, 8 (1929), 682-91 (p. 689).

[62] Ibid.

[63] T. S. Eliot, 'The Literature of Fascism', *Criterion*, 8 (1928), 280-90 (p. 289).

[64] John Xiros Cooper, 'T. S. Eliot's Social Criticism', *The New Cambridge Companion to T. S. Eliot*, ed. by Jason Harding (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 145-61 (p. 151).

intégral', which does imply the integrity and purity of a nation at the expense of individuals. Eliot's affinity to Maurras has therefore been criticised as his flirtations with fascism. However, as Eliot concedes, which is also corroborated by his creative texts, Maurras and his belief in the social institution of the Church holds Eliot from rather than draws him close to fascism and communism: he believes that a study of Maurras 'is to preserve us from a sentimental Anglo-Fascism'.[65] As Eliot takes pains to explain, what he identifies in Maurras is his decentralising urge that respects individuals and particularity, rather than the other way round. As Eliot articulates in another *Criterion* commentary, 'it is as immoral to compel a man to lead the good life—which of course being compulsory would not be really good—as to allow him to ruin himself'.[66] Even Kenneth Asher, the most scathing critic of Eliot's Maurrasian connection, finds it necessary to concede that despite their many similarities, Eliot still cherishes 'a healthy aversion to anything that smacked of totalitarianism'.[67] The respect for order and a hierarchical structure of society, which Eliot shares with Maurras, has to give way to Eliot's antagonism against the danger of uniformity and standardisation implied by the nationalist rhetorics. For Eliot, a culture 'which was simply a *uniform* culture would be no culture at all. We should have a humanity de-humanised. It would be a nightmare'.[68]

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[65] T. S. Eliot, 'The *Action Française*, M. Maurras and Mr. Ward', *Criterion*, 7 (1928), 195-203 (pp. 196-7, 202).

[66] T. S. Eliot, 'A Commentary', *Criterion*, 8 (1929), 377-81 (p. 381).

[67] Asher, *T. S. Eliot and Ideology*, p. 85.

[68] NDC, p. 62.

Two other related tendencies, which might seem contradictory to Eliot's distaste for totalitarianism and his decentralising regionalism, require closer scrutiny as they bear the brunt of most criticism of Eliot's conservatism. The first is Eliot's embrace of the emphasis on Kingship in Maurras, which he expresses more famously earlier on as his 'royalist' stance.[69] On siding with the idea of Kingship in Maurras, Eliot proactively explains its distance from absolutism and nationalism. Its 'vital dogma', as Eliot emphatically points out, is 'not nationalism but royalism'.[70] In Eliot's reading, the theory of *Action Française* where the Kingship is concerned 'does not contemplate a powerful dictator and a nominal king—but the powerful king and the able minister'.[71] In other words, the king needs to be powerful enough to hold together the diverse localities and regional cultures yet not powerful enough for the nation to fall under tyranny: 'the feeling towards a dictator is quite other than that towards a king'.[72] For such reasons Eliot finds fascism leaving much to be desired. Following this line of thought, fascism veers off towards absolutism and thus features a defection from Maurrasian royalism: 'the idea of Kingship does not seem to have played any great part in fascism'.[73]

The second, and trickier stance, is Eliot's much-misconstrued emphasis on the homogeneity of an ideal community. In *After Strange Gods* (1934), a talk Eliot gives to his Virginia audience in 1933, Eliot suggests that 'the population

[69] For Eliot's adherence to Kingship, see Eliot, 'The Literature of Fascism', pp. 288-9; for his royalist stance, see T. S. Eliot, *For Lancelot Andrewes* (London: Faber and Faber, 1928), p. ix.

[70] Eliot, 'Mr Barnes and Mr Rowse', *Criterion*, 8 (1929), p. 689.

[71] Eliot, 'The Literature of Fascism', *Criterion*, 8 (1928), p. 289.

[72] Eliot, 'Mr Barnes and Mr Rowse', *Criterion*, 8 (1929), p. 690.

[73] Eliot, 'The Literature of Fascism', *Criterion*, 8 (1928), p. 288.

should be homogeneous; where two or more cultures exist in the same place they are likely either to be fiercely self-conscious or both to become adulterate'.[74] The proposition was made famous, or rather scandalous, for the hostility to the 'free-thinking Jews' that was to follow, making it both hard and unethical to excuse the claim from accusations of anti-semitism.[75] Nevertheless, it is still arguable—though such argument requires extra care—that Eliot's bias is less based on a desire for homogeneity and purification of a certain population than an intellectual aversion to 'free thinking', as Ronald Schuchard contends.[76] Russell Kirk, in an equally sympathetic reading, contextualises Eliot's argument for cultural homogeneity within the poet's vision of a flexible and vibrant society on a larger scale, which has to consist of smaller homogeneous units.[77] Kirk calls attention to a less-cited remark that immediately follows Eliot's appeal to local homogeneity: 'We must also remember that—in spite of every means of transport that can be devised—the local community must always be the most permanent, and that the concept of the nation is by no means fixed and invariable'.[78]

Eliot later regretted his racist remarks made in *After Strange Gods* and prevented future reprints of the book. This does not mean, however, that his remarks are consigned to oblivion: criticism of his proposal regarding cultural

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[74] T. S. Eliot, *After Strange Gods: A Primer of Modern Heresy* (London: Faber and Faber, 1934), p. 19.

[75] Eliot, *After Strange Gods*, p. 20.

[76] Ronald Schuchard, 'Burbank with a Baedeker, Eliot with a Cigar: American Intellectuals, Anti-Semitism, and the Idea of Culture', *Modernism/modernity*, 10 (2003), 1-26 (pp. 15-16).

[77] Russell Kirk, *Eliot and His Age; T. S. Eliot's Moral Imagination in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Random House, 1971), pp. 209-11.

[78] Eliot, *After Strange Gods*, p. 20.

homogeneity persisted, despite the fact that it is only meant for smaller geographical units and that Eliot in the same year argued against those same homogenising attempts on national or wider levels. In another talk delivered in the same year entitled 'Catholicism and International Order' (1933), Eliot remarked that he is 'instinctively in sympathy' with regionalist movements 'after we have deducted the political nonsense and the sentimental-retrospective-literary nonsense', while at the same time he attacked the belief that the peoples of the world can be possibly unified through 'standardization'.[79] The resistance against uniformity on a national level even overrules the desire for hierarchy and order. As Eliot articulates here, '[t]he ideas of authority, of hierarchy, of discipline and order, applied inappropriately in the temporal sphere, may lead us into some error of absolutism or impossible theocracy'.[80]

Homogeneity on a smaller level and diversity on a larger scale is the dialectic key to *Notes Towards the Definition of Culture*. Eliot opens its section on regions by articulating that 'a people should be neither too united nor too divided, if its culture is to flourish. Excess of unity may be due to barbarism and may lead to tyranny; excess of division may be due to decadence and may also lead to tyranny'.[81] Such equivocation shows Eliot's caution towards totalitarianism and the centralising of power intrinsic to nationalist doctrines. A national culture is necessary, but the order and hierarchy intrinsic to it are also necessarily secondary to its diverse local manifestations: it is 'resultant of an

[79] T. S. Eliot, 'Catholicism and International Order', in CP4, p. 541.

[80] Ibid.

[81] NDC, p. 50.

indefinite number of local cultures which, when themselves analysed, are composed of still smaller local cultures'.[82] If there is any life in the Christian community in Eliot's imagination, it is always bound to be relational: the vigour of this vision is located somewhere in between region and nation, Church and state, local specificity and national unity. The tension would not have worked and the vigour never achieved if any half of the dyads becomes dominant, and to take either of the two sides away from the Maurrasian legacy would be doing injustice to Eliot. As Michael North puts it succinctly, '[t]he appeal of Maurras and the *Action Française* is its apparent ability to combine kingship and decentralization, to argue at once that the nation needs a single human being as its representative cultural personality and that it should be allowed to lapse into a collection of local communities'.[83]

The anti-homogenising and devolving agenda inherent to Eliot's regionalism is also shared by the British surrealist texts, of which Herbert Read's *The Green Child* is an important though understudied example. The following sections read the novel as a political allegory where the absurdities of lifeless, homogenised societies are enacted and ironised. The novel, along with other surrealist works discussed in this chapter, is connected to the chorus of Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral* with not only their shared homecoming plot, but also the enabling presence of abject power in both texts. In these texts, the combination of local soil and blood does not serve the discourse of centralised

[82] NDC, p. 60.

[83] Michael North, *The Political Aesthetic of Yeats, Eliot, and Pound* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 118.

nationalist government, but rather dismantles its stifling order, and asserts a renewed, devolutionary spatial ordering as part of a more tolerant politics.

3.4 A radical satire on uniformity: Herbert Read's *The Green Child*

The Green Child appeared in the same year as *Murder in the Cathedral*: a moment of fascism's unbridled growth in Germany and Italy with the danger of war looming on the horizon. In his introduction to the novel, Graham Greene rightly draws attention to the unattainable sense of 'glory' that underlies Read's account of the green world.[84] 'Glory', a concept central to Read's romantic vocabulary, is a 'disinterested and individual passion' that resists 'the animating force of a faction'.[85] If we read the novel through the sense of 'glory' as such, we have to admit that, quite contrary to Greene's reading in which the green people epitomise a non-political, ethereal sense of glory, their anti-vitalism is actually closer to what George Woodcock describes as the lack of a sense of glory.[86] James King, Read's biographer, suggests the novel's intertexuality with Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*.[87] In *The Sense of Glory* (1929), a collection of criticism on individual authors among whom embodiments of 'glory' are found, Read commends the prodigious success of Swift's satirical masterpiece. For Read, *Gulliver's Travels* achieved the popularity it had because it functions on two levels: that of simplicity for the

[84] Graham Greene, 'Introduction', *The Green Child* [1935], by Herbert Read (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1979), 5-7 (p. 7).

[85] Herbert Read, 'Malory', *Essays in Literary Criticism: Particular Studies* (London: Faber and Faber, 1938), 34-48 (p. 39).

[86] George Woodcock, *Herbert Read: The Stream and the Source* (London: Faber and Faber, 1972), p. 75.

[87] James King, *The Last Modern: A Life of Herbert Read* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1990), p. 134.

easily-beguiled readers of innocence and ignorance, and that of cynicism at the heart of the narrative.[88] To a certain degree, Read's own *The Green Child* also lends itself to a similar reading: beneath its transparent tales of adventures there is a cynical core, a satire of two bloodless utopias in the Swiftian tradition.

The novel, as Richard Church describes, has a triptych structure.[89] Each of the three sections of the novel enacts a disparate adventure, while the unity of the seemingly independent stories only emerges when the novel is read as a political satire. The first section describes the protagonist Olivero's homecoming in the night, with the dark violence involved in his rescue of Green Child named Silöen (Sally as her localised English name) and the killing of her husband named Kneeshaw. The following section, which takes up more than half of the book, features the flashback to Olivero's exile prior to his homecoming, during which time he founded the fictitious republic of Roncador in South America and served for thirty years as a benign dictator—a deliberate choice of title.[90] The final section delineates the Green Child's subterranean homeland in a fashion intensely redolent of the Houyhnhnms Land: a society possessed with rationality and a supreme sense of Order.

A curious uniformity of society underlies the lifelessness of both utopias. In Olivero's republic of Roncador, such lifelessness rises from the autocratic power of the state. The general 'calmness' or passivity of the society accounts for a sense of dramatic irony of the narrative, given that almost everything else

[88] Herbert Read, *The Sense of Glory: Essays in Criticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1933), pp. 81-82.

[89] Quoted in King, *The Last Modern*, p. 134.

[90] Read, *The Green Child,* pp. 118, 116.

in the society could have promised vitality if not reasons for tension.[91] Historically a colony, the district of Roncador is remarkably diverse in its population. There is the foreign oppression of the Spaniards, among whom there has long existed the tension between military dictatorship and the Jesuits. There are the native Indians impoverished by foreign exploitation and resented by the colonisers. There are, too, the creoles who turn out to be the main force behind the success of Olivero's coup, and who in Olivero's new ordinances becomes the mainstay of the society. Historical contestations are mentioned in passing, taking place before Olivero's reign among these racial groups. However, what Olivero's dictatorship has brought about, through its approach of racial purification and homogenisation, is 'a general air of peace and contentment': in the society men 'live in a relationship of mutual confidence, cultivating the earth and living happily on the abundance of its fruits'.[92] Any reader with a sense of discretion should take a meaningful pause before taking the peace at its face value.

The tension between a repressed vitality and an imposed order working on a national level is also tellingly implied through the representation of the South-American landscape and its intertextuality. The repression that Olivero's dictatorship will inflict upon the country is foreboded by the contrast of landscape he experiences on his way to General Santo's country estate, which shifts from a land of bursting colours and vibrant freedom to an enclosed space of dull confinement. On the '[g]reen pastures' of 'a delicious freshness' the narrator is captivated by 'the myriads of humming-birds' of dazzling variety,

[91] Read, *The Green Child*, pp. 71-86.

[92] Read, *The Green Child*, p. 105.

vivacity and iridescence.[93] The choice of humming-birds as emblem of the freedom and vigour on the fecund pastures of the Pampas evokes another earlier narrative: W. H. Hudson's *Green Mansions* (1904), which is identified by Read's biographer James King as one of the unacknowledged sources of *The Green Child*.[94] However, the vivacious heroine named Rima in Hudsons's novel, who is compared to the humming-bird, 'a creature of such fairy-like loveliness', is ironically antithetical to the pallid Green Child.[95] In evoking the humming-birds and the vigour they symbolise, the irony of *The Green Child* manifests itself in the bathos that follows, when the excitement of the account quickly transposes into a minor key and the humming-birds are revealed to be caged and domesticated in the General's house:

> There he fed them, and there they bred. He opened the cages and they flew out with shrill little cries, fluttering round the General [...]. Others flew about his ears, hovered round his mouth, buzzed and fluttered about his head and hands. When tired of playing with them, he [...] gently waved his hands in the midst of them, at which signal they all returned to their respective cages.[96]

Now the humming-birds are no longer praised for their glimmering sheen and vivacity, but for their obedience. The automatism of their feeding and quiet submission mirrors two later occurrences in the narrative. The scene corresponds to the submissive public of Roncador, who at the two decisive moments of the country—that of the revolution which involves the old

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[93] Read, *The Green Child*, p. 75.

[94] King, *The Last Modern*, p. 135.

[95] W. H. Hudson, *Green Mansions: A Romance of the Tropical Forest* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1959 [1904]), p. 72.

[96] Read, *The Green Child,* p. 76.

dictator's murder, and that of the nation's degeneration from oligarchical republic to Olivero's autocracy—only respond meekly with either 'general rejoicing' or 'acclamation'.[97] Its echo is also found in the other utopia of the green world. When Olivero enters one of the upper ledges of the quasi-purgatorial green world where he is trained for solitude, he is allowed to domesticate two animals to keep him company: either the blind-worm snake or an immense beetle. The vigour and iridescence of the humming-birds is bitterly evoked and mocked by the reptile sluggishness of the unusual 'pets' and the deliberately repellent description of their 'sheen': the snakes' 'faint gleams of phosphorescent blue in their scales' and the beetles' 'shell-like wing-cases […] of a blue metallic colour'.[98]

Counterpointing the romantic flash of the humming-birds is the lifeless uniformity of both utopian societies, victims to the dictates of autocratic state power and the rule of order. The ghostly 'peace' and submission of Roncador under Olivero's dictatorship are, as the narrative reveals, the result of Olivero's obsession with governmentality and order. Olivero's reflection is telling in this respect:

> There is no joy comparable to the joy of government, especially in circumstances of virgin chaos. Not only inanimate things—money, equipment, goods of every kind—but even human beings, are so much plastic material for creative design. A sense of order is the principle of government as well as of art […] . I began to wonder whether all great administrators—a Solon, a Caesar, a Charlemagne, a Napoleon—were not at bottom artists seeking a mode of expression. Certainly there is a profound difference between the man of action whose only end is

[97] Read, *The Green Child,* pp. 91, 107.

[98] Read, *The Green Child,* p. 141.

> action, a self-indulgent exercise of powerful muscles, and the man of action who moves towards some intellectual notion of order.[99]

That Olivero regards his subjects as 'plastic material for creative design' reveals two of his basic hypotheses of humanity. They possess no agency as plastic material, insentient and inanimate, submissive to all administrative manipulations. They are also supposed to be pliant to manipulation, being 'a purely rational being, dependent for his happiness on his material prosperity' to whom 'an efficient administration would have provided for all his needs'.[100] A similar understanding of society and its inhabitants is also found in the green world, where the green people venerate Order as the basic principle of the universe. Materialistic weight is attached to the notion of Order, which they regard with awe as the 'space-filling Mass'.[101] 'Only Order exists; Disorder is not, and cannot be, conceived', the same way turmoil and resistance do not exist under Olivero's dictatorship, as the narrative is too self-contained to leave any space for them to be conceived: 'for what is not Order, is not'.[102]

The green people's obsession with order is reflected in the topography of the subterranean world, which is highly orderly and hierarchical, formed of solid rock ledges stretching from lower levels to the upper grottos: it takes hard work and long years to ascend from a lower ledge to an upper one. The rigid and highly uniform social organisation, with no presence of passion or the slightest trace of dissidence, is also mirrored by the 'petrifaction' and

[99] Read, *The Green Child,* p. 93.

[100] Read, *The Green Child,* p. 98.

[101] Read, *The Green Child,* p. 143.

[102] Ibid.

'ossification' of the human body after death: which is ironically a desired state in the way a lifeless society is longed for. The same orderly social structure is also found in Olivero's Roncador, this time less in terms of topography than in the order secured by a powerful central government. As Olivero believes, '*authority must be single*' for the sufficient and effective unity of the state.[103] Single, as Olivero explains, primarily means ridding the Church of its authority. Appositely, his dictatorship starts with a murder right outside the porch of a cathedral: he and his two accomplices assassinate the old ruler during a religious ritual celebrating the tithes, a symbolic gesture weaning the state from the Church.[104] The secular government (with the only titular existence of the Church), set up by Olivero, features a society seething with internal tensions. Meanwhile, apart from the secularisation of government, a single authority also means the depletion of regional government. Olivero does address the delegation of power, yet ironically nothing visualises centralisation of power more vividly than his depiction:

> The art of government is the art of delegating authority. It is essential that the authority delegated should be held like a ball on an elastic string: it does not matter how large the ball, or how far the string is stretched, provided authority returns to its source at the inflection of a finger. The ideal governor is one who has dispossessed himself of all authority, remaining merely as the mathematical centre in whom a thousand lines converge: the invisible, perhaps only the potential, manipulator of a host of efficient marionettes. In more complex states the system of delegation will be divided and subdivided, but such was the simplicity of the economy of Roncador that I myself was able to control directly every post of administration.[105]

[103] Read, *The Green Child,* p. 103.

[104] Read, *The Green Child,* pp. 82-3.

[105] Read, *The Green Child,* p. 109.

Again, the dictator relishes the manipulation of a herd only passively animate: what has been described as 'plastic material' is now 'a host of efficient marionettes'.[106] It is from such belief, that the dictates of a central government override any humanitarian concerns, that the true horror of the utopias begins to reveal itself. There is first a racial purge. 'All pure Spaniards were incontinently dismissed', decrees Olivero. Further entry of pure-blooded foreigners into the nation is denied, leaving only the creoles and the natives:

> To secure the homogeneity of the state, marriage between Spaniards was forbidden—the assimilation of all foreign elements was thereby automatically secured. No foreigner was to be allowed entry into the state except under licence; he could only settle in the state by taking a native wife.[107]

Following the purge is the nationalisation of key sectors of social life, including foreign trade and land ownership. It does not take long for Olivero's totalitarian regime to take on a communist appearance, especially when its archetypal egalitarian distribution of wealth is evoked: 'The only distinction remaining would arise from the division of labour: one man must govern a farm, as one authority a state; but inasmuch as the capabilities of men vary, so their functions should vary; yet not their rewards.'[108]

To an extent, Read articulated his disenchantment with communism and a centralised government in his satire on the two lifeless utopias: in fact, one has good reason to take the novel as Read's renunciation of any government. The year when *The Green Child* appeared saw the publication of another book by

[106] Read, *The Green Child,* pp. 93, 109.

[107] Read, *The Green Child,* p. 104.

[108] Read, *The Green Child,* p. 95.

Read. In this book entitled *Essential Communism* (1935), Read rehearses Kropotkin's idea of a decentralised society as the remedy against a strong national government. It is also in this book where Read declared the autonomy of art. According to Read, the freedom of creation supersedes all political system or creed and should be devoid of ideologies, which, however, is in itself an intensely political statement.[109] It is therefore not a surprise to see Read jettisoning communism and converting to anarchism, which for him promises greater human freedom. In *Poetry and Anarchism* (1938), Read expressed his disillusion with communism: he was ready to accept it only insofar as 'Lenin and Stalin promised a definite 'withering away of the State'', not when the overgrowth of state power has stifled individual and artistic freedom.[110] Read's criticism of the State then becomes radical:

> 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.[111]

The statement sounds congenial to Eliot's critical remarks concerning both communism and fascism. Their difference lies in the fact that where Read's does away with national government altogether, Eliot is as suspicious of anarchical chaos as he is of state power uninhibited by either religious institution or regional authorities. Both positions, however, are consistent when contextualised in their respective intellectual trajectories. In the case of Herbert

[109] King, *The Last Modern*, p. 148.

[110] Herbert Read, *Poetry and Anarchism* (London: Faber and Faber, 1938), pp. 13-14.

[111] Ibid.

Read, critics have contended that his anarchical tendency predominates his entire creative career. Dana Ward, for instance, identifies the source of Read's anarchism to his lifelong commitment to dismantling all systems to the most radical degree, which as is implied is closely associated to the surrealist conviction in the subversive power of the unconscious. Even revolution, as Ward notes, is not sufficient, as it is still guided by 'reason' rather than 'instinct'.[112] Ward thereby cites Read's late distinction between revolution (a totalitarian act) and rebellion (a libertarian act) from his introduction to *Anarchy and Order* (1954):

> Revolutions, as has often been remarked, change nothing; or rather, they merely substitute one set of masters for another set […].
> Rebellions or insurrections, on the other hand, being guided by instinct rather than reason, being passionate and spontaneous rather than cool and calculated, act like shock therapy on the body of society, and there is a chance that they may change the chemical composition of the societal crystal. […] [Rebellion] eludes the world of power—that is the point, for it is always power that crystallises into a structure of injustice.[113]

Not by accident, what is cited above is also Read's own summary of the two utopias in *The Green Child*. There is no other way to comprehend the 'revolutions' in Roncador culminating in Olivero's own, whose dictates of order and conformity depletes what little vital blood there remains in the society. These nominal and emphatically 'bloodless' revolutions in the history of Roncador are the mirror image of the rational government established

[112] Ward, 'Art and Anarchy: Herbert Read's Aesthetic Politics', *Rereading Read: New Views on Herbert Read*, ed. by Michael Paraskos (London: Freedom Press, 2008), 20-33 (p. 23).

[113] Herbert Read, *Anarchy and Order: Essays in Politics* (London: Faber and Faber, 1954), p. 17.

thereupon. Both of them, along with the green world, constitute the rigid 'societal crystal' that Read aspires to smash, whose structure, as Read very well articulates, is infiltrated by an omnipresent state power. With the domination of rationality over instinct, both utopias enact social stupor. As George Woodcock who knew Read personally reports, Read once confessed that in this novel he 'described symbolically' how 'the realization of a rational blue-print leads to the death of a society'.[114]

3.5 *The Green Child*, the uncanny, and abjection

The Green Child vividly enacts the criticism against social uniformity and centralised state power: ideas that are also inherent in Eliot's prose as well as in *Murder in the Cathedral*. The relevance of the novel to the play also lies in the forceful presence of the uncanny along with the abject power of blood observed from both texts. *The Green Child* is a deeply disturbing novel: not because of its satirical agenda but of its dark undercurrent of the uncanny, manifested in the automata subjects in the two utopias/dystopias. Frank Morley, one of its first readers at Faber which rejected the novel for publication, once articulated his dissatisfaction at the ghostly lifelessness that pervades the book: 'Couldn't there have been some belly in part 2, some drink somewhere, some honest fucking? Ain't you no pity? You kill your readers like flies'.[115] It is arguable, however, that Morley in his indignation fails to do Read justice, as its lifelessness is precisely part of the novel's surrealist thrust. Human beings are deliberately described as 'plastic material for creative design' and 'a host of

[114] Woodcock, *Herbert Read*, p. 245.

[115] King, *The Last Modern*, p. 143.

efficient marionettes', the diction intensely evocative of surrealist plastic art and, in particular, its obsession with dummies.[116] Such an allusion is driven home through the description of the green people with their distinctive depilated features:

> They [Olivero and Silöen] could now see that the crowd was composed entirely of young men and women, but the distinction between the sexes was not very evident, since all wore the same diaphanous robe, and on some of the youths a beard was not yet very obvious. All wore their blond hair long, and had unshod feet. Their bodies were excessively slender, their heads egg-shapes; they had no perceptible eyebrows, their eyes were tiny, but bright like a ferret's.[117]

Like the 'marionette' residents in Roncador, these green people quietly and mechanically move about the earth. The eeriness their automatic movement gives to the novel is in this context coextensive with that of surrealist inanimate or passively animate body surrogates: mannequins, puppets, dolls. Both the ghostly crowds in Read's novel and the surrealist body surrogates bend to manipulation (in the case of the novel, laws and the rule of order) in a way 'not ruled by our common laws': such being French psychoanalyst Janine Chasseguet-Smirgel's remarks about surrealist mannequins and automata, including the dolls made by Hans Bellmer.[118] The mannequins convey a ghastly sense of the uncanny: their verisimilitude with the human body and their perversion or destruction bear the sinister hallmark of death.

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[116] Read, *The Green Child*, pp. 93, 109.

[117] Read, *The Green Child*, p. 131.

[118] Janine Chasseguet-Smirgel, *Creativity and Perversion* (New York: Norton, 1984), p. 88. Some of the most famous surrealist mannequins were made by Hans Bellmer. The photograph of Bellmer's '*Poupée, variations sur le montage d'une mineure articulée*' ['The Doll, Variations on the Assemblage of an Articulated Child'] was published in *Minotaure* on 5 December 1934 and exhibited in the International Surrealist Exhibition in London in 1936.

In his 1919 theorisation of the concept of the 'uncanny' concurrent with the rise of surrealism in France, Freud describes the doll as an uncanny object, which instigates a sense of the strangely familiar in the viewer's mind. Freud explains the association from its two aspects: that of the doll as strangely positioned between life and death, and that of its being a life-size 'double' of man. For the first aspect, Freud draws upon Ernst Jentsch's earlier theory on the uncanny, and analyses the prototypical doll of Olympia in E. T. A. Hoffman's *Sandman*. In Freud's explanation, her presence as a quasi-human automaton incites a certain intellectual uncertainty: the readers are not sure whether she is alive or not, hence the unfamiliarity. According to Freud, Jentsch 'singles out, as an excellent case, "doubt as to whether an apparently animate object really is alive and, conversely, whether a lifeless object might not perhaps be animate".[119] In this connection he refers to the impressions made on us by waxwork figures, ingeniously constructed dolls and automata'.[120] In other words, body surrogates like dolls and puppets reminds people of the presence of the 'automatic—mechanical—processes that may lie hidden behind the familiar image of a living person', answering for their uncanny effect.[121]

What makes these dolls or dummies 'uncanny', as Freud proceeds to argue, is the affect they stir up as a 'double': the projection of one's ego upon other objects. According to Freud, the 'double' was originally an insurance against the destruction of the ego. It has to be associated with one's infantile life when

[119] Sigmund Freud, *The Uncanny*, tr. by David McLintock, introduced by Hugh Haughton (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 2003 [1919]), p. 135.

[120] Ibid.

[121] Ibid.

one does not make distinction between living and lifeless objects, and when the idea of something lifeless coming alive (or the other way round) does not strike a sense of terror.[122] This is where dolls come in. The doll is usually linked to one's infantile years, and like mannequins and other body surrogates, it is 'meant for a function that human beings would or could hardly perform, human bodies turned into objects or images, available to be exposed, exploited, or abused', as Francesco Spampinato explains.[123] They are, therefore, the uncanny 'double' which once assured an infantile ego's immortality and defied death, but which later becomes the reminder of a certain part of the once integral ego that is repressed and objectified, 'the uncanny harbinger of death'.[124]

The uncanny feeling that a doll or a body-sized automata stirs up is therefore caused by nothing new; on the contrary, it rises precisely from a return to 'something that was long familiar to the psyche and was estranged from it only through being repressed'.[125] In this light *The Green Child* is a novel on the uncanny confrontation with the repressed self (its 'double') from one's beginning. To an extent, the homecoming with which the novel opens is all about arriving at 'where we started | And know the place for the first time'.[126] The surrealism of the novel is therefore, as Leena Kore-Schröder observes, 'entirely determined by the narrative functions of the uncanny, and driven by the very impulse of doubling back upon beginnings', as is revealed

[122] Freud, *The Uncanny*, pp. 142-43.

[123] Francesco Spampinato, 'Body Surrogates: Mannequins, Life-Size Dolls, and Avatars', *PAJ*, 38 (2016), 1-20 (p. 2).

[124] Freud, *The Uncanny*, pp. 141-42.

[125] Freud, *The Uncanny*, p. 148.

[126] T. S. Eliot, 'Little Gidding' V, TP1, p. 208, ll. 28-29.

in the act of homecoming itself and what Olivero encounters on the way.[127] One of the extraordinary things that confronts Olivero, on traversing his home landscape in the dark, is a familiar stream strangely flowing in the reverse direction towards its source.[128] By way of citing a similar imagery by Carl Jung, who happens to be Read's personal acquaintance and appreciates the psychoanalytical depths of Read's novel, Kore-Schröder usefully draws attention to the symbolic significances of the reversing stream. She associates the river with the subliminal urge to unwind one's early experiences and to go back to the primitive impulse that drives one's selfhood:

> Just as the normal libido is comparable to a steady stream which pours its waters broadly into the world of reality, so the resistance, dynamically considered, is comparable, not so much to a rock rearing up in the river bed which is flooded over or surrounded by the stream, as to a backward flow towards the source. A part of the soul desires the outer object; another part, however, harks back to the subjective world, where the airy and fragile palaces of phantasy beckon.[129]

The primitive impulse of libido implied by the reverse stream finds its embodiment in the character of Kneeshaw, who by the time Olivero arrives is forcing fresh lamb blood down the Green Child's throat, and who, as Olivero then recalls, used to be a schoolboy known for his destructive energy. Olivero remembers the boy Kneeshaw as a former student of his who had brutally destroyed a clockwork model train, which as a result 'lay on the table like a

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[127] Leena Kore-Schröder, 'Rumbling in the Depths: *The Green Child* and the Uncanny', *Rereading Read,* ed. by Michael Paraskos (London: Freedom Press, 2008), 188-206 (p. 193).

[128] Read, *The Green Child*, pp. 11-12.

[129] Carl Jung, *Psychology of the Unconscious*, tr. by Beatrice M. Hinkle (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner, 1922 [1912]), p. 107.

disembowelled animal'.[130] One interesting fact about the character, as many critics have observed, is the autobiographical touch hinted at by the name of Kneeshaw: one of the famous poems Read wrote to record his service during the First World Was was named 'Kneeshaw Goes to War' (1918). Like Olivero who ultimately returns to Yorkshire, the character Kneeshaw also originates partly from the author's self. The irony rests in the fact that the brutish Kneeshaw in the novel is no longer the sensitive yet expressive youth in Read's war poem. Rather, he is described as the embodiment of animal instincts, some primitive existence prior to the symbolic stage of language: 'He was unread and almost inarticulate, facing the problems of life with direct instincts, acting from day to day as these instincts dictated'.[131] He is also frequently described as being 'simple': a man with 'a kind of animal simplicity'.[132] The word 'simple', etymologically meaning 'one', is tied up with the instinctual pre-mirror stage of the infantile period when an orderly subjectivity is yet to be constructed, and when the repression of the other is yet to take place.

If Kneeshaw's destructive instinct, being the immediate cause of Olivero's original leave-taking, is what Olivero had to alienate and annihilate in the act of killing in order to construct the lifeless utopia in Roncador, then the fact that Kneeshaw materialises after all from the debris of his past life enacts nothing less than the return of the repressed. Moreover, Kneeshaw functions as an archetypical 'double' for Olivero the same way that the first part doubles the two utopias to follow in the novel. Among the many similarities between

[130] Read, *The Green Child*, p. 23.

[131] Read, *The Green Child*, p. 25; similar descriptions can be found in pp. 31, 32-33.

[132] Read, *The Green Child*, p. 41; also see pp. 37, 31.

Olivero's Roncador and the green world, including the obsession with order and their ghostly automata of citizens, the 'bloodless' feature they share is also definitive of the novel's psychoanalytical interpretation. If one accepts Read's distinction of a rational 'revolution' from a more instinctive 'rebellion' cited in the foregoing section, one understands the reason why in Roncador 'the revolutions were in nearly all cases bloodless': the society's life-blood has long been sapped by the rational state government.[133] Olivero's own obsession with reason and order also keeps the overflowing of blood safely at bay. When devising his assassination of the dictator he explicitly refrains from bloodshed: 'we should be risking the success of the plot if in any way the assassination interfered with the ceremony in the cathedral, or if blood were shed in the immediate vicinity of a building held sacred by the people'.[134] The actual assassination suggestively takes place in the bull ring outside the cathedral, the setting intensively evocative of savagery and bloodshed. Nevertheless, again not a trace of blood is visible from the narration, which is kept clean to a clinical level.

It is important to note that blood and other body fluids, which remind of the mortal and organic nature of the human body, are actually repressed in the narrative. The repressed revolutionary blood is nonetheless preserved in the land's memory: 'The heat of the sun sent up the smell of dust, sweat and blood'.[135] In the same way are blood and man's physical existence repressed in the green world through denial. This rational world of the green people is

[133] Read, *The Green Child*, p. 61.

[134] Read, *The Green Child*, p. 74.

[135] Read, *The Green Child*, p. 88.

devoid of passion, and the green people express utter disgust against flesh: 'For whatever cause, they regarded the organic and vital elements of their bodies as disgusting and deplorable. Everything soft and labile filled them with a species of horror.'[136] Explanation of the horror is then brilliantly provided in terms of an orderly subjectivity and self-hood:

> The senses are the causes of all Disorder, for being confined to the body, they create the illusion of *self-hood.* The only sensual perception which is true is that which shows us in everything an unchanging Order; other perceptions, as of the manifold variety of things, creation, destruction and change, tend to create a sense of Disorder, and are the cause of all error.[137]

The above explanation, though carefully asserting the boundary of the body upon which an orderly self-hood is founded, ironically also recognises the agency of senses and labile existences (blood included) in the construction of self-hood: even though such recognition is only effected through negation. Viewed from this vantage point, the novel also requires a backward reading, as the significance of the eucharistic scene in the novel's first part starts to emerge as the hinge of the entire narrative. The overflowing lamb blood works as a rupture to the clean, proper subjectivity that Olivero acquires by leaving Kneeshaw behind, and denotes the inevitable return of the repressed: it is what will ultimately happen to any neurosis that Read fervently assaults in 'Why the English Have No Taste'. Meanwhile, by forcing lamb blood down the throat of the Green Child, who embodies her people's veneration for order and expulsion of the body, the character of Kneeshaw accomplishes the carnal

[136] Read, *The Green Child*, p. 140.

[137] Read, *The Green Child*, p. 144, emphasis mine.

unification of an orderly subjectivity and what is cast out in its construction. By dint of Olivero's rescue, the Green Child ends up not having taken in the blood, but the narrative does open up a possibility where the primitive, ritualistic act of blood drinking integrates what subjectivity spits out: the abject. In this sense it is Kneeshaw that has the last laugh in this novel, who triumphs over the rule of rationality and order by possessing and enforcing a more integral, 'simple' existence. It is now to be revealed how the abject works in Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral* to condition a more organic subjectivity in resistance to the dictates of order and the brutality of state power when abused.

3.6 Abjection: challenging (b)order and the symbolic language

If Kneeshaw, the 'double' of the rational Olivero, by association with the only explicit bloodshed in the novel evokes the eruption of the destructive instinct and the idea of mortality, he also enacts the moment when the horror of the uncanny is given agency and becomes the abject. Literally meaning 'cast out', the concept of the abject was developed by Julia Kristeva in *Powers of Horror* (1980) to denote man's corporeal reality, cast out by the Lacanian symbolic system in the construction of a clean coherent subjectivity. According to Kristeva, contamination in various forms—body fluid, filth, faeces, and things reminding of death like corpses—is prone to instigate feelings of abjection, as it encroaches upon the clear boundary of subject that is clean and proper, and threatens its existence. Such threat instigates fear and horror, and man in turn set up borders between the clean and the unclean, proper and improper, inside and outside in order to expel the latter category and take

subjectivity back in control. However, such borders are always ambiguous and porous, and the subject either inevitably falls into abjection or is in constant negotiation with it, hence the anxiety its manifestations excite. 'We may call it a border; abjection is above all ambiguity. Because, while releasing a hold, it does not radically cut off the subject from what threatens it—on the contrary, abjection acknowledges it to be in perpetual danger.'[138]

The theory of abjection arises from Freud's notion of the uncanny: the abject is, to a certain extent, the return of the uncanny which had been, 'in the archaism of pre-objectal relationship', part of the infantile self.[139] However, abjection is uncanniness in a more radically violent form, being 'a massive and sudden emergence of uncanniness'.[140] Its rupture not only calls to mind the repressed, but impels its integration into a renewed subjectivity. Like in Read's novel, the uncanny also pervades Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral*. Both works tap into the collective memory of the native culture (British tales of mythology and martyrdom in the twelfth century) for sources of expression, and both estrange the idea of home by presenting the uncanniness (*unheimlichkeit*) of a homecoming in which bloodshed and violence takes place. If in Read's novel the presence of the uncanny lends coherence and cogency to the satire on lifeless utopias, what is at work in Eliot's play is an enactment of abjection as an active power of resistance against the nationalist machinery.

The abject is primarily to be observed in the chorus of the play. If explicit bloodshed is conspicuously absent from *The Green Child* considering how

[138] Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Objection*, tr. by Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), p. 9.

[139] Kristeva, *Powers of Horror*, p. 10.

[140] Kristeva, *Powers of Horror*, p. 2.

many deaths actually take place, the language adopted by the chorus in *Murder in the Cathedral* is, to say the least, bloodstained and infused with abject power. Their language, to start with, is highly subliminal and for this reason distinctively surrealist in nature. The surrealism in Eliot's verse has been observed by a few contemporaries and critics. Eliot's brother Henry claimed him to be 'one of the earliest surrealist poets', an understanding Eliot seems to have endorsed.[141] Ronald Schuchard in *Eliot's Dark Angel* has touched upon the surrealist agenda in Eliot's early quatrain poems, with William Skaff yet another critic who discusses Eliot at some length as a proto-, or at least crypto-surrealist.[142] However, the surrealist characteristic of the chorus in *Murder in the Cathedral*, especially in relation to contemporaneous British surrealists, is a subject much underexplored.

To examine Eliot's use of abjection as part of the British surrealists' collective undertaking against tyranny and uniform identity, a brief detour is called for to better comprehend such resistance through language and its construction of subjectivity. When the British surrealists were searching for their own voices in the mid-1930s, the renewal of the association between land, language and identity became increasingly important. The urge of 'being British' pressed for a unique place-based identity, while the rise of national socialism warns of the danger of falling prey to the rabid ideology of the fascists. As part of a collective resistance to the homogenising nationalistic

[141] Schuchard, 'Burbank with a Baedeker, Eliot with a Cigar', *Modernism/modernity*, 10 (2003), n. 25, n. 46.

[142] Ronald Schuchard, *Eliot's Dark Angel: Intersections of Life and Art* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999). p. 233, n. 19; William Skaff, *The Philosophy of T. S. Eliot: From Skepticism to a Surrealist Poetic, 1909-1927* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1986). Skaff's study, however, only focuses on the surrealism of Eliot's early works, especially *Poems* (1920).

order, British surrealists taps into the depths of the unconscious for an alternative language. In other words, they sought to demolish the mind-body dichotomy and to invent a language that belongs to the primal, to the pre-Oedipal, pre-symbolic stage where the divide between self and the other has yet to emerge.

One of the most consummate examples of this undertaking is Dylan Thomas's poem 'From love's first fever to her plague' published simply as 'Poem' in the *Criterion* in October 1934. In many ways the poem is both response to and continuation of Eliot's own 'Animula' (1929), where the development (in the sense of adulteration and degeneration) of 'the simple soul' of God's creation is delineated. In 'Animula', Eliot takes issue with how the social order inscribed in a language steeped in the worldly time corrupts the primal unity of being. The 'animula' ('small soul') in the poem absorbs the 'patterns' and the 'imperatives of "is and seems"', emblematic of the imbrication of social structure, order, power, and language.[143] The abundance of visual rhymes ('warm'/'alarm', 'good'/'blood') is symptomatic of the unreliability of language, yet the soul is still deeply enmeshed in the intricate rhyme scheme the language nonetheless sets up, dictating the 'control' of desire and '[d]enying the importunity of the blood'.[144]

In 'From love's first fever to her plague', Dylan Thomas deals more explicitly with the same fall while foregrounding one of the many clashes in 'Animula': that between word and flesh. The worldly experience of man after birth is portrayed as the gradual ramification of a primal unity: the infantile

[143] T. S. Eliot, 'Animula', TP1, p. 105, ll. 11, 19.

[144] Eliot, 'Animula', ll. 3, 6, 27-28.

experience of the world as an integral whole is structured and disciplined by a sense of division concomitant to the absorption of language and the beginning of the symbolic stage, which sets apart self from the other and establishes subjectivity. The primal unity at birth, with the earth and sky being 'as one airy hill', becomes 'two mountains meeting', and the wind 'that long had blown as one' now becomes 'the four winds': 'From the divorcing sky I learnt the double, | The two framed globe that spun into a score; | A million minds gave suck to such a bud | As forks my eye.'[145]

In Thomas's short story 'The Orchards' (1936) published in the *Criterion*, similar imagery, of the unity of origin multiplying into plenitude, also prevails the narrative. What's more, as in the poem to which we will come back momentarily, the story recognises and pines for an alternative, non-symbolic language that incorporates the alienating existence of the unconscious. Such alternative language, as is hinted, is possible in the realm of dream. Originally entitled 'Anagram' in Thomas's Notebook in 1934, with the title itself indicating the *jouissance* with language and its disintegration, the story enacts the breakdown of the symbolic language in dreams. In the story, a poet Peter (originally Marlais, Thomas's own middle name) traverses the Welsh landscape in his dreams. The narrative constantly jolts the poet-protagonist along with the readers between the language of the waking reality and that of the dream. In the waking reality, the protagonist finds the journey in his dream quite 'indescribable': 'Peter struggled with his words like a man with the sun,

[145] Dylan Thomas, 'Poem', *Criterion*, 14 (1934), 27-28 (p. 28).

and the sun stood victoriously at high noon over the dead story'.[146] The Apollonian sun of order, however, is to be counterpoised by the language of the dream in the 'moonless acre' in 'From love's first fever to her plague', where the 'word' warmth' is discarded.[147]

Where the 'moonless acre' in the poem is only suggestive of the potential connection to the earth where the dream language is concerned, the connection is spelt out in 'The Orchards'. In the poet-protagonist's dream walk, the linguistic anarchy and the landscapes in disarray mirror each other, both finding expression in the word 'aberbabel', which together with the burning orchard occupies the centre of the landscape in the narrative.[148] In Welsh, 'aber' means the mouth of the river: it at once relates to the speaking 'mouth' of the symbolic language and the discharge of fluids, the abject of the same subjectivising process. In so doing (or undoing), language in the dreamscape of Thomas's narrative no longer assumes the Apollonian authority and stability in the dream reality: as the babel falls, so do 'the city of words, the walls of a poem, the symmetrical letters', and the poet-protagonist 'marked the disintegration of the ciphers as the light failed, the sun drove down into a foreign morning, and the word of the sea rolled over the sun'[149]. Similarly, the referential chain of the symbolic language is inflected and encroached upon by the unconscious. The dream landscape is imbued with a series of pointing/signifying gesture, through which the symbolic nature of language is visualised. Repetitively, the 'flesh-and-ghost hand' of a maiden '*points*' to her

[146] Thomas, 'The Orchards', *Criterion*, 15 (1936), 614-22 (p. 616).

[147] Thomas, 'Poem', *Criterion*, 14 (1934), 27-28 (p. 28).

[148] Thomas, 'The Orchards', p. 620.

[149] Thomas, 'The Orchards', p. 616.

sister of a scarecrow.[150] The scarecrow importantly embodies at once the creation of subjectivity through symbolic language as well as what it casts aside. As is in 'From love's first fever to her plague', the scarecrow is defined by a language of division: 'the fork-tree breast, the barbed eye, and the dry, twig hand'.[151] Meanwhile, the life-size yet lifeless scarecrow, being at once the 'sister' and the uncanny 'double', resembles yet another surrealist mannequin that evokes the repressed primal unity and mortality. The scarecrow, taken as a whole, suggests that the linguistic anarchy in a dream augurs an alternative language in which the repressed unconscious equally inscribes the disorderly landscape.

In 'From love's first fever to her plague' the dark currents from the 'aberbabel' are also found, flowing from the depths of the pre-Oedipal unconscious and challenging the symbolic language set upon the division between self and the other. In the poem, the infant's acquisition of language is powerfully infused with his physical reality through the word 'declension': 'And from the first declension of the flesh | I learnt man's tongue, to twist and shapes of thoughts | Into the stony idiom of the brain'.[152] Here, language is described as an act inflicted upon the body, which in turn resists through the imagery of the discharge of body fluids that overflows the poem. Contrasting with the opening line of 'Animula' where the 'simple soul' of infant man is described as the sacred 'issues from the hand of God', the start of the human being in Thomas's poem is decidedly worldly and sexual, featuring the

[150] Thomas, 'The Orchards', p. 615.

[151] Thomas, 'The Orchards', p. 622.

[152] Thomas, 'Poem', *Criterion*, 14 (1934), 27-28 (p. 27).

discharge of the abject: it is the 'issue' from 'love's first fever to her plague'.[153] The abject then constantly underlies the multiplication and declension of the primal unity. The emergence of the symbolic language and the breaking up of the primal unity are portrayed in themselves as the result of abjection: they are '*spewed* out' by the 'One womb, one mind'.[154] The process of the division between self and the other is also indelibly contaminated by the abject: 'Each golden grain *spat* life into its fellow'.[155] As put by Julia Kristeva, 'from its place of banishment, the abject does not cease challenging its master. Without a sign (for him), it beseeches a discharge, a convulsion, a crying out'.[156] In the case of Thomas's poem, the abject not only challenges subjectivity and language from the inside, but is imbricated into the process of their making. The fleshly language for this reason is especially empowering and liberating: less for its multiplicity and the 'many sounding minded' nature of language, as critic John Goodby suggests, than for its resistance, the primal unity that refuses to be tamed and repressed.[157]

Arguably, this is the language that the chorus speaks in *Murder in the Cathedral*. That the language of the chorus comes not from the realm of the conscious is suggested by Becket on his entrance: '[t]hey speak better than they know' and 'they know and do not know'.[158] The emphasis on the fact that the chorus speaks from the dark realm beyond knowledge evokes the concept

[153] Thomas, 'Poem', pp. 27-28.

[154] Thomas, 'Poem', p. 28.

[155] Thomas, 'Poem', pp. 28, 27.

[156] Kristeva, *Powers of Horror*, p. 2.

[157] John Goodby, *The Poetry of Dylan Thomas: Under the Spelling Wall* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2013), p. 172.

[158] Eliot, *Murder in the Cathedral*, CPP, p. 239.

of the 'uncanny', as the word etymologically takes its root ('can') from 'knowledge'.[159] Contrary to the countryman of the third tempter and his sophistry, these countrywomen's imagination arises from the depths 'in the guts of the women of Canterbury', and is tied up to the sensual, irrational and organic aspect of nature and body.[160] In foreseeing the inevitable bloodshed and the long shadow Becket's death is to cast upon their own fates, they express their horror in an explosion of senses. This monologue of the chorus is so intensely surrealist that it is worth citing in its entirety:

> CHORUS. I have smelt them, the death-bringers, senses are quickened
> By subtile forebodings;
> I have tasted
> The savour of putrid flesh in the spoon. I have felt
> The heaving of earth at nightfall, restless, absurd. I have heard
> Laughter in the noises of beasts that make strange noises: jackal, jackass, jackdaw.
> …
> I have tasted
> The living lobster, the crab, the oyster, the whelk and the prawn; and they live and spawn in my bowels, and my towels dissolve in the light of dawn. I have smelt
> Death in the rose, death in the hollyhock, sweet pea, hyacinth, primrose and cowslip. I have seen
> Trunk and horn, tusk and hoof, in odd places;
> I have lain on the floor of the sea and breathed with the breathing of the sea-anemone, swallowed with ingurgitation of the sponge. I have lain in the soil and criticised the worm. In the air
> Flirted with the passage of the kite, I have plunged with the kite and cowered with the wren. I have felt
> The horn of the beetle, the scale of the viper, the mobile hard insensitive skin of the elephant, the evasive flank of the fish.
> I have smelt

[159] Definition of 'uncanny', OED.

[160] Eliot, *Murder in the Cathedral*, CPP, p. 270.

> Corruption in the dish, incense in the latrine, the sewer in the incense, the smell of sweet soap in the wood path, a hellish sweet scent in the wood path, while the ground heaved.[161]

In this long monologue of the chorus, all possible physical senses are mobilised to give an idea of what deathly horror feels like. The sensual nature of the language works not only on the level of its grotesque imagery, but also its auditory affect. The nauseating horror of death is imitated aurally by the internal rhymes, with the droning vowels like 'prawn/spawn/dawn' and 'bowels/towels', and is reinforced by the incantatory quality of the verses: the abundance of brisk, mono-syllabic words give the lines an almost primordial and ritualistic quality, chanting death at an unrelenting pace.

The monologue of the chorus cited above features some of Eliot's most consummate surrealist writings. Part of its surrealism rests with the profusion of *objets trouvés* taken out of their usual settings and assuming therefore a dreamlike and uncanny quality. There are 'trunk and horn, tusk and hoof, in odd places' along with the oceanic animals in an unfamiliar milieu. The lobster is redolent of Salvador Dalí's 'Lobster Telephone' (1936), the oceanic creatures of 'The Beached Margin' (1937) by Edward Wadsworth, the twice-appearing horn of Dalí's rhinoceros series with phenomenal horns, and the elephant, with 'mobile hard' skin, of the mechanical monster of Max Ernst's 'Celebes' (1921). The assemblage of these unrelated *objets trouvés*, all randomly taken from nature's realm, reveals a vivid while disturbing dreamscape refusing to be domesticated or appeased.

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[161] Eliot, *Murder in the Cathedral*, CPP, p. 270.

The surrealism of the chorus also results from its vocabulary of abjection. Their verses constantly evoke the abject amidst domestic settings, estranging the otherwise safe and orderly environment. 'Bowels' that rhymes with towels hints at the danger of evisceration and eruption of the abject. Sweet soap, which belongs to a relaxing bathing environment, is cast out into the open, to the unprotected landscape of wood path and a heaving earth; the homely space of the cottage garden, normally a sweet enclosure of safety and sanity, is subverted and disheveled by the menace of death. The horror threatens to affect the most commonplace settings, 'in the kitchen, in the passage | In the mews in the barn in the byre in the market-place'.[162] The border between the safe and sinister, orderly and disorderly is further dismantled by the profuse references to the swallowing act ('taste', 'eat', 'swallow', 'ingurgitation'), which at once connects and confuses the body's inside with the wild nature outside. In such unity there is, however, not a peaceful and stable collective identity—regional or national—founded upon one's connection with nature as the third tempter's depiction implies. Instead, by smashing the illusion of an orderly domestic space, and by dismantling the border between the interiority of the body and its exterior environment, the idea of a stable subjectivity based on the symbolic order of language and reason is brought to an end. Now united, the body and nature cohabit a disconcerting world of chaos, defilement and transgressions in which, however, the hope of a renewed identity is inscribed.

[162] Eliot, *Murder in the Cathedral*, CPP, p. 270.

3.7 From 'Shall I at least set my lands in order?' to 'foully united forever': an alternative national identity through abjection

To understand how abjection helps to construct an alternative national identity which counterbalances that of institutional order, one needs to revisit the play's overall structure. *Murder in the Cathedral* is a piece of extraordinary classical symmetry. Raymond Williams, for instance, commends the play's 'great formal beauty of design' with its 'succession of balances'.[163] Arguably, the balance not only manifests itself in the organisation of two parts flanking an interlude, in which Becket gives his Christmas sermon and surrenders his will to God's greater will, but also in the doubling of its characters. The four knights, as is widely observed, double the four knights who kill Becket by the King's decree. Less observed is the chorus as the 'double' of Becket. If Becket in the play embodies the *logos*, which at once indicates language, reason, will and Word of God, the dithering of the chorus with its slightly unhinged and deeply visceral language unleashes the repressed of the *logos*: the instinctive, destructive, and irrational power inherent in the human body and the land.

One makes sense of the chorus as Becket's 'double' only by restoring the play to its time: the time of Becket's martyrdom in 1170 as well as that of interwar Britain which gave birth to the play along with surrealist works such as those published in the *Criterion*. Such contextualisation foregrounds language and the symbolic order as being at stake in the play. To start with, the play enacts a linguistic utopia to the babel of England: it imagines a linguistic homogeneity unattainable in Becket's own time. The four knights, being

[163] Raymond Williams, *Drama from Ibsen to Eliot* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1952), p. 229.

courtiers with French names, should have spoken French; Becket and the priests, ecclesiastical Latin. The only character who could have spoken the Anglo-Saxon vernacular is the chorus, whom Eliot emphatically characterised as plebeians: 'I set myself the task of writing lines, not for an anonymous chorus, but for a chorus of women of Canterbury—one might almost say, char-women of Canterbury.'[164] In the play, the incongruity between land, language and identity is ironically presented, again, in the third tempter's blathering:

> TEMPTER. …King in England is not all-powerful;
> King is in France, squabbling in Anjou;
> Round him waiting hungry sons.
> We are for England. We are in England.
> You and I, my Lord, are Normans.
> England is a land for Norman
> Sovereignty. Let the Angevin
> Destroy himself, fighting in Anjou.
> He does not understand us, the English barons.
> We are the people.[165]

Contrasting to his earlier speech hallmarked by highly stylised latinate verbosity ('endurance', 'circumstance', 'undetermined', 'enmity' and 'alliance'), the same tempter's assertion of English identity is presented with almost exclusively Anglo-Saxon vocabulary.[166] Interestingly, the dexterity with which the latinate words were spoken is replaced by a sense of awkwardness, insinuated by the syntactical simplicity and occasional fragmentations in the short speech ('Round him waiting hungry sons'). The

[164] T. S. Eliot, 'The Three Voices of Poetry', *On Poetry and Poets* (London: Faber and Faber, 1957), 89-102 (p. 91).

[165] Eliot, *Murder in the Cathedral*, CPP, p. 251.

[166] Eliot, *Murder in the Cathedral*, CPP, p. 251.

audience, in turn, would find themselves facing a French-speaking baron asserting Norman identity as the mainstay of English identity, to a man who is himself a Norman descendant born to a London household. With such confusion of identities the speech artfully undoes itself: the connection between land and identity appears arbitrary and contrived, being achieved at the expense of a suppressed language native to the land. The concluding '[w]e are the people' creates therefore the effect of dramatic irony.

Where the national identity formulated by the conscious language fails, the chorus provides an alternative, which arises precisely from the defilement of the land. To start with, the chorus is defined by its affinity to and dependence upon the earth, which is punctuated by orderly seasonal cycles and contingent upon nature's caprice:

> CHORUS. Sometimes the corn has failed us,
> Sometimes the harvest is good,
> One year is a year of rain,
> Another a year of dryness,
> One year the apples are abundant,
> Another year the plums are lacking.
> Yet we have gone on living,
> Living and partly living.[167]

The flip side with the harmony with nature is the passivity of their life: 'living and partly living'. Its insipidity results from a certain self-centredness in the chorus' existence: they live in passive compliance with the imposed order of their environment, sequestered in their own petty livings and averting confrontations with the 'other'. They passively bear 'witness', but even such

[167] Eliot, *Murder in the Cathedral*, CPP, p. 244.

witness excludes the 'other'; disruptions such as scandals are simply removed from their gaze: 'We have had various scandals, | Several girls have disappeared | Unaccountably, and some not able to'.[168]

The imminent horror and prospect of bloodshed at once upsets the passive harmony and pries open their self-absorption, initiating their private experience into the public sphere. Overwhelmingly, the saint's blood abjects the earth and upsets its rigid, lifeless order. The once reassuringly flat seasonal cycle is now disrupted, 'this, this is out of life, this is out of time', '[h]ow how can I ever return, to the soft quiet seasons?'[169] With the eruption of the abject arrives a violent 'other' thrust upon the chorus. The chorus' immediate response is for its purification, an urge not dissimilar to the plea '[s]hall I at least set my lands in order' put forward towards the end of *The Waste Land*:

> CHORUS. Clear the air! clean the sky! wash the wind! take stone from stone and wash them.
> The land is foul, the water is foul, our beasts and ourselves defiled with blood.
> A rain of blood has blinded my eyes.[170]

A fact worth noting is that in performance, the actual climax of the play arrives not at the moment when Becket faces death. To cite Raymond Williams's rather counter-intuitive observation, the centre of the play is not even 'the particular death of Becket; the death serves as an expression of the permanent experience of martyrdom'.[171] The experience belongs as much to the martyr

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[168] Ibid.

[169] Eliot, *Murder in the Cathedral*, CPP, p. 275.

[170] Eliot, *Murder in the Cathedral*, CPP, p. 275.

[171] Williams, *Drama from Ibsen to Eliot*, pp. 230-31.

himself as to the believers and worshippers, who have to bear and be reborn in the long aftermath of the death. Speaking from this perspective, the culmination of the death actually occurs in the chorus' epiphany in the face of violence and horror, baptised in the saint's blood. On discovering the futility of its purifying efforts, the chorus finds its existence to be inextricably tied up with the filthy 'other' of evil and wrongdoings. Being the passive witnesses as they once were, these Canterbury women cannot wash their hands clean of the evils of the world: 'We are soiled by a filth that we cannot clean, united to the spiritual vermin, | It is not we alone, it is not the house, it is not the city that is defiled, | But the world that is wholly foul.'[172]

On this showing, concomitant with the disintegration of worldly, natural order ('out of life', 'out of time') is the breaking down of the chorus' own bodily (b)order. The intrusion of the abject forces the chorus to reconcile with its own bodily existence. On this point I agree with Michael Beehler, who argues that in the play the chorus 'internalizes the abject as the trace of an otherness that divides and pluralizes its subjectivity, subsuming that subjectivity in an unconscious logic to which it can only consent and which it can never dominate.'[173] As Beehler implies, the re-initiation of the repressed otherness into an orderly knowable self can turn out to be liberating, as is suggested by what happens in the play. The abject forced upon the placid natural order to which the chorus has been conforming complicates and expands its petty selfhood, and is instrumental to the birth of its public identity.

[172] Eliot, *Murder in the Cathedral*, CPP, p. 276.

[173] Michael Beehler, 'Semiotics/Psychoanalysis/Christianity: Eliot's Logic of Alterity', *Arizona Quarterly*, 45 (1989), 57-53 (p. 68).

With the outburst of the abject, the chorus not only observes and complies with the land, but is 'foully united' with it.[174] The bloodstained land is hence no longer natural or neutral, but intensely political. In this regard the sudden 'blindness' by the blood is significant: blood besmirches the chorus' vision and makes passive 'witnessing' not possible, and the failure, in turn, engenders the awakening of the public self of the chorus, in which its limited vision of 'private catastrophe' is transposed into a vision of a larger community. It now actively participates in its disruption and links its own catastrophe to that of the collective—the house, the city, the world—partaking in 'a fear not of one but of many'.[175]

Viewed in this light, it is entirely significant that the chorus awakens to civic responsibility as well as to a regional and national identity—the political aspect of the land it occupies by the eruption of the abject. It exclaims in horror, distraught and disoriented:

> CHORUS. … A rain of blood has blinded my eyes. Where is England? where is Kent? where is Canterbury?[176]

The chorus, who only a moment ago found the land neutral and void—'the empty land | Which is no land, only emptiness absence, the Void'—in a fit of abjection awakens to the communal, or even national attributes of the land, though the articulation here is as much an awareness as a problematisation of the notion.[177] A similar instance, again, could be observed in Dylan Thomas's

[174] Eliot, *Murder in the Cathedral*, CPP, p. 272.

[175] Eliot, *Murder in the Cathedral*, CPP, p. 244.

[176] Eliot, *Murder in the Cathedral*, CPP, p. 275; Kristeva, *Powers of Horror*, p. 75.

[177] Eliot, *Murder in the Cathedral*, CPP, p. 272.

'The Orchards', where the repressed unconscious, in this case the dream, is revealed to be instrumental to one's place-based identity in relation to the land. Annis Pratt calls attention to the fact that the dream journey is an 'archetypal folkwalk' in terms of the Welsh folk legends and myths it invokes.[178] The narrative, and more importantly the 'aberbabel', is also emphatically located in a prototypical Welsh landscape where the sea 'met the Glamorgan shores where a half-mountain fell westward out of the clump of villages in a wild wood, and shook the base of Wales'.[179] The poet-protagonist is himself a self-conscious 'folkman', but importantly only so in a dream: in the dream he is a 'legendary walker, a folkman walking', whereas in waking reality he 'was a folkman no longer but Peter the poet walking'.[180] How the repressed or alienated raw material of one's self conditions one's spatial orientation or even identity is also of interest to Kristeva, who calls attention to the spatial agency inherent to abjection. According to Kristeva, with the radical dislocation it incurs, abjection invites people to contemplate their spatial bearing:

> … the one by whom the abject exists is thus a *deject* who places (himself), *separates* (himself), situates (himself), and therefore *strays* instead of getting his bearings, desiring, belonging, or refusing. […] Instead of sounding himself as to his 'being', he does so concerning his place: '*Where* am I?' instead of '*Who* am I'?[181]

It is worth noting that, in the process of abjection and the subject's orientation in / absorption of exteriority, the subject still plays a pivotal role. In

[178] Annis Pratt, *Dylan Thomas' Early Prose: A Study in Creative Mythology* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1970), p. 96.

[179] Thomas, 'The Orchards', p. 615.

[180] Thomas, 'The Orchards', pp. 620, 621.

[181] Kristeva, *Powers of Horror*, p. 8.

the poststructural thinking of Kristeva the idea of subjectivity and identity is not entirely jettisoned; what is challenged instead is their fossilisation. In other words, the 'I' still exists forcefully in its interpenetration with its surroundings—in the question of 'Where am *I*'—and forms the solid bedrock of the political structure founded thereupon. In her study of Kristeva, S. K. Keltner argues that abjection is the shape that the border between the intimate and the public takes, and describes the process of abjection as more of the public's gravitation towards the private subject than the interpenetration of the two: 'to be precise, her thesis of abjection is shown to bear the weight of the loss of public space as the space of individuation'.[182] Such individuation as the condition for a collective identity is also visible in the political awakening of the chorus in Eliot's play, which also testifies to the anti-nationalist, decentralising structure of power that the chorus embodies. In its self-centred and passive phase the chorus expresses itself through an abstract collectivity ('we'), but shifts to highly individualised modes of expression when confronted with the abject ('*I* have smelt them'). If, as in Benedict Anderson's famous postulation, a collective or specifically national identity must be 'imagined', then *Murder in the Cathedral* reveals that such imagination takes place on a microscopic level of the intimate human psyche rather than as an abstract leap of faith of a faceless collectivity. In other words, the chorus' political awakening in abjection implies a structure of power where the power is channelled from individuals to the collective entity, not the other way round.

[182] S. K. Keltner, 'What is Intimacy', *Psychoanalysis, Aesthetics, and Politics in the Work of Julia Kristeva*, ed. by Kelly Oliver and S. K. Keltner (Albany: SUNY Press, 2009), 163-78 (p. 170).

This is an important exposition and supplement to Eliot's decentralising notion of 'unity in diversity': through a highly devolutionary and individualised understanding of the process in which man becomes a citizen, the chorus in the play forcefully resists the centralising nationalist agenda of the fascists using their own vocabulary, abjecting it with its own blood.

3.8 The political aesthetics of verse drama

So far, the analysis of *Murder in the Cathedral* in the context of Eliot's own decentralising politics and the subliminal language of British surrealism gives a glimpse of the collective discourse of the mid-1930s. Both Eliot and the British surrealists are revealed to have resisted a unifying nationalist ideology and ethnic violence of the fascists by asserting an alternative national identity: it invokes the vital destabilising force of the land it occupies, and features a devolutionary ordering of power. To a certain degree, the chorus of *Murder in the Cathedral*, or even Eliot's enterprise of verse drama as a whole, fleshes out a critical process only loosely laid out in his political treatises: that of connection. How does a community cohere, be it local or national; or put otherwise, how to structure a civil society or a nation in an order that is neither anarchical or tyrannical? As the foregoing argument articulates, the presence and power of the abject in the chorus provides an instance of such coherence, which paradoxically features a national identity achieved through irrationality and disorder, a fluid boundary of subjectivity that incorporates alterity and exteriority. Moreover, the character of chorus and the undertaking of verse drama in themselves may be regarded as Eliot's own connection to the wider

community: one forged through the irrational, emotive power he accepts as part as his own subjectivity and identifies in the medium of poetic drama.

The idea of verse drama in itself is part of Eliot's campaign to come to terms with and organise the mass public with a non-ideological approach. In 'Poetry and Drama' (1950) written later in his career, Eliot clarifies that the form of verse drama sets out to emulate ordinary speech through poetic language.[183] Verse drama, according to Eliot, should never be 'losing that contact with the ordinary everyday world with which drama must come to terms'.[184] At the same time, the term 'verse drama' has also inherent to it 'a credible order' according to which this ordinary reality is organised.[185] Again, the order is materialised through the critical device Eliot recognises in drama: the irrational, emotional instigation that serves to engage and mobilise a large, varied audience. In 1920, writing on 'The Possibility of a Poetic Drama', Eliot rehearses his theory of the 'dissociation of sensibility' by promoting the equal importance of feelings in theatrical practices. According to him, poetry helps to give form to an opaque, sometimes ambivalent truth, and through dramatic devices this truth is often embodied as an 'idea-emotion'.[186]

The visceral language of the chorus in *Murder in the Cathedral* and its discovery of a national identity in the eruption of the abject could be regarded as an instance of the 'idea-emotion', which Eliot aspires to communicate through the medium of verse drama. The sincerity of the chorus in the play has

[183] T. S. Eliot*, Poetry and Drama* (London: Faber and Faber, 1950), p. 13.

[184] Eliot*, Poetry and Drama,* pp. 34-35.

[185] Ibid.

[186] T. S. Eliot, *The Sacred Wood: Essays on Poetry and Criticism* (London: Faber and Faber, 1997 [1920]), p. 56.

long been put to question. Eliot later addresses the problem of sincerity intrinsic to the genre of play writing in 'The Three Voices of Poetry' (1950). In this essay reflecting upon his verse dramas, Eliot distinguishes three voices existing in a poetic text (poetic drama included) in relation to its distance from the author. The first voice is the poet talking to himself or to nobody; in the second he address the reader; and the third is the 'dramatic' voice by which the poet creates a dramatic character speaking in verse. Critics including Randy Malamud imply that the chorus in the play adopts the third voice, with a noticeable authorial distance.[187] After all, Eliot in this essay does set it apart from its predecessor in 'The Rock', in which 'its members were speaking *for me*'.[188] Richard Badenhausen, on the other hand, contends that the chorus is in fact the poet's 'first voice' speaking, which 'reveals the familiar concerns, fears and obsessions of the poet', and the 'dramatic' third voice is developed in the play through other characters, Becket, the Priests, and the Knights.[189] Such ambivalence in itself is significant, as the emotive power of poetic drama is mobilised less by any of these voices individually than by the cacophony itself and, as Eliot puts it, by their 'deeper consistency':

> It should remove the surface of things, expose the underneath, or the inside, of the natural surface appearance. It may allow the characters to behave inconsistently, but only with respect to a deeper consistency. It may use any device to show their *real* feelings and volitions, instead of just what, in actual life, they would normally profess to be conscious of; it must reveal, underneath the vacillating or infirm character, the

[187] Randy Malamud, *Where the Words Are Valid: T. S. Eliot's Communities of Drama* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1994), p. 41.

[188] Eliot, 'The Three Voices of Poetry', *On Poetry and Poets*, p. 91.

[189] Richard Badenhausen, 'When the Poet Speaks Only for Himself: The Chorus as "first voice" in *Murder in the Cathedral*', *Yeats Eliot Review*, 11 (1992), 78-84 (p. 79).

> indomitable *unconscious* will, and underneath the resolute purpose of the planning animal, the victim of circumstances, and the doomed or sanctified being.[190]

In other words, the dramatic character can embody as many (or few) of these poetic voices as he can, as his inconsistency regarding voices and identities is partly what the genre calls for. The recognition of the 'real' and the 'unconscious' that wreak havoc as part of the 'deeper consistency' of a character/individual also works on a metaphorical level, and this is one of the messages of the play: one accepts the alterity within before accepting it from beyond the individual, thus the formation of a community. That said, the characterisation of the chorus in *Murder in the Cathedral* could be read as Eliot's own practice of integrating the alterity inherent to himself, breaking down the boundary of a solid identity, and reaching into the community. In the same essay on 'The Three Voices of Poetry', Eliot addresses his need 'to identify myself with these women, instead of merely identifying them with myself'.[191] His phrasing reflects a conscious effort to assimilate what is not normally his identity, of what is proletarian, indigent, female, sensual, and abject. In other words, the chorus enacts many of the secret personae that Eliot harbours behind the public scene, such as his occasional outbursts of obscene verses despite his famous distaste for the flesh and female sensuality.[192] It is

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[190] T. S. Eliot, 'Introduction', *Shakespeare and the Popular Dramatic Tradition* by S. L. Bethell (London: Faber and Faber, 1945), 7-9 (p. 9), emphases mine.

[191] Eliot, 'The Three Voices of Poetry', *On Poetry and Poets*, p. 91.

[192] Eliot is known for his aversion to flesh and female sexuality. In 'La Figlia che Piange' (1912), for instance, the man's desertion of his lover is described as 'the mind deserts the body it has used' (CPP, p. 34). The desire to purge the carnal desire and to alienate the female sex informs his early writings, especially 'The Death of Saint Narcissus' (1915) and *The Waste Land* (1922). The aversion persisted throughout his career: Eliot is reported to be 'tensely withdrawn from anything reminiscent of the flesh' in the late 1940s. See Hans Meyerhoff, 'Mr

therefore no wonder that, as the manuscript reveals, the chorus was the part with which Eliot was most comfortable, as Eliot wrote the chorus before everything else, and constructed the rest of the play around these lines.[193] As a result, while Thomas Becket is indisputably the hero, the chorus as his uncanny 'double' is often held to be the more endearing, if not convincing, character of the play. The chorus is often commended to be the play's most developed character, more so than all the rest of the male characters. Conrad Aiken, for instance, was immediately struck by the humanity of these choruses and the very depth of the common feeling they possess: 'That is perhaps the greatest surprise about it—in the play Eliot has become human, and tender…'.[194] The affective chorus creates also a point of identification for Helen Gardner, who contends that the audience to the play are no longer mere 'spectators but sharers in a mystery'. [195] Working together, the human and the mysterious—what the chorus shares with the surrealists—resist the clean and rational order of the nationalist machinery and convey the alternative communal identity to the play's audience under the imminent horror of war.

What the chapter has addressed so far is largely contained within the national border: the ordering of power within a nation as being inflected by the destabilising force of the land itself. As the contextualisation of *Murder in the*

Eliot's Evening Service', *Partisan Review*, 15.1 (1948), pp. 135-42 (141). For Eliot's obscene verses (his Bolo poems included) that counterpoises this aspect of his personality, see Gabrielle McIntire, 'An Unexpected Beginning: Sex, Race, and History in Eliot's Columbo and Bolo Poems', *Modernism/modernity*, 9 (2002), pp. 283–301; Loretta Johnson, 'T.S. Eliot's Bawdy Verse: Lulu, Bolo and More Ties', *Journal of Modern Literature*, 27 (2003), pp. 14–25.

[193] Richard Badenhausen, 'Drama', *T. S. Eliot in Context*, ed. by Jason Harding (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 125-33 (p. 129).

[194] Quoted in Lyndall Gordon, *The Imperfect Life of T. S. Eliot* (London: Virago, 2012), p. 273.

[195] Helen Gardner, *The Art of T. S. Eliot* (London: Cresset Press, 1968), p. 138.

Cathedral with surrealism has revealed, the cultural and political authority of 'home', lineage and racial purity based on these geographical traits can be dismantled by writing home alternatively as a contesting ground, with identity forged through incorporating the Other and order established through the rupture of boundaries. With reference to boundaries, it is worth noting that the subliminal language and abject imagery instrumental to the resistance to nationalism—a collective undertaking of both Eliot and the British surrealists—are also significant in a supra-national context where the national border melts down in their presence. Abjection, for example, in the later theorisation of Kristeva is carried beyond the realm of individual psyche and becomes crucial to a cosmopolitan world view. In her later development of the concept in *Strangers to Ourselves* (1991) and *Nations without Nationalism* (1993), the presence of the strange/alien/foreign in an individual subjectivity is framed into a forceful challenge to the national border. It starts with the recognition of the foreigner in one's self: '[s]trangely, the foreigner lives within us: he is the hidden face of our identity, the space that wrecks our abode, the time in which understanding and affinity founder'.[196] The same alien force within the self then serves as the drive behind a transnational community where everyone is a foreigner: '[a] paradoxical community is emerging, made up of foreigners who are reconciled with themselves to the extent they recognize themselves as foreigners.'[197] In a similar spirit, the following chapter takes a step further from what is at stake in the texts discussed in the

[196] Julia Kristeva, *Strangers to Ourselves*, tr. by Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), p. 1.

[197] Kristeva, *Strangers to Ourselves*, p. 195.

current chapter, which features the challenge to nationalism from within, and moves on to anatomise the similar mechanism in Eliot's later works where the cultural authority of the nation is undone on a supra-national—and specifically imperial—scale.

CHAPTER IV
'OTHER ECHOES INHABIT THE GARDEN': ENGLISHNESS AND ITS DISCONTENTS

4.1 Introduction

'Where is England? Where is Kent? Where is Canterbury?' ask the distraught women of Canterbury in *Murder in the Cathedral* (1935). 'Here, the intersection of the timeless moment | Is England and nowhere', Eliot answers obliquely in 'Little Gidding' (1942).[1] It takes the still ongoing Blitz and three other 'quartets' before such an affirmation was made, but the play and the *Four Quartets* are connected by a powerful symbol that evokes England. The first fourteen lines of 'Burnt Norton' (1936), which introduce a rose-garden that predominates in all the quartets to follow, originates in lines written by Eliot for the play: lines originally assigned to the second priest who interpolates between the second and the third tempters. The important imagery of the rose-garden emerges from the tempters speaking for the temporal power of chancellorship and for the regional, rural basis of England: from its inceptive moment, the image is imbricated with the spatial politics related to the secular—and then war-torn—nation.

Eliot's later poetics rely heavily upon the image of the rose-garden, laden with transnational overtones and adapted to address England's particular moment of crisis. The Dantesque garden of roses in 'Ash-Wednesday' (1930) transfigures into the apple orchard in 'New Hampshire' (1933), a nostalgic 'Landscapes' poem written shortly after Eliot's return from America. In

[1] T. S. Eliot, 'Little Gidding' I, TP1, p. 202, ll. 52-53.

Murder in the Cathedral, 'Burnt Norton', another verse play *The Family Reunion* (1939) and the rest of the quartets, the orchard again reverts to a rose-garden: one that is relocated from Dante's timeless paradise and the New England shores to English villages and country estates. From this point on, Eliot's rose-garden intensively evokes the image of an old, rural England. All the quartets are named after actual places, three of them being villages in an idyllically imagined south of England. Burnt Norton is a village near Chipping Campden in Gloucestershire, in the famously picturesque region of the Cotswolds; East Coker is 'a tiny village in Somerset', as Eliot puts it; and the obscure village of Little Gidding, the site of a seventeenth-century Anglican religious community near Cambridge.[2] The rose-garden in *The Family Reunion* belongs to the country estate of Lord Monchensey in the north of England, suggestively named 'Wishwood'.

The rural settings of Eliot's rose-gardens hark back to the tradition that idealises England's countryside as gardens, with its expansive green fields dotted with ancient villages and manor houses. This pastoralised England is ubiquitous in early twentieth-century Georgian poetry, and is still very much alive in the writings during the 1930s and 1940s.[3] These nationalistic garden images are complicated by other, often supra-national echoes that put an aggrandised Englishness into perspective. A frequently-cited example celebrating the quintessential Englishness of rose-gardens comes from Ford

[2] T. S. Eliot, 'The Influence of Landscape upon the Poet', *Daedalus*, 89 (1960), p. 422.

[3] Steve Ellis contextualises Eliot's *Four Quartets* within what he terms as 'a final flowering of the Georgian movement', namely pastoral literature celebrating Englishness including those by H. V. Morton, H. J. Massingham, and neo-romantic artists and writers. Steve Ellis, *The English Eliot: Design, Language, and Landscape in* Four Quartets (London: Routledge, 1991), p. 93.

Madox Ford's *The Spirit of the People: An Analysis of the English Mind* (1907):

> Thus nowhere in the world, so much as in England, do you find the spirit of the home of ancient peace; nowhere in the occidental world will you find turf that so invites you to lie down and muse, sunshine so mellow and innocuous, shade so deep or rooks so tranquil in their voices. You will find nowhere a *mise-en-scène* so suggestive of the ancient and the enduring as in an English rose-garden, walled in and stone pathed, if it be not in an English cathedral close. Yet these very permanent manifestations of restfulness were founded by the restless units of European races, and these English rose gardens and cathedral closes breed a race whose mission is, after all, to be the eternal frontiersman of the world.[4]

The rose-garden, as Ford depicts it, is a landscape symbol imbued in the ancient memory of deep England, or one of the significant '*lieux de mémoire*': a concept by Pierre Nora that Ian Baucom adduces in his analysis of Ford's garden. Baucom argues, with the help of Nora, for the agency of places in constructing the myth of a nation through the fetishising power of memory: places 'where an identity-preserving, identity-enchanting, and identity-transforming aura lingers, or is made to appear'.[5] The thrust of Baucom's argument is that locations of Englishness like the rose-garden are never static, but are often refashioned in the course of their replication and dissemination overseas. In other words, these '*lieux de mémoire*' crucial to the identity-making enterprise of the home country of England are bound to be rewritten by foreigners and foreign places.

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[4] Ford Madox Ford, *The Spirit of the People: An Analysis of the English Mind* (London: Alston Rivers, 1907), pp. 50-51.

[5] Ian Baucom, *Out of Place : Englishness, Empire, and the Locations of Identity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), p. 19.

In Ford's text, the quiet rose-garden, safely enclosed within churchyards, is nevertheless destabilised by the fact that England is more than any other country a 'land […] ruled by foreigners', and that the purity of the English blood is but a fiction.[6] The moment the authenticity of an English rose-garden is established, Ford swiftly inverts the national symbol of history, peace and isolation into a joint venture of 'European races': the Romans, the Britons, the Anglo-Saxons, the Danes and the Normans who with their conquests and constructions transform the English landscape and build the English garden in collaboration. The garden of England, as Ford puts it, therefore hosts a race of 'eternal frontiersman'. The folk authenticity of England that the rose-garden carefully preserves is hence less authentic than artificial. The rose-garden is described as a '*mise-en-scène*' after all, hinting at the elements of theatricality and performance inherent to the identity-making process, and within the few lines cited the necessary feature of enclosure is stressed repetitively, implying the precariousness of an imaginary pure, exclusive England isolated from foreign influences.

Being frontiersmen, the English people carry a conquering 'mission' for the ever expanding, self-replicating landscape of the garden. Ford's undertone, of imperial expansion as part of the quintessential English spirit, is also found in other garden texts from the early twentieth century, the most prominent being Rudyard Kipling's 'The Glory of the Garden' (1911) written for C. R. L. Fletcher's *A History of England*. In the poem, Kipling also relies upon the

[6] Ford, *The Spirit of the People,* pp. 31, 44.

traditional metaphor of the 'garden of England': 'Our England is a garden'.[7] However, his eulogy is as much celebratory as revealing about the economic structure that sustains the garden. The moment the didactic speaker emphasises the collective ownership of the garden ('*our* England'), he also delegates responsibility to his readers in taking care of the garden: like every other garden, its maintenance takes strenuous human labour of tilling, trimming, potting and weeding. 'The Glory of the Garden lies in more than meets the eye', the speaker warns:

> … such gardens are not made
> By singing:— 'Oh, how beautiful,' and sitting in the shade
> While better men than we go out and start their working lives
> At grubbing weeds from gravel-paths with broken dinner-knives.[8]

The verse here is evocative of a pamphlet entitled 'Let Us Tidy Up', published in 1929 as part of the anti-litter campaign initiated by the Council for the Preservation of Rural England (CPRE). An anti-litter notice collected in the pamphlet adopts the similar strategy of emphasising a shared responsibility and ownership by naming the English countryside as '*everybody's* garden': 'Someone loves this garden and he has *lent* it to you | Please leave it as beautiful as you find it'.[9] However, to both of these texts appealing to the nationalist symbol of the garden, it is worthwhile asking whom the speaker addresses. In fact, in both, the speakers assume a leisurely readership ('sitting in the shade') who tend to idealise the garden-like countryside and are also

[7] Rudyard Kipling, 'The Glory of the Garden', *Rudyard Kipling's Verse: Definitive Edition* (Hodder and Stoughton, 1940 [1911]), p. 733.

[8] Ibid.

[9] Harry Hardy Peach, ed. *Let Us Tidy Up: Some Litter Rhymes, Litter Notices, Stories and Suggestions How to Deal with It* (London: The Dryad Press, 1929), p. 12, emphases mine.

capable of vandalising it: in Kipling's case, those who might have been what Martin Wiener describes as the English landed elite in the later nineteenth century 'presiding over a waning rural economy' while still 'wealthy enough not to feel critically menaced by the decline of agriculture', and in Peach's case the leisurely urban weekenders.[10] As Ford also observes in 1906, the aestheticisation of the countryside, along with 'the return to the land' movement, was largely confined to the comparatively well-to-do: the '"Country" in inverted commas […] may be said to exist only for a more or less lettered, more or less educated, more or less easily circumstanced town class'.[11]

On top of the socio-economic privilege of class is that of race, which is prominent in Kipling's text: 'There's not a hand so weak and *white*, nor yet a heart so sick | But it can find some needful job that's crying to be done'.[12] The rhetoric here is reminiscent of Kipling's own notion of 'the white man's burden': the verses clearly reveal the speaker's anxiety over the borders of England, where he sends forth his readers to work ('Our England is a garden that is full of stately views, | Of borders, beds and shrubberies and lawns and avenues', and 'Then seek your job with thankfulness and work till further orders, | If it's only netting strawberries or killing slugs on borders').[13] A lot is going on in the small garden plot at the turn of the twentieth century. As cultured nature, the garden sees the transformation of class structure with the

[10] Martin J. Wiener, *English Culture and the Decline of the Industrial Spirit, 1850-1980,* 2nd edn (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 48.

[11] Ford Madox Ford [Hueffer], *The Heart of the Country: A Survey of a Modern Land* (London: Alston Rivers, 1906), p. 23.

[12] Rudyard Kipling, 'The Glory of the Garden', emphasis mine.

[13] Ibid.

decline of a landed aristocracy. As a national symbol, the garden of England is variously represented to be perpetually negotiating its boundary within a larger geopolitical structure, be it the empire or Europe.

Such is the context in which Eliot's rose-garden is embedded. This chapter engages with the image of the rose-garden and its country-house setting in *The Family Reunion* and *Four Quartets*, situating them in the widely-circulated discourse on the English country houses of the time, particularly on matters of preservation and heritagisation. In *A Shrinking Island*, Jed Esty contends for a certain centripetal drive towards England and the consolidation of an insular English identity occasioned by the decline of the empire. In identifying Eliot's Christian traditionalism and attachment to the native soil, Esty reads *Four Quartets* as Eliot's attempt to spatialise the historical depth of a Christian England in its countryside and transform England's rural past into a certain transhistorical, timeless order.[14] My argument consciously evokes all aspects of Esty's project, especially its focus on a rural-based Englishness in the context of the decline of the empire and late modernism. Where I differ, however, is in my emphasis on the transnational nature of Eliot's engagement with the country-house discourse, embodied in the rose-garden in 'Burnt Norton' and Wishwood in *The Family Reunion*. These textual spaces enact a 'chronotope'—to follow Esty's use of Bakhtin—that is essentially at odds with the pastoralised discourse appropriating real pasts to the end of addressing present national crises. If the English garden along with the rural estates it occupies can be regarded as a symbol for the colonial centre, then Eliot's *Four*

[14] Jed Esty, *A Shrinking Island: Modernism and National Culture in England* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), p. 142.

Quartets indeed reveal a pattern where the boundary, or frontier, of the enclosed imperial garden is foregrounded and opens up as the quartets proceed. The hierarchy of the centre and its margins is dissolved: the quartets are words from neither an Englishman nor an American, and from neither 'here' nor 'there', but are ultimately from a 'metic' (a resident alien) writing from the interstices between cultures. As a whole, the quartets envisage a spatial ordering alternative to the imperial power relations and in which one does not lose one's transnational (or cosmopolitan) edge in clinging to one's local geographies or roots.

4.2 Burnt Norton and Bateman's: a tale of two country houses

In a summer afternoon of 1934, Eliot and his American friend Emily Hale visited Burnt Norton, a country estate near Chipping Campden in Gloucestershire, England. This aristocratic country house, hidden in the famously picturesque region of the Cotswolds, was in the possession of the fifth Earl of Harrowby, though at the time of their visit the property remained largely uninhabited. However, the eponymous poem based on the visit also resonates with children's laughter from the garden of another English country house. In a letter to John Hayward on 5 August 1941, Eliot connected the rose-garden motif that runs from 'Burnt Norton' to 'Little Gidding'—the first draft of which was just sent to Hayward—with Rudyard Kipling's short story entitled 'They'. As he explains, 'the children in the appletree' evoking the rose-garden was meant 'to tie up New Hampshire and Burnt Norton (with a

touch, as I discovered in the train, of "They" which I don't think I had read for 30 years)'.[15]

Collected in *Traffics and Discoveries* (1904), the story, located in Sussex, concerns an anonymous motorist who on a summer day finds himself amidst a beautiful walled garden attached to a country house (called 'House Beautiful' later on) near the 'lower coast' of England. He is attracted by a few children playing in the garden, whose bashfulness and deliberate distance from him only make them more alluring. He then becomes acquainted with the landowner of the magnificent estate, a blind yet clairvoyant woman. At her invitation the narrator comes to the estate another two times in the hope of meeting the lovely children again, who recede even further away into the lush gardens and the depths of the labyrinthine old house. It is not until the end of the story that the truth, only hinted at in the preceding parts, is unravelled: the story's eponymous 'they' turn out to be ghosts of those who died young, and can only be seen by those who have lost their own children. The House Beautiful is in many ways an idealised version of Kipling's own country estate Bateman's, which he purchased in Sussex in 1902. The intimate delineations of the gardens and the interiors in 'They' reflect his passionate devotion to the renovation of the house and its gardens. On purchasing the house along with the farm buildings, watermill and farmland, Kipling commissioned his architect cousin Ambrose Poynter to carry out a series of improvements to the house, and kept buying up more land in order to lay out new gardens.

[15] Helen Gardner, *The Composition of* '*Four Quartets*' (London: Faber and Faber, 1978), p. 29.

What happened to rural houses like Burnt Norton and Bateman's reveals the rise and fall of the landed class over the centuries. Both the Norton estate and Bateman's are located far from the bustle of the city: they are 'out-of-the-world' destinations as described in 'They'. Bateman's was built in 1634 in a Jacobean style that Kipling's renovations tightly followed. Burnt Norton was built in 1716 by Sir William Keyt, heir to a Royalist baronetcy, who ultimately destroyed the house (himself within) in a fire in 1741. The house, once lavishly built according to Keyt's own expensive taste as 'an extravagant, naively Baroque mansion', was reduced to only a black skeleton, which was not pulled down until 1789.[16] For the high costs involved, no serious efforts in rebuilding the house had been made until 1901, when architect Edward Guy Dawber, known for his use of local Cotswold stone, was employed to renovate the estate.[17]

The renovations of the Norton estate and Bateman's—which through Kipling's 'They' becomes another country house behind the text of 'Burnt Norton'—both happened at the turn of the twentieth century. However, the styles they respectively adopted are very different. Bateman's follows the revivalist style popular at the turn of the century. A contemporary review commended its seventeenth-century furnishing that meticulously matches the old Jacobean house: it is, after Kipling's careful refurbishment, '*typically* Jacobean', and features 'a *typical* old English home'.[18] Such an expensive

[16] David Verey, *Gloucestershire*, 3rd edn (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), p. 148.

[17] Edward Malins, 'Burnt Norton', *Garden History*, 7 (1979), 78-85 (p. 81).

[18] 'Batemans, Sussex. The Residence of Mr. Rudyard Kipling', *Country Life*, 15 Aug 1908, 224-33 (pp. 230, 232), emphases mine.

result, of a visible preservation of the history and authenticity of an old house, was not what happened to the Norton estate. Dawber's commission concerning the Norton estate was primarily for the gardens instead of the house itself, and a comparison of Dawber's plan against the layout of the original Norton estate immediately reveals the economy of the early twentieth-century renovation. The eighteenth-century gardens and parterres spanning across five to six acres, 'which must have resembled some of the terraced gardens that William Kent had seen in Italy', is radically streamlined.[19] Large areas of the original landscape garden were either grassed over or allowed to languish, decorated with only an ornamental dry pool (which also enters Eliot's 'Burnt Norton') and a formal rose-garden of four flower beds.

For the Norton estate, Dawber's choice of a formal garden over a revivalist reinstatement of the eighteenth-century landscape garden is rooted in deeper economic reasons. Cultural historian Robert Williams has ascribed the popularisation of the formal garden in England, after the reign of a taste for the landscape garden for two centuries, to the collapse of the land market in the late nineteenth century.[20] The traditional support from local tenants and farm labourers, which used to keep the expensive country house and gardens running, was no longer easily available to the traditional landed class from the latter half of the nineteenth century. With the steep price increase of imported grain and drastic decrease in the price of farm goods, a great agricultural depression set in in the 1870s, followed by the large-scale migration of landless

[19] Malins, 'Burnt Norton', *Garden History*, 7 (1979), p. 79.

[20] Robert Williams, 'Edwardian Gardens, Old and New', *The Journal of Garden History*, 13 (1993), 90-103 (p. 91).

farmers into the city and its factories. As Raymond Williams points out, the percentage of rural workers decreased from a third of the whole working population to less than a tenth within the nineteenth century alone.[21] Such rural depopulation caused many expansive country estates to lie idle, and the introduction of estate duties in 1894 and death duties in 1898 worked in tandem to force many estates to sell land for the hefty tax bill. The turn of the century thus saw many landed aristocrats like the fifth Earl of Harrowby struggling. For this reason, the modern, plainer architectural style and smaller formal gardens of the renovated Norton estate constitute part of the larger picture of changed class structure in rural England of the time.

With Bateman's, Kipling could be said to have gained from the traditional landed gentry's loss. Kipling belongs to the relatively new generation of land owners who purchase country estates from profits earned elsewhere. The previous owner must have suffered from the agricultural decline, as according to a contemporary commentary what came with the house was no more than '250 acres of land', which 'would in no way produce the means to build and support it'.[22] The shrinking in land possession must again be understood against the context of its time, when 'many landowners burdened with an empty country house or two and unworked acres […] were forced to auction parcels of land piecemeal or turn them into a game preserve for lease to

[21] Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City* (London: Paladin, 1975), p. 226.

[22] 'Batemans, Sussex. The Residence of Mr. Rudyard Kipling', p. 224. Compare the figures here to Robert Williams's account, according to whom a big Victorian country house that could serve as the social, political and economic hub of a working estate might comprise ten or twenty thousand acres or more. See Robert Williams, 'Edwardian Gardens', *The Journal of Garden History*, 13 (1993), p. 91.

shooting parties organized by city bankers and industrialists'.[23] Nevertheless, the fact that Kipling did not rely upon agrarian income was also the redemption of Bateman's: capital from elsewhere enabled the more extravagant renovation of the house in its original Jacobean style. Kipling is not alone in this respect: late nineteenth-century England was known for its reverence for the revivalist architecture primarily in the Tudor fashion, be they big manor houses or small cottages, all ideally located in the idyllic countryside. Cultural, instead of pure aesthetic reasons underlie such passion, as behind these revivalist houses is an earnest assertion of true English tradition. Tudor represents 'our most national architecture', as architecture historian Geoffrey Scott put it in 1908, and the same nationalistic fervour filtered into the revivalist houses is also identified in the house and gardens in Kipling's Bateman's, as well as the story 'They'.[24]

Like Bateman's, the fictional 'House Beautiful' in 'They' epitomises the feudal myth and rural myth as part of a desired authentic English identity. The architectural grandeur of the house and gardens, the aristocratic inheritance of the property, and the agricultural basis that sustains it: all celebrate the squirearchical glory of a feudal society. Miss Florence, the 'landed proprietress' of the 'House Beautiful', is suggested to have inherited the estate, which is hinted at by her remarks over her childhood experience in the house.[25] What she oversees (though her blindness prevents her from seeing) is a stately Tudor

[23] Robert Williams, 'Edwardian Gardens', *The Journal of Garden History*, 13 (1993), p. 91.

[24] Geoffrey Scott, *The National Character of the English Architecture* (Oxford: Blackwells, 1908), p. 37.

[25] Rudyard Kipling, 'They', *Short Stories I: A Sahib's War and Other Stories*, selected by Andrew Rutherford (London: Penguin, 1971 [1904]), 93-116 (pp. 104-5).

house heavily decorated with ‘a couple of hundred acres’ tilled by tenants, along with a spectacular garden:

> … As the light beat across my face my fore-wheels took the turf of a great still lawn from which sprang horsemen ten feet high with levelled lances, monstrous peacocks, and sleek round-headed maids of honour—blue, black, and glistening—all of clipped yew. Across the lawn—the marshalled woods besieged it on three sides—stood an ancient house of lichened and weather-worn stone, with mullioned windows and roofs of rose-red tile. It was flanked by semi-circular walls, also rose-red, that closed the lawn on the fourth side, and at their feet a box hedge grew man-high. There were doves on the roof about the slim brick chimneys, and I caught a glimpse of an octagonal dove-house behind the screening wall.
>
> Here, then, I stayed; a horseman’s green spear laid at my breast; held by the exceeding beauty of that jewel in that setting.
>
> ‘If I am not packed off for a trespasser, or if this knight does not ride a wallop at me,’ thought I, ‘Shakespeare and Queen Elizabeth at least must come out of that half-open garden door and ask me to tea.’[26]

This scene at the opening of the narrative sets the political and socio-economical tone for the story. This space is quintessentially English with the Tudor imagery it evokes. The setting is also immediately aristocratic: the house that confronts the narrator here is deliberately ‘ancient’, and the garden is neatly and expensively laid out, with ornate yew sculpture, box hedge, and fountain. As the narrator continues to reveal, the garden is equipped with a door made of ‘heavy oak’ and ‘sunk deep in the thickness of the wall’, and the house contains an ‘unflinching, wagon-wide staircase’, ‘fluted Elizabethan doors’, full of ‘heavily-timbered’ ‘oak floored’ rooms and ‘a maze of

[26] Kipling, ‘They’, p. 93.

passages'.[27] These architectural details carefully register the Tudor memory of the place, making it slightly anachronistic in a phantasmagorical way.

This phantasmagorical anachronism continues in the narrative. The narrator hints that the estate might not be a real place: it cannot be retraced on map, and is not registered in the *County Gazetteer*.[28] The landowner, who does appear from the half-open garden door in the stead of Queen Elizabeth and Shakespeare, uses the ancient tallies—already rare in late Victorian England—to collect debts from tenants. If, with the rural blight and decline of landed aristocracy in Kipling's own time, expansive and well-maintained Tudor estates were already an anachronism, then the 'House Beautiful' is as much a modern nostalgic idealisation as a monument of the past, a *lieu de mémoire* in Pierre Nora's sense.[29] In this light, the ghost children, appearing by the fountain and hidden behind the yews, could be regarded as the incarnation of the *genius loci* wandering about the meadows of Tudor England, or even of the lost feudal myth itself epitomised by the estate.

It is therefore significant that the narrator's learning moment where the children are revealed to be ghosts happens only after a seemingly extraneous description of Miss Florence settling her account with her tenant Mr. Turpin:

> 'No. Please attend to me, Mr. Turpin.' She turned in her chair and faced him with his back to the door. It was an old and sordid little piece of scheming that she forced from him—his plea for the new cowshed at his landlady's expense, that he might with the covered manure pay his next year's rent out of the valuation after, as she made clear, he had

[27] Kipling, 'They', pp. 95, 110-11.

[28] Kipling, 'They', p. 100.

[29] Pierre Nora, 'Between Memory and History: *Les Lieux de Mémoire*', tr. by Marc Roudebush, *Representations*, 26 (1989): pp. 7–25.

> bled the enriched pastures to the bone. I could not but admire the intensity of his greed, when I saw him out-facing for its sake whatever terror it was that ran wet on his forehead.
>
> I ceased to tap the leather—was, indeed, calculating the cost of the shed—when I felt my relaxed hand taken and turned softly between the soft hands of a child. So at last I had triumphed. In a moment I would turn and acquaint myself with those quick-footed wanderers....
>
> The little brushing kiss fell in the centre of my palm—as a gift on which the fingers were, once, expected to close: as the all faithful half-reproachful signal of a waiting child not used to neglect even when grown-ups were busiest—a fragment of the mute code devised very long ago.
>
> Then I knew. And it was as though I had known from the first day when I looked across the lawn at the high window.
>
> I heard the door shut. The woman turned to me in silence, and I felt that she knew.[30]

The confrontation between the lord and the peasant reveals the anti-pastoral side of the Tudor estate: the tenant, petrified in front of his mistress with the reasonable request for an extra cowshed for the young stock, is denigrated for his 'greed' and for having 'bled the enriched pastures to the bone'. Interestingly, the narrator's sympathy does not rest with the truly exploited and the landless, but with the landed aristocracy instead. The upper-class consciousness of the narrator is observed at different points of the narrative, in particular where he notices that Mr Madden, the butler, looks at him 'not as a menial should lift his eyes to his divinely appointed superior'.[31] His social class partly answers for his privilege of entering the garden and later the house without being 'packed off as a trespasser': the garden door, only 'half-open' on his first entrance, is fully open during his third visit along with the door to the

[30] Kipling, 'They', p. 114.

[31] Kipling, 'They', p. 105.

house.[32] 'And how could I ever bear the garden door shut?' the lady asks the narrator.[33] In contrast, the door emphatically remains shut to the lady's tenant: he had to '[cling] to the latch' while speaking and shut the door behind him on leaving.[34]

Such difference over the right to the property is explained, though rather enigmatically, by the lady's response to the narrator's query regarding his presence during her confrontation with the tenant. 'But are you sure I shan't be—?' asks the narrator. 'Certainly not. You have the *right*', answers Miss Florence, but the confirmation is oddly followed by her explanation: 'He hasn't any children'.[35] The ability to see (or hear, touch, and sense) the ghost children is hence identified with the right to the property altogether: 'It isn't a matter of favour but of *right*', as the lady stresses to the narrator at an earlier point, regarding his right over the sight of children. As part of the more privileged class they are entitled to mourn the children together: children on whom inheritance and the future prosperity of the estate are staked. As a consequence of their death, the process whereby a working country estate becomes heritage starts to unfold. The heritagisation of country homes take place either in the way that the heirless Tudor house in 'They' is handed over to the colonial capital of Kipling and ultimately consigned to the National Trust in 1939, or in the way that the Norton estate—though still the property of the Earl of Harrowby to this day—appeared 'disappointingly commonplace' and 'deserted'

[32] Kipling, 'They', p. 94.

[33] Kipling, 'They', p. 115.

[34] Kipling, 'They', p. 113.

[35] Kipling, 'They', p. 113.

in Eliot's description.[36] In both cases, the house becomes a painful reminder of an anachronistic agrarian economy that could not persist.

4.3 From heritage to history: 'Burnt Norton', 'East Coker', and *The Family Reunion*

When Eliot arrived at the Norton estate in 1935, he was not familiar with its history: he admitted in a letter to Raymond Preston that 'I know nothing of the history of the house and what you tell me about Sir William Keyt is new to me'.[37] However, to assume Eliot's unfamiliarity with the general degeneration of houses like Burnt Norton would be a misjudgement. A 1934 *Criterion* commentary on the National Trust shows Eliot's astute awareness of the demise of country houses and the largely feudal socio-economic structure that had sustained them: according to Eliot, '[t]he huge country manor, the large town mansion, will very likely disappear', for they 'belong to a state of society which we have left behind'.[38] This commentary manifests Eliot's typical double consciousness regarding the ethics of the preservation of rural England. There is his awareness that the National Trust's 'artificial conservation' of old country houses is complicit with urbanisation, while the forces of modernity that such heritage campaigns represent might indeed mean success. In the meantime, the more 'desirable' way of their preservation, and of a preindustrial 'economic basis, and a healthy, settled agriculture, with a proper balance

[36] T. S. Eliot to Raymond Preston, 9 Aug 1945, and T. S. Eliot to Hermann Peschmann, 12 Sept 1945, both quoted in TP1, p. 903.

[37] T. S. Eliot to Raymond Preston, 9 Aug 1945, quoted in TP1, p. 903.

[38] T. S. Eliot, 'A Commentary', *Criterion*, 14 (1934), 86-90 (p. 89).

between town and country life', remains only a utopian idea in the rural parish communities he was to envision in 1939 in *The Idea of a Christian Society.*[39]

The 'doubleness' of Eliot's rural vision has been observed by Steve Ellis. By way of reading Eliot's dismissive treatment of the Elyots's Tudor dance in 'East Coker', Ellis explains Eliot's 'doubleness' in terms of the competing rural ideologies always present in his works: the desire to take such rustic communities as a norm while avoiding any idyllic or nostalgic representations.[40] The recognition of the co-presence of the two aspects is important, as it carefully circumvents the binary thinking of Frank Kermode's reading of pastoral literature as either 'a tendency to laugh at country folk, and this was a traditional activity', or 'a tendency to idealize them'.[41] Taking stock of Ellis's recognition of the emphatically non-nostalgic aspect of Eliot's rural vision, I contend that the underlying country-house context of many of his later works enacts the poet's aversion to rural nostalgia and heritage campaigns, as they are deleterious to actual rural preservation. Unlike the well-kept garden in Kipling's 'They', the rose-garden at Burnt Norton has to it an air of ruin and desolation: the 'obscure attraction' that Eliot identified in its desolation also makes its way into the very title of the poem, '*Burnt* Norton'.[42] The garden is decisively empty, and no effort whatsoever is made to populate this desolate landscape. The 'echo' of footfalls is followed by the 'empty alley', which leads to a dry pool that is 'drained' and only to be filled up by use of visionary

[39] Eliot, 'A Commentary', *Criterion*, 14 (1934), p. 89.

[40] Ellis, *The English Eliot*, pp. 99-100. Both these aspects of Eliot's non-nostalgic ruralism have been addressed earlier on in the thesis. See sections 2.4 and 2.7.

[41] Frank Kermode, *English Pastoral Poetry: from the Beginnings to Marvell* (London: George G. Harrap, 1952), p. 38.

[42] T. S. Eliot to Raymond Preston, 9 Aug 1945, quoted in TP1, p. 903.

power.[43] The drained pool is poignantly reminiscent of the once boisterous fountain typical to the landscape gardens, or the House Beautiful in 'They' in particular: the way it 'might have been'.[44]

The rose-garden is suffused by the existence of the what-has-beens and what-might-have-beens: it is a space inscribed by a deep sense of the past. The past, specifically that of the rise, fall and struggling of the 'dignified, invisible' squirearchical (g)hosts that once occupied the site, haunts and inflects one's perception of the present. It disturbs with the 'perpetual possibility' of the regression to a pre-industrial society where country houses prosper and require no need for artificial conservation.[45] In the rose-garden three models of the past-present relationship are at play. There is 'history', which took its course and is held responsible for the actual degeneration of landed gentry and their estates. There is the desired 'might have been', featuring Eliot's own idea of a Christian society with country houses being the socio-economic hub and the parish Church the spiritual centre. There is also the suppressed yet menacing 'heritage' mentality of the National Trust and the *laissez-faire* commercial culture it stands for. The opening of 'Burnt Norton' shows the contestation of the three models:

> Time present and time past
> Are both perhaps present in time future,
> And time future contained in time past.
> If all time is eternally present
> All time is *unredeemable*.
> What might have been is an abstraction

[43] T. S. Eliot, 'Burnt Norton' I, TP1, p. 179-80, ll. 11, 32.

[44] Eliot, 'Burnt Norton' I, ll. 33, 9.

[45] Eliot, 'Burnt Norton' I, ll. 9, 7.

Remaining a perpetual possibility
Only in a world of speculation.
What might have been and what has been
Point to one end, which is always present.
Footfalls echo in the memory
Down the passage which we did not take
Towards the door we never opened
Into the rose-garden. My words echo
Thus, in your mind.[46]

Compare these words to Eliot's account of temporality from *The Family Reunion* (1939):

AGATHA. I mean painful, because everything is *irrevocable*,
Because the past is *irremediable*,
Because the future can only be built
Upon the real past.
[…]
Harry must often have remembered Wishwood—
His nursery tea, the school holiday,
The daring feats on the old pony,
And thought to creep back through the little door.
He will find a new Wishwood. Adaptation is hard.[47]

It is worth noting that the entrances to both country houses—Wishwood being the Yorkshire country estate of Lord Monchensey in which *The Family Reunion* is set—are initiated by a contemplation on the dialectic between past and present, and more importantly, by the awareness of the past being emphatically 'unredeemable' or 'irrevocable'. Corresponding to the empty rose-garden in 'Burnt Norton' is the decay of Wishwood in *The Family Reunion*, the rock garden which is left to 'rack and ruin'.[48] The desolation of

[46] Eliot, 'Burnt Norton' I, ll. 1-14, emphasis mine.

[47] T. S. Eliot, *The Family Reunion*, CPP, p. 288, emphases mine.

[48] Eliot, *The Family Reunion*, CPP, p. 292.

both country houses is an index of the 'pastness of the past' which, together with the 'presence' of the past, constitute the 'historical sense' Eliot expounded in his earlier essay 'Tradition and the Individual Talent' (1917).[49] If the official argument of the early essay is still that the generative powers of the present tense can alter the past, then, as Michael Levenson helpfully observes, towards Eliot's later career the recognition of the previously repressed 'pastness of the past' powerfully parallels his search for the worldly intersection with timelessness.[50] As Levenson puts it, history in Eliot's later view 'strewn as it is with values irretrievably lost, is unaccommodating in its priority […]. Now the monuments no longer move; now it is we who move among them'.[51] Where Levenson explains the shift in terms of Eliot's ageing, I propose to read it as Eliot's sonorous denunciation of the 'heritage' industry that seeks to recast the nation's past in a nostalgic fashion, resulting in the irrevocable 'pastness' of the past.

A number of scholars in the past decades have historicised Eliot's ruralism within the nostalgia of English heritage in the 1930s, most notably Steve Ellis, David Matless, Jed Esty, Alexandra Harris and Michael Gardiner.[52] These studies variously situate Eliot's *Four Quartets* amidst the organicists including H. J. Massingham and Philip Mairet, along with travel writing and posters that glorify Little Englandism such as H. V. Morton's bucolic England and the

[49] T. S. Eliot, 'Tradition and the Individual Talent', in CP2, p. 106.

[50] Michael Levenson, 'The End of Tradition and the Beginning of History', *Words in Time: New Essays on Eliot's* Four Quartets, ed. by Edward Lobb (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1993), 158-78 (p. 173).

[51] Levenson, 'The End of Tradition and the Beginning of History', *Words in Time*, p. 177.

[52] Ellis, Matless, Esty and Harris's argument have all been cited in greater details earlier on in the thesis. For Michael Gardiner and his critique of literary 'estatedness' as a cultural treatment of England, see chapter 3 of Michael Gardiner, *The Return of England in English Literature* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).

Shell Guides. Critics tend to identify Eliot with this representation of a pastoral England with distinct folk traditions: Terry Eagleton even goes so far as to assert that the rustic dancers in 'East Coker' are imitations of the revivalist Morris dance popular in the thirties. However, Ellis's is one of the few readings that points out Eliot's departure from these idealised rural visions.[53] What Eliot attempts, according to Ellis, is to 'dissociate rural community from any prevailing idyllic or picturesque mood'.[54] Eliot's remonstration against the National Trust and heritage movement is echoed in a *Criterion* review of Edmund Blunden's *The Face of England*, authored by George Scott-Moncrieff. Blunden's collection of sketches on the English topography, landscape and life reminiscent of a timeless old England is part of the 'English Heritage Series' instigated by Longmans in 1929. The series carries the authoritative seal of the government's agenda of an English identity based on its rural myth, with an Introduction by the then Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin (who famously asserted that 'to me, England is the country, and the country is England' in 1924), and a commendation by the Labour leader Ramsay MacDonald.[55] In the *Criterion* review, Blunden's sentimental picture of England is found wanting for its failure to present 'England's countryside as it is': '[t]he suffering, the muddle of bad land laws, the result on a rural population when most of the best of each generation drifts townwards' are conspicuously absent

[53] Terry Eagleton, *Figures of Dissent: Critical Essays on Fish, Spivak, Zizek and Others* (London: Verso, 2003), p. 82.

[54] Ellis, *The English Eliot*, p. 118.

[55] Wiener, *English Culture and the Decline of the Industrial Spirit,* p. 73.

from the account.[56] For Scott-Moncrieff, Blunden's accounts are only 'happy memories' that belongs to 'a man of leisure', someone consuming rather than actually participating in the labouring reality of rural England.[57]

The review is sympathetic to Eliot's own attitude towards heritage, especially because it spells out that the pastoral 'happy memories' are no less than the abuses of memory. These constructed, heritagised memories are the conscious formulation of a modern age and its transformed social structure, with an emerging 'leisure' group of ramblers and tourists who readily consume the idyllic image of the past. Heritage, as Patrick Wright's observes it, embodies a certain 'presentism' that is obsessed more with the present that the past.[58] In his Introduction to *On Living in an Old Country*, Wright takes François Hartog to task by arguing that our 'regime of historicity'—Hartog's terms for the heritage industry—is comprised of 'a massive, overwhelming, omnipresent present, that has no horizon other than itself', and which is constantly in the business of 'manufacturing' the past around its own requirements'.[59] In other words, the presentism of the heritage industry makes it bad historiography. In 'Time and Heritage', Hartog takes issue with the definition of monumental heritage according to a 1993 law, which prescribes heritage as 'the memory of our history and the symbol of our national

[56] George Scott-Moncrieff, 'Review of Edmund Blunden: *The Face of England*', *Criterion*, 11 (1932), pp. 759-60.

[57] Ibid.

[58] Patrick Wright, *On Living in an Old Country: The National Past in Contemporary Britain*, new edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. xix.

[59] François Hartog, 'Time and Heritage', *Museum International*, 57 (2005), 7-18 (p. 8); Wright, *On Living in an Old Country*, pp. xviii-xix.

identity'.[60] He warns that historical memory, once made into heritage, ceases from being a given and degenerates into a 'history-heritage': one that is instrumental to the construction of a national identity fashioned 'in the polished style of the legislator'.[61] Heritage on this view is the antithesis to continuity, and is instead 'a sign of rupture, between a present and a past'.[62] Its search for roots and obsession with memory bear out the anxiety over what is irrevocably lost, and our distance from it.

These critiques of heritage, both from Eliot's own time and a more contemporary assessment, are informative to the reading of the opening section of 'Burnt Norton'. The word 'unredeemable' jolts the reader out of the simultaneity of time suggested by the foregoing lines, but is justified by its condition: 'If all time is eternally present'. To borrow Hartog's diction again, modern endeavours to 'exhume' 'assemble' or 'invent' an identity for the rural past execute the past through the mindset of the present.[63] In other words, the synchronic vision with which the poem begins is only enabled by the centrality of the 'past', rather than its modern nostalgic adaptations. What is needed urgently for interwar and post-war Britain, as is the concern of *Notes Towards the Definition of Culture* (1948), is not a thin image of a pre-industrial old England however imaginatively attractive it may be, but the retrieval of a whole socio-economic structure that once sustained the image and made it into a lived reality: a society close to the soil through parish-based Christian faith. In a 1932 broadcast script for BBC entitled 'Building up the Christian World',

[60] Hartog, 'Time and Heritage', *Museum International*, 57 (2005), p. 10.

[61] Ibid.

[62] Hartog, 'Time and Heritage', *Museum International*, 57 (2005), pp. 14-15.

[63] Hartog, 'Time and Heritage', *Museum International*, 57 (2005), p. 10.

Eliot expounds on this idea of the past as a continuum more systematically and lucidly:

> I admit that our aim is almost more difficult than the impossible; for it is to try to realise the state of affairs which we should have attained had we gained all the good things we have gained and at the same time kept all the spiritual good that we have lost. And this means that we cannot simply pick and choose, by historical study, the good things out of the dustbin of the past and polish them up as fresh as new. For if we had kept them then, they would have been living in us; in, that is, our ancestors for all the generations between any period we call 'the past', and ourselves; they would not be quite the same as what we inspect through the telescope of history. Our task, then, is not antiquarianism; it is just the permanent task of making the permanent truths live in us in our own brief and particular moment of time.[64]

Paradoxically, what is most at stake for Eliot is the past's continued life into the present which enables it to resist the violence of modern nostalgia. As Eliot sees it in the 1934 commentary on the National Trust, if 'the ordinary countryside which is largely the work of generations of humanizing labour' cannot be 'preserved, and preserved *alive*', then it is 'of small good that the land should be dotted with little museums of scenery'.[65] When Eliot commends the 'contemporaneity of the past' in the Introduction to his 1941 edition of Kipling's verse, the stress rests with the 'past' rather than its 'contemporaneity', as the comment is grounded upon what Eliot calls Kipling's 'historical imagination': his 'nearness to the past' and 'a sense of the antiquity of England'.[66] In 1948 he warns of the danger of restoring or reviving 'a

[64] T. S. Eliot, 'Building up the Christian World', *The Listener*, 7 (1932), pp. 501-02 (p. 501).

[65] Eliot, 'A Commentary', *Criterion*, 14 (1934), p. 88.

[66] T. S. Eliot, 'Editor's Introduction', *A Choice of Kipling's Verse*, ed. by T. S. Eliot (London: Faber and Faber, 1941), 5-40 (p. 32).

vanishing culture under modern conditions which make it impossible': in its place should be the endeavour 'to grow a contemporary culture from the old roots'.[67] In other words, where cultural continuity is concerned, the 'pastness of the past' is still granted priority and serves as the fountainhead of regenerative and reconstituted power. A difficult question then arises: what happens if 'the past', which ideally lives on, is rendered inaccessible after all and only disturbs the present wistfully as the 'might have been', the dusted 'bowl of rose-leaves' uprooted and lifeless?[68] This is the crucial question that underlies *The Family Reunion,* which closely delineates how an aristocratic country house becomes ultimately forsaken.

Written during the years between 'Burnt Norton' and 'East Coker', *The Family Reunion* is generally regarded as the sequel to the fragments of *Sweeney Agonistes.*[69] However, the play is as much an explanatory sequel to the emptiness of the rose-garden in 'Burnt Norton' as the forlorn Norton estate enacts the bleak afterlife of the House Beautiful in 'They'. In the play, Harry, the Lord Monchensey who has been abroad for eight years, now comes back to his ancestral home for his mother's birthday. Harry returns home only to feel estranged: the deathly decay of the old house and his family stifles him. Like *Murder in the Cathedral*, the play also has a spiritual plot. Harry claims that he deliberately ends his unhappy marriage by pushing his wife over board on their

[67] NDC, p. 53.

[68] Eliot, 'Burnt Norton' I, ll. 9, 16.

[69] T. S. Eliot to James J. Angleton and E. Reed Whittemore, 31 Jan 1939: 'All the verse that I have composed in the last two years forms part of a play which is about to be published', indicating *The Family Reunion*. Quoted in TP1, p. 927. For the play to be the sequel to *Sweeney Agonistes*, see Lyndall Gordon, *The Imperfect Life of T. S. Eliot* (London: Virago, 2012), p. 317, and Anthony Cuda, '"A Precise Way of Thinking and Feeling": Eliot and Verse Drama', *The New Cambridge Companion to T. S. Eliot*, ed. by Jason Harding (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2017), pp. 116-30 (p. 123).

voyage from New York, which may not be true: rumour has it that she either commits suicide or falls by accident. However, he is tormented nonetheless by his own peculiar sense of guilt, visualised on the stage by a group of Furies who hunt him down, a variation of the Eumenides in Aeschylus's *Oresteia* on which both this play and *Sweeney Agonistes* draw. To expiate his guilt, he turns down the love and spiritual solace his cousin Mary offers, and decides to go on a solitary journey of repentance and mission abroad, which also means giving up his inheritance of the property despite his mother's earnest wish.

If Wishwood symbolises the last stronghold of British aristocracy, then the play through Harry's 'de-possession' rather unsentimentally performs the execution of that which is already decayed and merely keeps up appearances.[70] In the play, each person from the family gives away an aspect that either reveals or accounts for the degeneration of the house. Aunt Ivy laments the house's decrepit garden falling out of care: the garden enthusiast Ivy is reminiscent of Emily Hale's own aunt Mrs. Perkins, with whom Eliot spent a good deal of time both in New England and in the Cotswolds for several summers throughout the 1930s. The provincial yet genteel Aunt Violet claims that she 'would never go south' for the need to avoid 'the vulgarest people' with 'money from heaven knows where'; however, the absence of industrial income leaves the house crushed by agricultural depression and hefty taxes.[71] Uncle Gerald, the retired Colonel from the North-West Frontier of British India

[70] In one typescript, Eliot identifies one central idea of the play to be 'the process of de-possession'. See Gordon, 'Appendix V', *The Imperfect Life*, p. 542.

[71] Eliot, *The Family Reunion*, CPP, p. 286.

who spends most of his life abroad, cannot render himself of use to the estate after retirement.

The decay of the country house is also accelerated by forces of urbanisation. The 'country-bred' Uncle Charles is more given over to the vibrant life of London clubs, while the text suggests that his two nephews Arthur and John (Harry's two brothers who only exist off-stage) might be leading precisely such an urban life. Both fail to show up on their mother's birthday due to their respective car accidents. John in his drive home ran into a lorry for not 'know[ing] this part of country', an indicator of the frequency of his homecoming, while Arthur is detained by another accident in which he drunkenly reversed a car into a shop-window in London. According to the newspaper, 'When challenged, Mr Piper [Arthur] said: "I thought it was all open country about here"—'.[72] The anecdote is based upon a piece of news that Eliot kept from the *Evening Standard* of 14 April 1937, which reported a Viscount Forbes who drove at 52 miles per hour on the outskirts of London, and said when stopped 'I thought it was all countrified'.[73] In the play, the accident is deliberately transposed from Beddington Lane near Croydon to the centre of London: Ebury Street that leads directly to Buckingham Palace. Such is Eliot's black comedy that satirises the pastoral association of a distinguished British identity with the countryside.

Among Harry's family members, Aunt Agatha and Cousin Mary are the only people who look squarely at the demise of their family estate. They are

[72] Eliot, *The Family Reunion*, CPP, p. 328.

[73] Gordon, *The Imperfect Life*, p. 328.

able to place it within a broader time scheme where the irredeemability of the past is allowed to take place, as put in the opening lines of 'East Coker',

> 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.
> Old stone to new building, old timber to new fires,
> Old fires to ashes, and ashes to the earth
> Which is already flesh, fur and faeces,
> Bone of man and beast, cornstalk and leaf.
> Houses live and die: there is a time for building
> And a time for living and for generation
> And a time for the wind to break the loosened pane
> And to shake the wainscot where the field-mouse trots
> And to shake the tattered arras woven with a silent motto.[74]

In the poem, Eliot contemplates the open field which was once the family estate of his ancestor Andrew Eliott, who crossed the sea from East Coker to Massachusetts in 1669. The poem starts by building up an expectation of continuity ('[i]n succession') but reveals it to be a full life cycle that also involves deterioration and death. This stanza enacts a burial not of just any society, but particularly of an agrarian one with man's closeness to the land and its farm animals: the alliterative juxtaposition of 'flesh, fur and faeces' ultimately mixes with crops and foliage to nourish the earth. The spatial palimpsests, which re-inscribe his family estate into an agricultural, industrial or idle plot of land, are accounted for in a controlled matter-of-fact tone, while the allusion to Ecclesiastes justifies the 'pastness' of the lost rural way of life and puts it into a timeless perspective of God's design. Such 'pastness' is accentuated with the slightly alienating use of the archaic spelling in the

[74] T. S. Eliot, 'East Coker' I, TP1, p. 185, ll. 1-13.

following verse paragraph where the poet's Tudor ancestor's rustic dance is depicted ('daunsinge', 'coniunction' and 'betokeneth concorde').[75] The reader is also reminded—quite emphatically with repetition—that a truthful proximity with the past is only evoked paradoxically with a consciously-kept distance from the present: 'If you do not come too close, if you do not come too close'.[76]

In *The Family Reunion*, the similar unsentimental judgement on, and acceptance of, the 'pastness of the past' that Harry, Agatha and Mary espouse counters the rhetoric of the elderly family members: the aristocratic elite clinging to the remnants of old feudal glory. Mary sees through the vanity of their wishes: in becoming an anachronism their once stately country home is 'drying up' the life of its residents.[77] The second scene of Part I symbolically opens with Mary arranging flowers: '[t]he gardener had no garden-flowers to give me for this evening' and 'I had rather wait for our windblown blossoms, | Such as they are, than have these greenhouse flowers | Which do not belong here, which do not know | The wind and rain, as I know them'.[78] This flower-arranging episode is an addition to the original draft in response to Martin Browne and Frank Morley's remonstrations on the underdevelopment of Mary's character.[79] To amplify Mary's character by letting her arrange flowers may seem an unusual move, but it does count towards Mary's prophetic power regarding the imminent doom of the house. The flowers that

[75] Eliot, 'East Coker' I, ll, 29, 31, 33.

[76] Eliot, 'East Coker' I, l. 24.

[77] Eliot, *The Family Reunion*, CPP, p. 306.

[78] Eliot, *The Family Reunion*, CPP, p. 303.

[79] Gordon, *The Imperfect Life*, pp. 323-4.

Mary brings in are symbolic of the landed aristocrats of the family secluded in the greenhouse of Wishwood, out of touch from the 'wind and rain' of a changed social reality. The same imagery of 'wind and rain' is used again in the dying Lady Monchensey's last soliloquy. In the soliloquy, she finally gives up her pretence of the changelessness of their country home and its surroundings—her primary ploy in persuading Harry to inherit the estate—and owns up to the practical difficulties that have long beleaguered the sustenance of the house:

> AMY. So you will all leave me!
> An old woman alone in a damned house.
> I will let the walls crumble. Why should I worry
> To keep the tiles on the roof, combat the endless weather,
> Resist the wind? fight with increasing taxes
> And unpaid rents and tithes? nourish investments
> With wakeful nights and patient calculations
> With the solicitor, the broker, agent? Why should I?
> It is no concern of the body in the tomb
> To bother about the upkeep. Let the wind and rain do that.[80]

In this soliloquy, as with the opening section of 'East Coker', there is the resolve to give up rescuing the degenerating country home along with its related elegiac rural myth, leaving them both in the safe sequestered realm of the past. In 'East Coker', The 'daunsinge' ancestors, who once leapt '[r]ound and round the fire' or 'joined in circles', are integrated with the cosmic cycle where their rustic vigour ultimately degenerates into '[d]ung and death'.[81]

This said, the denunciation of the heritagisation of English country houses and their discourse arguably fits into a larger agenda of Eliot's engagement

[80] Eliot, *The Family Reunion*, CPP, p. 343.

[81] Eliot, 'East Coker' I, ll. 29, 33-34, 46.

with rural England, one that dissolves the political and cultural authority of England as the imperial centre. The formal symmetry of the quartets partly manifests itself in the fact that every quartet opens with the exposition of the garden leitmotif and its associated country house, the powerful imagery of the imperial centre: 'East Coker' with the desolate country estate, 'The Dry Salvages' with the sea along with its contagion and isomorphism with the garden, and 'Little Gidding' with the hedgerows. While the latter two quartets will be discussed shortly in greater detail, the opening sections of the first two quartets are structurally connected by their introduction and complication of a centre: 'the still point of the turning world'.[82] The 'axle-tree' in 'Burnt Norton' bedded in the rose-garden indicates the axis of the turning wheel of the world. It is also the centre where Eliot's Tudor ancestors once danced ('at the still point, there the dance is'), indicating the structural centrality of the garden and the big country houses disseminated as national images during the imperial enterprise.[83] However, in their evocation, these national images are also debunked in the quartets, as is the dichotomy between the centre and its margins, which is the subject matter of the following section.

4.4 The empire's homecoming

Along with its intertextual *The Family Reunion*, the opening section of 'Burnt Norton', in evoking a country house in decline, subtly negotiates Eliot's ambivalence towards England's rural past. The ambivalence is found in the simultaneous presence of a yearning for the synchronic presence of the past as

[82] Eliot, 'Burnt Norton' II, l. 16.

[83] Eliot, 'Burnt Norton' II, ll. 2, 17.

well as an aversion to nostalgic projects that heritagise the past based on present needs. As I will contend in this section, the insistence on the 'pastness' of feudal glory fits snugly into the reality of a shrinking empire, the historical backdrop that Jed Esty has set up for late modernism.[84] Though departing from the similar context of the British Empire in contraction, my argument essentially turns aside from Esty's contention of a resurgent national culture and an antidiasporic imagination as its result. Esty observes a certain Anglocentric turn in Eliot and his contemporaries in the 1930s and 1940s, which according to him is 'an insular romance of wholeness' driven by a lost totality of the Empire.[85] One phenomenon, which Esty draws upon in support of his contention, is the recurrent theme of the bounded space in late modernist works, including Eliot's treatises for a rooted Christian community. The bounded space is viewed in Esty's study as being symptomatic of the spatial consolidation and security at stake in the period.[86] However, it is also worthwhile investigating how the reading of certain bounded spaces triggers off an interpretive framework alternative to Esty's, the rose-garden and the country estate to which it is attached being useful examples. With the 'irredeemable' 'pastness of the past' which these quintessential English landscapes embody, the power of the imperial centre that they epitomise is depicted in a failing light. Correspondingly, Eliot's allegiances shift beyond the national border to a larger, more levelling transnational order.

[84] Esty, *A Shrinking Island*, p. 8.

[85] Esty, *A Shrinking Island*, pp. 7-8.

[86] Ibid.

Imperial echoes resonate across the rose-garden, which are mostly filtered through its rich intertextual associations. Apart from Kipling's 'They', which bears the authority because Eliot suggests the source himself, one other widely acknowledged source of the rose-garden is Frances Hodgson Burnett's *The Secret Garden* (1911).[87] Both feature colonial writing embedded in the social reality and ideology of the early twentieth century, and both cast a long wistful idealising look at the imperial centre of England, symbolised by the country houses and gardens. *The Secret Garden* tells the story of Mary Lennox, a white Anglo-Indian girl who after being orphaned at ten is deported from India, thus embarking on her pilgrimage to Yorkshire where her maternal uncle Archibald Craven owns a country estate named Misselthwaite Manor. The pilgrimage turns out to be the young girl's rite of passage, which is both located and mediated through an English garden. On setting foot on Yorkshire earth, Mary starts an almost ritualistic search for a legendary 'secret garden' that belongs to the estate. The success in finding the key to it and her labour of cultivation therein ultimately transforms her originally cross and officious character, and more importantly re-initiates her into her British pedigree. Towards the end of the story, Mary's initially confused identities between her British blood and Indian habits are reconciled in a scene where she is identified with one of her British female ancestors.[88]

[87] R. N. Parkinson, '"The Secret Garden"', *Notes and Queries*, 200 (1955), p. 6; Alison White, 'Tap-Roots into a Rose Garden', *Children's Literature*, 1 (2009), pp. 74–76; Christopher Heywood, 'Frances Hodgson Burnett's "The Secret Garden": A Possible Source for T. S. Eliot's "Rose Garden"', *The Yearbook of English Studies*, 7 (1977), pp. 166-171.

[88] Frances Hodgson Burnett, *The Secret Garden* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1995 [1911]), p. 248.

If the novel could be read as a bildungsroman, then the development of Mary's character is deeply enmeshed with the politics of the imperial centre and its peripheries: Mary's two national identities. Since her orphanage symbolically cuts off her blood tie with her English home and ancestry, her search for identity becomes a central plot to the novel. It is even arguable that her identity is established through a process of sloughing off her own Indianness—primarily her colonial paternalism as a descendant of privileged white colonisers—and acquiring an English identity inherent to her lineage. The novel begins by setting up the India-born Mary as 'contrary': the diction from an old English nursery rhyme also projects a process of correction and rehabilitation.[89] Her bad temper is nurtured by the colonial paternalism whereby she and the colonial class she is born into are entitled to absolute power over the subalterns: her coloured, native servants (her 'Ayah'). Her migration to England causes therefore her disorientation in both geographical and cultural terms. Her first cultural encounter registers the frustration of her colonial expectations of her maid servant in Misselthwaite Manor. Facing a 'round, rosy, good-natured-looking' farm girl, Mary quickly senses the absence of the racial privilege once available to her, which used to allow her to slap her Ayah.[90] Such confrontation with a new maid augurs the beginning of her awakening towards a less racist, more egalitarian reality in England. Through the cultivation of the secret garden she establishes friendship with people of different social classes: Ben Weatherstaff the reticent gardener, Colin her aristocratic cousin, and Dickon the farm boy who is the incarnation of the

[89] Burnett, *The Secret Garden*, p. 13.

[90] Burnett, *The Secret Garden*, p. 28.

genius loci (he is referred to as 'The Yorkshire Angel').[91] These various attachments open her eyes not only to the social reality of England, but also to the tyrannical power of her colonial past. For the first time she acquires a certain self-reflexivity, which allows her to step out of her colonial inculcation and begin to ponder the fate of the subalterns: 'Everybody had to do everything he told them—in a minute. I think they would have been killed if they hadn't'.[92]

The narrative is informed by a recognition of the tyranny of colonialism made pertinent after the atrocities of the Second Boer War, but it ironically comes back to an idealised imperial centre for solution and reconciliation. The novel is still Anglocentric to the core in that the cure it provides is precisely what started off the colonial enterprise in the first place: the assertion of the English landscape as the only acceptable form of 'home', which justifies its replication in the colonies. If, as critic Jerry Phillips observes, the imperial (and imperious) 'Missie Sahib' of Mary is eventually tamed and 'decentered', then her humbling experience is only channelled through a reinforcement of an 'imperial ego' and a textual endorsement of (if not desire for) the absolute power and order of the home rule.[93] The central plot of the novel is therefore, according to Phillips, one of the empire's homecoming to its mother country.[94] The offspring of the colonial elite like Mary, on the other hand, finds it

[91] Burnett, *The Secret Garden*, p. 176.

[92] Burnett, *The Secret Garden*, p. 135.

[93] Jerry Phillips, 'The Mem Sahib, the Worthy, the Rajah and His Minions: Some Reflections on the Class Politics of *The Secret Garden*', *The Lion and the Unicorn*, 17 (1993), 168-94 (pp. 179, 186).

[94] Phillips, 'The Class Politics of *The Secret Garden*', *The Lion and the Unicorn*, 17 (1993), pp. 168-9.

compelling to unveil the authenticity myth that widely circulates in the colonies but could only be verified by her migration into the real 'home' location of England. This is the reason that underlies her mysterious impulse to find and enter the secret garden: one that is locked up exactly for as long as the ten years she has lived so far. In other words, the garden is significantly locked up against someone from the periphery of the empire. During her first days on arrival in the manor house, she finds it hard to even adapt to the notion of the inaccessibility of the garden (as the symbol for the imperial centre): 'How could a garden be shut up? You could always walk into a garden'.[95] However, she ultimately obtains the key to the secret garden: like the narrator in Kipling's 'They', her access to the imperial 'home' from the colonies is made available by her class and racial privilege, and her cultivating activities within is an act to claim possession of the centre and to root herself therein.

The beckoning of the colonial centre through the landscape of the big, stately country home and its garden is arguably the underlying discourse that the rose-garden in 'Burnt Norton' confronts, with its allusions to both Kipling and *The Secret Garden*. Growing up in the (ex)colony of America may mean a visceral yearning for the centre of civilisation. Kipling's 'They' feeds his readers' imagination of the colonial centre with its satisfying details of the grandeur and solemnity of English country houses and gardens, as English novels most certainly did for Henry James, an important literary predecessor to Eliot.[96] James, in his later life, recalled some 'far-away foolish fiction,

[95] Burnett, *The Secret Garden*, p. 36.

[96] For Eliot's familiarity with the story since early years, see Eliot's Harvard assignment in March 1909 entitled 'The Defects of Kipling', in CP1, pp. 8-14.

absorbed in extreme youth, which haunt me, yet escape me, like the echo of an old premonition'.[97] James's recollection goes on:

> I seem to myself to have lain on the grass somewhere, as a boy, poring over an English novel of the period […] and losing myself in the idea of just such another scene as *this*. But even could I rediscover the novel I wouldn't go back to it. It couldn't have been so good as this; for this […] is the *real* thing.[98]

The 'quaint spectacle', which sends James recalling his youthful readings and imaginations of the imperial centre, is a walled and rose-covered 'dear little old garden' in Rye, East Sussex.[99] It is located near James's own Lamb House in Rye, a rural farmhouse he procured in 1899 presumably for the 'real thing': the 'authentic' England of which he became a subject in 1915. The young Eliot, writing in 1918 for *The Little Review* on the late Henry James, also relies heavily on the symbol of the English garden: he relates to his mother the experience of composing this essay between 10 May and 9 June, 'sitting out in a back garden all day writing about Henry James and Hawthorne. The Roses are wonderful'.[100] The setting of an English garden is decisive to the tone of the essay: its reading of Henry James along with Nathaniel Hawthorne almost exclusively features the alienating and paternal gaze cast from the imperial home of England to its provincial ex-colony. In the essay, a certain gratification at an ultimate 'transplantation' is in tension with Eliot's provincial anxiety about an American birth, both enacted through a series of horticultural

[97] Henry James, 'Winchelsea, Rye, and "Denis Duval"', *English Hours* (London: Tauris Parke, 2011 [1901]), 162-179 (p. 172).

[98] James, 'Winchelsea, Rye, and "Denis Duval"', *English Hours,* p. 172; emphases mine.

[99] Ibid.

[100] T. S. Eliot to Charlotte Eliot, 23 June 1918, L1, p. 234.

metaphors apposite to the milieu of the essay's composition. Eliot holds fast to the centre he has newly occupied. The American soil to which he, James and Hawthorne are all native is but a 'barren' 'granite soil', and the merit of James, as he argues, lies in the fact of the latter's early 'transplantation': even the American flavour of James's work is seen to be better preserved after his transplantation into the imperial home.[101]

The same goes for Kipling's own homecoming to England with his purchase of Bateman's. It is even more interesting, however, to note how the discourse of the age fashions the Sussex property of a homecoming Anglo-Indian writer into a model landscape for the British colonies. The *Country Life* review of Bateman's in 1908, which belabours Kipling's conscious preservation of an authentic Jacobean style, concludes with the following remarks:

> Batemans is precisely the retreat which the English speaking world would desire one of its wisest thinkers and most brilliant writers to have created for himself. It is a typical old English home, of which every part, within and without, both what is original and what has been recently added, is in ordered harmony, while the whole is redolent of the British soil and an epitome of generations of its men. From what surroundings could a teacher and patriot more fittingly draw his inspiration?[102]

The review reveals how Kipling's national identity as an English 'patriot' is ironically contingent upon 'a typical old English home' which itself is a result of modern restoration. It also reveals how the modern construct of both—the

[101] T. S. Eliot, 'The Hawthorne Aspect', *The Little Review*, 5 (1918), in CP1, p. 736.

[102] 'Batemans, Sussex. The Residence of Mr. Rudyard Kipling', *Country Life*, 15 August 1908, p. 233.

identity and the authenticity of the house—is propagated as a model for the entire 'English speaking world'.

Such imperial ideology persists into the time of *The Family Reunion* and 'East Coker', which Eliot challenges in his commentary against the proposal of the Music and Drama Bill by the League of Audiences in 1938. Unlike the young American contemplating Henry James in the English rose-garden, Eliot a decade after conversion is more critical of the colonial replications of culture from the centre. The change of attitude has as much to do with the conversion *per se* as the decline of the Empire, when the centre no longer holds: Eliot is quick to detect the underlying imperial campaign and the feebleness, rather than control of the centre that the proposal discloses. Two major grounds of the proposed Bill are cited in the commentary. It would

> encourage and assist the organization of companies of the highest standard to produce notable English works in drama and music and present them overseas, where they would help to bring a better understanding of our national outlook and so help to keep the peace of the world and preserve the spirit of community which was (*sic*) the support of the India, Dominion and Colonial Offices as well as the Overseas Trade Department,

And that it would

> Increase the amenities of rural life by visits of performers, orchestras, brass bands, and thus helping (*sic*) to arrest the drift to the towns.[103]

Eliot finds it problematic that 'a project for advertising Britain abroad identified with one for improving Britain at home'.[104] In other words, the same

[103] T. S. Eliot, 'A Commentary', *Criterion*, 17 (1938), 478-85 (p. 479).

strategy of cultural imperialism is ironically employed for both remote colonies and the countryside right in the colonial centre: the English countryside has lost its agency. Interestingly, Eliot in the commentary compares the proposal to 'a baby crying itself into paroxysms, with the efforts of its parents to distract it by toys, singing, holding a watch to its ear, etc., and by dosing it with medicine. In the end we are shown that the trouble with the baby is that it has a safety-pin stuck in its bottom'.[105] In likening the need to replicate the culture from the centre ('our national outlook') to the colonies for an imperial order ('the peace of the world') to that of a powerless and desperate baby, Eliot adeptly dismantles the centre's authority.

A certain centrifugal pattern is observed in the Wishwood of *The Family Reunion*, the rose-garden in 'Burnt Norton' and the ruins of ancient houses in 'East Coker', which could only be contextualised in Eliot's recognition of an enfeebled colonial centre as shown above. Quite contrary to the 'homecoming' of the empire in *The Secret Garden* where the centre is fortified by being the site of education, population and reconciliation, the homecomings to Eliot's rural locations in the late 1930s are variously characterised by depopulation and expulsion. In *The Family Reunion*, Harry's homecoming from America is followed by his 'de-possession' of the family estate and his departures again to the colonies as a missionary. This failed homecoming is paralleled by that of Uncle Gerald, an Anglo-Indian torn between Indian and English allegiances. After spending his life in India, Gerald aspires to 'be back in the East' again, but the impetus is primarily the privilege and power available to him as a

[104] Eliot, 'A Commentary', *Criterion*, 17 (1938), p. 481.

[105] Eliot, 'A Commentary', *Criterion*, 17 (1938), pp. 480-81.

colonial elite: 'your servants look after you very much better'.[106] In this late 1930s text, the colonial centre and authority that Wishwood stands for no longer retains the restorative power it once held for Mary Lennox in *The Secret Garden*. With the crumbling house and a failing squirearchical order at home, Gerald could only seek hope for power in further displacement into the colonies.

The centrifugal urge is also observed in the rose-garden scene in 'Burnt Norton'. If the entrance into the rose-garden in the context of *The Family Reunion* and *The Secret Garden* can also be read as the homecoming of two Americans, Eliot and Emily Hale, then the garden as a *lieu de mémoire* of England's rural history at once admits and expels these (former) colonial subjects from the New World:

> Other echoes
> Inhabit the garden. Shall we follow?
> Quick, said the bird, find them, find them,
> Round the corner. Through the first gate,
> Into our first world, shall we follow
> The deception of the thrush? Into our first world.
> There they were, dignified, invisible,
> Moving without pressure, over the dead leaves,
> In the autumn heat, through the vibrant air,
> And the bird called, in response to
> The unheard music hidden in the shrubbery,
> And the unseen eyebeam crossed, for the roses
> Had the look of flowers that are looked at.
> There they were as our guests, accepted and accepting.
> Go, said the bird, for the leaves were full of children,
> Hidden excitedly, containing laughter.
> Go, go, go, said the bird: human kind
> Cannot bear very much reality.[107]

[106] Eliot, *The Family Reunion*, CPP, p. 286.

[107] Eliot, 'Burnt Norton' I, ll. 18-43.

Again, the colonial centre is no longer a snug, restorative space for those who come home. If anything, it is an enclosed space decisively sequestered in the past, hence the sense of unease and anxiety it stirs in the poetic speaker. In admitting the speaker and his friend, the garden sees the contestation between the speaker and the ghosts of a feudal past native to the land, which are emphatically fugitive ('invisible' and blithely '[m]oving') to the homecoming visitors. The inaccessibility of the ghosts of glorious country houses and orderly rural England is reinforced by the hallucinatory nature of the account with its shifting tenses. On the speaker's entrance into 'our first world', his immediate future ('*Shall* we follow') is projected as part of an irrevocable past ('[t]here they *were*', '[a]nd the bird *called*') in which he may or may not have partaken: after all, it was a 'passage which we did not take' and a 'door we never opened'.[108] In other words, though the imbrication of past and future may count towards the claim that 'time future [is] contained in time past', what the rose-garden scene enacts is not, as commonly held, a simultaneity of time.[109] Rather, the scene ruthlessly enacts its rupture: unlike Mary Lennox who finds the key to the secret garden and claims inheritance to the secret garden, the speaker and his friends find the present (where they are visitors) and the rural past (upon which the authority and identity of the imperial centre were established) impossible to cohere. The leaves that '*were* full of children' and thus laden with future hopes are now 'dead leaves', and the 'pastness of the past' even prevents one from relating to the experience with a present tense.

[108] Eliot, 'Burnt Norton' I, ll. 21-22, 26, 30, 12-13.

[109] Eliot, 'Burnt Norton' I, l. 3.

The homecoming visitors are not at home in a space inscribed with the home's past. Hence their nervous hesitation over their entrance and potential trespass (intertextual to Kipling's 'They'), with the bird's voice pressing them to leave.

The intertextual tension the rose-garden creates with *The Secret Garden* and 'They' is striking especially where the politics between the centre and the periphery are concerned. If the politics of 'They' are that of a racially and economically privileged class securely located in the imperial centre, and if that of *The Secret Garden* is to venerate the centre's assimilative authority at the expense of the margins, then the rose-garden scene takes marginality more seriously: it questions whether this centre is all that secure, and invites the marginal status to counter the discourse of its centre. The visitors coming home to the English garden are self-conscious outsiders, the outsidedness manifested by their difficulty in accessing the rural myth the garden embodies and by their anxiety within the garden walls. The difficulty of navigating a foreign countryside and its patriotic representations, even after years of living there as a naturalized citizen, is succinctly summed up by Eliot in the word '*metic*': an identity that arguably overrides both of his national identities and becomes the primary identity that predominates Eliot's later spatial politics and poetics.

4.5 A metic's intervention

In early 1924, Eliot reviewed the *Spring Thunder and Other Poems*, a poetry collection by Mark Van Doren which includes many poems on the farm in Hope, Illinois where the author grew up. The review itself is telling of the interstitial identity that Eliot chooses to assume, an American coming to the

centre of civilisation and acclimatising to its identity myths. It is worth observing how these American rural verses are interestingly contextualised within '[r]acial migrations and the economic conditions of modern life'.[110] Even more worth noting is how the review carefully distinguishes the lived country from its representations, and how these representations pose as difficulty especially to migrants. Despite the American setting and theme of Van Doren's book, the review starts with a claim about English rural writing and Eliot's conscious distancing from it: 'I myself—to make a personal confession—have never criticized, because I never understood, a well-known type of contemporary poetry which is occupied almost exclusively with the English countryside'.[111] Eliot goes on:

> I […] cannot enjoy poetry about the English country, though I admire the beauty of that country itself; I do not so consciously admire the beauty of the American country (for me, Northeastern America), but it must have a profound significance for me, because I enjoy Mr Van Doren's poems in the same way, I think, that English readers enjoy the poetry of Mr De la Mare and Mr Blunden.[112]

These comments, on the difficulty that representations of English countryside pose to foreigners, are better understood in light of an earlier review by Eliot on the 'politically English' Georgian poetry whose idyllic verses are equally 'patriotic': 'the American shows his too quick susceptibility to foreign influence; the Englishman his imperviousness. For contemporary English verse has borrowed little from foreign sources; it is almost politically English; the

[110] T. S. Eliot, 'Why Rural Verse: A review of *Spring Thunder and Other Poems* by Mark Van Doren', *The Nation*, 120 (1925), p. 432, in CP2, p. 589.

[111] Eliot, 'Why Rural Verse', in CP2, p. 589.

[112] Eliot, 'Why Rural Verse', in CP2, p. 590.

Georgian poets insist upon the English countryside, and are even positively patriotic'.[113] In other words, the world of words on the English countryside is for Eliot a self-sufficient, enclosed political space intensely resistant to outsiders.

If the rose-garden embodies Eliot's version of a carefully constructed English countryside as an enclosed colonial centre once occupied by landed elites, then the anxiety in the English garden is at once spatial and racial in nature. The word that sums up both the spatial and racial dimensions of an outsider's experience in the garden is the 'metic'. Originating from ancient Greek, the word means a resident alien in a Greek city-state with a certain degree of citizenship and rights. It is a spatial word by origin: it is constituted of 'together'/'sharing' (*meta*) and 'house'/'home' (*oikos*), but the security of the house can at once denote inhospitality. As critic Richard Badenhausen points out, the meaning of the word is more exclusionary than inclusive, as it 'separates legitimate members of the *oikos* from those simply living in the same place'.[114]

Eliot readily assumes the identity of a 'metic': in as early as 1919, he has called himself a 'metic' in a letter to his English friend Mary Hutchinson. He writes on his own 'ignorance' regarding Mary and the tradition of her country:

> But remember that I am a *metic*—a foreigner, and that I *want* to understand you, and all the background and tradition of you. I shall try to be frank—because the attempt is so very much worth while with you—it is very difficult with me—both by inheritance and because of

[113] T. S. Eliot, 'Reflections on Contemporary Poetry, I: A review, in part, of *Strange Meetings*, by Harold Monro', *The Egoist*, 4 (1917), pp. 118-19, in CP1, p. 573.

[114] Richard Badenhausen, *T. S. Eliot and the Art of Collaboration* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 35.

> my very suspicious and cowardly disposition. But I may simply prove to be a savage.[115]

The word is also used in the same review of Van Doren's rural verses. Here, the limitations of an urban habit and outlook are added to the initial understanding simply as 'a foreigner': according to Eliot in the review, a metic 'can only thoroughly naturalize himself in cities'.[116] The 'metic' identity is invoked with a two-fold purpose: to explain away his own distance from the rural writing of his adopted country—the home of civilisation in opposition to his own 'savagery' as the letter in 1919 suggests—and to frame such distance as somewhat problematic. It belongs, after all, to the 'the problems of modern life' where 'various races and various social origins' converge in a big metropolitan public which has only 'metropolitan feelings and emotions' to share. The apposite term serves to voice an expatriate's self-conscious anxiety over the effect of his migrating cohort upon English civilisation.[117]

In both these earlier occasions, the word 'metic' is used defensively and apologetically as an unstable identity that is subsidiary to the authority of the centre. As Eliot's identification with it intensifies, however, the 'metic' identity is given a greater degree of agency. In March 1945, writing for the *Christian News-Letter*, Eliot again identifies with the metic by adopting the pseudonym 'Metoikos' in a polemic response to an earlier article signed off as 'Civis' (citizen). The 'metic' identity is here used as an effective gambit to counter the patriotic signature of 'Civis' and the cloistered, all-too-comfortable group

[115] T. S. Eliot to Mary Hutchinson, 11 (?) July 1919, L1, p. 318.

[116] T. S. Eliot, 'Why Rural Verse', in CP2, p. 589.

[117] T. S. Eliot, 'Why Rural Verse', in CP2, p. 589.

norms it represents.[118] Later, in October 1958 on the annual luncheon of the Kipling society, Eliot once more resorts to the metic identity when making his point on a common marginal status he shares with Kipling: 'The word *metic* […] does not apply perhaps in the strictest sense to either of us, since we come both from wholly British stock; but I think that Kipling's attitude to things English, like mine, was in some ways different from that of any native-born Briton. I feel this in some of the poems written after Kipling settled in Sussex'.[119] This is not a new point, as it rehearses Eliot's earlier observation in the 1941 Introduction to his edition of Kipling's verse, in which he commends the 'universal foreignness' of Kipling:

> What life would have made of such a man, had his birth, growth, maturity and age all taken place in one set of surroundings, is beyond speculation: as life directed, the result was to give him a peculiar detachment and remoteness from all environment, a universal foreignness which is the reverse side of his strong feeling for India, for the Empire, for England and for Sussex, a remoteness as of an alarmingly intelligent visitor from another planet. He remains somehow alien and aloof from all with which he identifies himself.[120]

A 'cosmopolitan' stance such as this, which in Eliot's earlier appraisals was held responsible for Kipling's 'discursive' observations and 'restless immaturity', is now assessed in a favourable light.[121] Not only so, but the 'detachment' regarding national identity that is only available to those who live in the interstices like the metics—an idea crucial to the politics of 'Little

[118] Quoted in Robert Crawford, *Devolving English Literature* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000), pp. 220-21.

[119] T. S. Eliot, 'The Unfading Genius of Rudyard Kipling', *Kipling and the Critics*, ed. by Elliot L. Gilbert (New York: New York University Press, 1965 [1958]), 118-23 (p. 120).

[120] Eliot, 'Editor's Introduction', *A Choice of Kipling's Verse*, p. 23.

[121] T. S. Eliot, 'Kipling's Defects', in CP1, p. 16.

Gidding' as will be covered soon—is also incorporated into a larger political framework: one in which the Empire is regarded on par with England and Sussex, thus redeeming Kipling from Eliot's earlier charges of his incoherent politics.[122] What is most intriguing about this 'Introduction' to Kipling, which also makes it relevant to the Empire's homecoming in the rose-garden scene, is its ambition to braid two apparently contradictory agendas: the aloof and detached cosmopolitanism, and the rootedness in the English soil observed from Kipling's Sussex period. In other words, Kipling's ruralism is meticulously framed as the response to the imperial centre from the outside. For Eliot, Kipling's later works flesh out a certain 'historical imagination' especially on 'what ought to be preserved' of England: a working countryside where 'the countryman belongs to the land, the landlord to his tenants, the farmer to his labourers and not the other way about'.[123] Such imagination, according to Eliot, is decisively different from 'any other "regional" writer' native to England such as Thomas Hardy, as it arises from 'the freshness of a mind and a sensibility developed and matured in quite different environment: he is discovering and reclaiming a lost inheritance'.[124] On this showing, Kipling's return to and celebration of the English soil are paradoxically conditioned by his metic status, which accounts for 'the freshness of a mind and a sensibility developed and matured in quite different environment' Eliot observes in Kipling.[125] It is also in this sense that the later works of Kipling,

[122] T. S. Eliot, 'Kipling Redivivus: a review of *The Years Between*, by Rudyard Kipling', *The Athenaeum*, 4645 (1919), pp. 297-98, in CP2, p. 35.

[123] Eliot, 'Editor's Introduction', *A Choice of Kipling's Verse*, pp. 32, 33.

[124] Ibid.

[125] Eliot, 'Editor's Introduction', *A Choice of Kipling's Verse*, p. 33.

retrieving an almost lost rural life in England, are understood not as a rupture from or exhaustion of his earlier 'foreign and imperial material', but rather as 'the continuation and consummation of the earlier'.[126]

As with 'Ash-Wednesday' and its allusion to Ezekiel where the possession of one's homeland is predicated upon exile, the word 'inheritance' is again invoked in the context of homecoming following dislocation, this time more specifically on the political landscape of the Empire. Such perspective makes more relevant the emphasis on the 'right' over the ghost children in 'They': dead children who represent the hopeless future of the declining country homes. The enabling identity of the 'metic' in Eliot's later writings allows a distinctive rightful claim for the margins over the imperial home. Eliot's identification with Kipling as a fellow 'metic' in 1958, for instance, is followed by his citation from Kipling's 'The Recall', a poem accompanying the story 'An Habitation Enforced'. The story concerns an American couple who on a vacation in Edwardian England end up purchasing a country estate in East Sussex, only afterwards discovering the estate to be the wife's ancestral home. They have hence settled in the place which they now call 'home', and given birth to a son. The poem takes on the voice of the meaning-giving, magical English land, with the four lines Eliot cited as follows:

> Under their feet in the grasses
> My clinging magic runs.
> They shall return as strangers.
> They shall remain as sons.[127]

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[126] Eliot, 'Editor's Introduction', *A Choice of Kipling's Verse*, p. 32.

[127] Rudyard Kipling, 'The Recall', *Actions and Reactions* (London: Macmillan, 1909), p. 51.

If the ideology behind the story and poem by Kipling is still intensely Anglocentric, with the English land 'draw[ing] them to my knees', less so is Eliot's version of Kipling. The visitors in the rose-garden, when confronted with the imperial centre, are carefully poised between the sense of exteriority and the intervention that are both available to the 'metic' identity.[128] Robert Crawford contends by way of addressing the 'metoikos' of Eliot that the poet consciously utilises the identity as an outsider and insider at once; what may be added is that the outsider is given an intervening agency to challenge and even fulfil the 'inside'.[129] In 'Burnt Norton', the visitors coming home to the English rose-garden experience an anxiety over their 'metic' identity both to the foreign country and its defining rurality. However, the outsider's anxiety is represented alongside, and counterbalanced by, the metic's claim upon ownership of the centre. In the face of the ghost children embodying the estate's history and lineage, the speaker remarkably assumes the role of the host: '[t]here they were as our *guests*, accepted and accepting'.[130] The order, in which 'accepted' anticipates 'accepting', is revealing, as it discloses the reversal of power structure: the metic has as much 'right' over the imperial home, especially when the home is already degenerating, depopulated and decentred.

[128] Kipling, 'The Recall', *Actions and Reactions*, p. 51.

[129] Crawford, *Devolving English Literature*, p. 223.

[130] Eliot, 'Burnt Norton' I, l. 30, emphasis mine.

4.6 Barbarians in the garden

The empowerment of the metic, which makes the rose-garden's Kiplingesque resonances all the more relevant, is arguably also the politics of *Four Quartets*. Patricia E. Chu, for instance, contends for the 'geopolitical' nature of Eliot's persistent engagement with Kipling.[131] Chu locates Eliot's writings on Kipling within the poet's own political imagination of an ideal 'man of letters', who according to Eliot's eponymous essay in 1945 shoulders the political task of taking back cultural authority from powers of 'centralization and homogenization' and returning it to 'non-dominant cultures'.[132] Taking account of this connection made by Chu, I would proceed to argue for an anti-colonial sentiment inherent to Eliot's rose-garden. The metic's intervention, which participates in and intensifies the decaying process of the colonial centre, is as much a response to the centripetal ideology in Kipling and Burnett as to Eliot's own affinity with colonialism earlier on. Some brief back-pedalling is therefore called for to investigate Eliot's change where his attitude towards the Empire is concerned.

Eliot does not start off his career either as a poet or London bank clerk with a discernible hostility to the colonial enterprise. The first years of his expatriation see him fidgeting over his provincial American birth, which he still regarded as a flaw. The anxiety is borne out by his readiness to align with the centre, alongside a self-conscious repression of any signs of marginality. During his employment at Lloyd's from 1917 to 1925 he is known to have

[131] Patricia E. Chu, *Race, Nationalism and the State in British and American Modernism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 54.

[132] T. S. Eliot, 'The Man of Letters and the Future of Europe', *The Sewanee Review*, 53 (1945), 333-42 (p. 335).

worked in the 'Colonial and Foreign Department'. In letters describing the job, however, the colonial element is invisible. A letter to his mother on 21 March 1917, for instance, sees the department referred to simply as a neutral 'Foreign Department', and the main incentives of taking up the post are accounted for in an unadulterated European guise. It is, according to Eliot, the opportunity to learn and practice more European languages: '[i]ncidentally, I shall pick up scraps of the Spanish, Portuguese, Danish, Swedish, and Norwegian languages. Russians, fortunately, manage to produce their reports in English or French'.[133] Such accounts are part of the early Eliot's agenda of his own decolonialisation and initiation into the centre, which at this moment seems to be the point of his expatriation. 'It is the final perfection, the consummation of an American to become not an Englishman, but a European, something which no born European, no person of any European nationality can become', writes Eliot by way of addressing Henry James.[134] Such adherence to the centre can be challenging and stressful, and is most of all a strained identity performance. As he confesses a year later, being a foreigner in London 'is like being always on dress parade—one can never relax. It is a great strain'.[135]

The Eurocentric view takes its toll on Eliot's earlier representation of the colonies, as the description of his job in Lloyd's already reveals. Early works represent the colonies in a dismissive manner, and a good example in this respect is 'Mélange Adultère de Tout' collected in *Poems* (1920). Written in French, the poem in its choice of language resembles what becomes the line

[133] T. S. Eliot to Charlotte Eliot, 21 March 1917, L1, p. 230.

[134] T. S. Eliot, 'In Memory of Henry James', *The Egoist*, 5 (1918), pp. 1-2, in CP1, p. 648.

[135] T. S. Eliot to Henry Eliot, 2 July 1919, L1, p. 310.

assigned to Countess Marie Larisch in *The Waste Land*, as a relatively marginal identity (American or Lithuanian) is concealed in the camouflage of a presumably superior European language: 'Bin gar keine Russin, stamm' aus Litauen, echt deutsch'.[136] In the poem, the autobiographical account of a cosmopolitan experience—'En Amerique, professeur; | En Angleterre, journaliste; | […] A Londres, un peu banquier'—only betrays a deeply ingrained colonial mentality.[137] Toward the latter half of the poem, Europe is counterbalanced by its colonies represented in a rather unfavourable light as 'empty':

> J'erre toujours de-ci de-là
> A divers coups de tra là là
> De Damas jusqu'à Omaha.
> Je célébrai mon jour de fête
> Dans une oasis d'Afrique
> Vêtu d'une peau de girafe.
>
> On montrera mon cénotaphe
> Aux côtes brûlantes de Mozambique.[138]
>
> [Still I wander here and there, with various breaks for tra la la, from Damascus to Omaha. I shall celebrate my day of festivity in an African oasis, clad in giraffe-skin. They will display my cenotaph—empty—on the burning coasts of Mozambique].

Despite the poem being a satire on a confusion of identities, the speaker, while on his identity masquerades within Europe, still traverses a landscape of life, activities, and details. After an imaginary relocation to the margins, be they America, Syria or Mozambique, his 'racial cross-dressing' as Michael North

[136] T. S. Eliot, 'The Waste Land' I, TP1, p. 55, l. 10.

[137] T. S. Eliot, 'Mélange Adultère de Tout', TP1, p. 41, ll. 1-6.

[138] Eliot, 'Mélange Adultère de Tout', ll. 16-20.

calls it still persists until its culmination with a doomed ending in Africa, as the word 'cénotaphe' suggests.[139] As North implies, Africa in this poem becomes an ultimate signifier for the speaker's restless shifting identities in Europe: it is a 'place of placelessness', and is therefore 'itself this cenotaph, marking the speaker's habit of always being elsewhere, a quality this poem makes typically modern and necessarily African'.[140]

'Mélange Adultère de Tout' is a good example, as it shows how Eliot's earlier representations of the centre and its peripheries are organised in a seemingly even-handed manner and situated in a cosmopolitan context, but are imperialist in nature nonetheless. Admittedly, as Paul Douglass points out, for Eliot at this time to 'become European is to have no nationality—to become no one', yet the poem asserts its superiority nonetheless through the colonies' undoing, his native country included.[141] I agree with Paul Douglass in his contention that Eliot's Anglo-Eurocentrism is accountable for his imperialism, but only in so far as his earlier career is concerned. Eliot admittedly never fully outgrows this Eurocentrism, though the position gradually disentangled itself from an explicitly colonial position. Nevertheless, at this earlier stage his Eurocentrism and imperialism simply figure as two sides of the same coin: he was being rather unconcerned about colonial exploitations as well as the political and cultural authority of marginal locations. Hence the tendency of this poem and other earlier works to disorient non-European locations and

[139] Michael North, *The Dialect of Modernism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), p. 84.

[140] Ibid.

[141] Paul Douglass, 'Reading the Wreckage: De-Encrypting Eliot's Aesthetics of Empire', *Twentieth Century Literature*, 43 (1997), 1-26 (p. 5).

cultures, and to adapt them to a European textual frame to which they do not belong. *The Waste Land*, for instance, has been widely criticised for ironically marginalising Oriental cultures precisely through their appropriation; David Spurr, being one of these critics, is alert to the universalising movement of the poem that unites 'Europe with its colonized other in an idealized mythic identity'.[142]

With this in mind, one is better positioned when coming to grips with Eliot's pro-imperialist assertion in 1924, in which the Empire as a convenient antidote to small-minded nationalism is promoted as a smaller-minded Eurocentric paternalism. In an open letter to Ford Madox Ford in support of the newly-founded *Transatlantic Review* in 1924, Eliot declares that 'I am all for empires, especially the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and I deplore the outburst of artificial nationalities, constituted like artificial genealogies for millionaires, all over the world.'[143] The political claim, however, is founded upon an aesthetic premise:

> The number of languages worth writing in is very small, and it seems to me a waste of time to attempt to enlarge it. On the other hand, if anyone has a genuine nationality—and a genuine nationality depends upon the existence of a genuine literature, and you cannot have a nationality worth speaking of unless you have a national literature—if anyone has a genuine nationality, let him assert it, let the Frenchman be as French, the Englishman as English, the German as German, as he can be; but let him be French or English or German in such a way that his national character will complement, not contradict, the other nationalities. Let us not have an indiscriminate mongrel mixture of socialist internationals, or of capitalist cosmopolitans, but a harmony of different functions. But

[142] David Spurr, 'Myths of Anthropology: Eliot, Joyce, Lévy-Bruhl', *PMLA*, 109 (1994), 266-80 (p. 272).

[143] T. S. Eliot, 'To the Editor of *The Transatlantic Review*', *The Transatlantic Review*, 1 (1924), 95-96 (p. 95).

> the more contact, the more free exchange, there can be between the small number of intelligent people of every race or nation, the more likelihood of general contribution to what we call Literature.[144]

The declaration on empires makes no mention of the colonies at all: they are indeed invisible 'place[s] of placelessness'.[145] Apparently, only the West Europeans are allowed 'genuine' nationalities—and by implication, 'genuine' languages and cultures—which no less than sanction the subjugation of the colonies.

The above claim is cited in full to contrast Eliot's later rectified position in *Notes Towards the Definition of Culture* (1948), where imperialism, or the British Empire to be specific, is critiqued for standardising the local diversities. As is covered in the preceding chapter, local and racial distinctions of culture are held as the book's primary concern in relation to both domestic and transnational politics. The supposed superiority, of Western European and English languages and cultures that Eliot subscribed to in 1924, is now turned on its head. The paternal ideology of 'worth' is exchanged for a more enabling discourse of cultural preservation: now for a language to survive 'it must continue to be a literary language', and 'there is no safeguard more reliable than a language'.[146] The British Empire's colonising activities in India are also tried for their disregard for local cultures:

> There is finally the peculiar case of India, where almost every complication is found to defeat the culture-planner. There is stratification of society which is not purely social but to some extent

[144] Eliot, 'To the Editor of *The Transatlantic Review*', *The Transatlantic Review*, 1 (1924), 95-96 (p. 95).

[145] North, *The Dialect of Modernism*, p. 84.

[146] NDC, p. 57.

> racial, in a Hindu world which comprehends people with an ancient tradition of high civilisation, and tribesmen of very primitive culture indeed. There is Brahminism and there is Islam. There are two or more important cultures on completely different religious foundations. Into this confused world came the British, with their assurance that their own culture was the best in the world […]. […] [N]o man is good enough to have the right to make another over in his own image. The benefits of British rule will soon be lost, but the ill effects of the disturbance of a native culture by an alien one will remain.[147]

There are still continuities and consistencies in terms of Eliot's different positions regarding imperialism before and after conversion. Despite the criticism of the homogenising enterprise of British imperialism, Eliot still hesitates over calling himself—as do critics—an 'anti-imperialist'.[148] The idea of an empire is still cherished as long as local cultures are carefully 'foster[ed]', which also explains why in the book an idealised Russian Empire is held as more favourable to British colonial policies.[149] In specific naming situations including 'parent' and 'satellite' cultures, the earlier paternalism is also clearly present.[150] However, the juxtaposition between the centre and its peripheries no longer reduces the latter to a 'placeless' status as is in 'Mélange Adultère de Tout'. The centre is now only granted limited authority, with the rest delegated to the vernacular; the rhetorical frame where 'Frenchman [is] as French, the Englishman as English, the German as German' is now adapted to illustrate the codependency of cultures:

> [I]t is to the advantage of England that the Welsh should continue to be Welsh, the Scots Scots and the Irish Irish, then the reader should be

[147] NDC, p. 64.

[148] NDC, p. 90.

[149] NDC, p. 92.

[150] NDC, pp. 45, 55.

> disposed to agree that there may be some advantage to other peoples in the English continuing to be English. It is an essential part of my case, that if the other cultures of the British Isles were wholly superseded by English culture, English culture would disappear too.[151]

Eliot's more nuanced attitude towards imperialism further informs one's reading of *The Family Reunion*. As Harry's recollection reveals, his childhood retreat is a location away from inheritance and civilisation, '[t]he hollow tree in what we called the wilderness | Down near the river'.[152] The destiny as an heir to the house is thrust upon him, whereas Arthur and John, deprived of the right to inheritance, are assigned the role of 'Indians' in their childhood games.[153] The fight between the heir and the 'Indians' epitomised in the boys' games is reversed in life, where Harry abandons inherited family property for becoming a missionary in the colonies, '[t]o the worship in the desert, the thirst and deprivation, | A stony sanctuary and a primitive altar, | The heat of the sun and the icy vigil, | A care over lives of humble people'.[154] His pilgrimage to the purgatory of the primitive land is counterpointed by the inheritance of his 'Indian' brother: 'Let the cricket chirp. | John shall be the master. | All I have is his'.[155] It is worth noting how the language of *The Waste Land* is taken to task in dismantling the tidy paradigm of the civilisation/savagery binary. If in *The Waste Land* the urban apocalypse is at once enacted in and compared to stony wilderness, and relies upon primitive rituals of Adonis and Osiris for fertility and rain, then in *The Family Reunion* the same redemptive forces are applied to

[151] Eliot, 'To the Editor of *The Transatlantic Review*', p. 95; NDC, p. 57.

[152] Eliot, *The Family Reunion*, CPP, p. 307.

[153] Ibid.

[154] Eliot, *The Family Reunion*, CPP, p. 339.

[155] Ibid.

the rural locations, the heart of England. Furthermore, the play also sees the centre represented by the stately country home divested of its authority of representing civilisation. Harry, eight years away from the imperial centre, comes back as a savage: an 'Indian' himself, he consciously resists the aristocratic gentility of his English family with his own savage 'tom-tom', with which the speaker in Eliot's early poem 'Portrait of a Lady' once withstood the affected Boston hostess.[156] As Robert Crawford argues in *The Savage and the City*, Harry's homecoming to Wishwood resembles 'very much a return to the Frazerian wood', where the yearning for spring transpires to be a rite of spring as in *The Waste Land*: Harry's perception of spring to be 'an issue of blood' is strikingly close to primitive ritual.[157]

Crawford's reading of primitivism in *The Family Reunion* as a resistant force against urban materialism (embodied by Uncle Charles) situates it in the resistant pattern of *The Waste Land* and the *Sweeney* fragments. The city, however, is arguably at a comparatively lesser stake in this play than is the whole ambit of western civilisation that the aristocratic rural site of Wishwood stands for. The primitive elements in *The Family Reunion* are effectively deployed to indicate the loss of potency of the centre and thus restoring other cultures to an equal footing. In the play, the country home ends up being taken over by the 'Indian' of John and will be ultimately run down, as Amy's final soliloquy forebodes. Moreover, Harry, the elected and the heir who epitomises civilisation, is a savage himself after eight years abroad and with the prospect

[156] T. S. Eliot, 'Portrait of a Lady' I, TP1, p. 10, l. 32.

[157] Robert Crawford, *The Savage and the City in the Work of T. S. Eliot* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), p. 210.

of further exile in the colonies, to '[know] the natives' and 'learn […] several dialects'.[158] In so doing the centre and the periphery—the savage land of the colonies—are levelled to a degree, which registers a tendency already observed in a 1935 commentary in the *Criterion*. The commentary addresses the recent anthropological 'discovery' of the Papuan race by the West and, more specifically, the concerns of *The Times* that their contact with Western civilisation 'may bring disaster to people who at present are "producing all they use for themselves"'.[159] Eliot detects from the response a general loss of faith in the western civilisation, with which he sadly agrees:

> The concept of Empire is not necessarily an ignoble one […]: the notion of extending law, justice, humanity and civilization—with no other interest than glory, and no other motive than a sense of vocation. But in the present state of things, the glory of the administrators is quickly followed, if not accompanied, by the ignominy of exploiters. How many lower peoples have been, on balance, really helped by European intervention? And until we set in order our own crazy economic and financial systems, to say nothing of our philosophy of life, can we be sure that our helping hands to the barbarian and the savage will be any more desirable than the embrace of the leper?[160]

The terminologies regarding higher (superior) and lower civilisations are disconcerting, yet it is also worth noting that Eliot believes that such distinction no longer justifies colonial practice. The colonial exploitation of 'the barbarian and the savage' is aptly described as the spread of the contagious disease: the centre of civilisation is sick, so are the activities it carries out in its colonies.

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[158] Eliot, *The Family Reunion*, CPP, p. 344.

[159] T. S. Eliot, 'A Commentary', *Criterion*, 15 (1935), 65-69 (pp. 65-66).

[160] Eliot, 'A Commentary', *Criterion*, 15 (1935), p. 68.

Four Quartets starts with the colonial centre of the rose-garden. However, not only is the centre represented as being hollowed out, as the foregoing argument reveals, but the text also enacts a pattern where the cultural supremacy of the centre is constantly intervened by and delegated to its margins. Read from this angle, *Four Quartets* is less a reinforcement of the ideology of establishment, as Donald Davie famously argues, than its challenge.[161] Unlike the polyphony of *The Waste Land*, the contrapuntal nature of *Four Quartets* has not been sufficiently emphasised. Such musical reading is justified as much by the title of the work as by the rich presence of the marginal cultures, which lends itself to Edward Said's method of 'contrapuntal reading' whereby British power must be examined in the context of its global expansions.[162] In 'Burnt Norton', for instance, the 'metic' visitors' (the 'us' in section I, II and IV) sited experience within the English garden is interpolated by the more abstract contemplation on the nature of the centre as well as the order founded thereupon: 'the still point of the turning world'.[163] Moreover, the text vigorously tests the metic's relation to the centre. Section IV once more establishes the central location of the garden as rural England through the allusion to Thomas Gray's 'Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard': its opening line '[t]ime and the bell have buried the day' is intensely reminiscent of Gray's '[t]he curfew tolls the knell of parting day'.[164] However, the lines

[161] Davie, Donald, 'Anglican Eliot', *Eliot in His Time: Essays on the Occasion of the Fiftieth Anniversary of 'The Wasteland'*, ed. by A. Walton Litz (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973), pp. 181-96.

[162] Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (London: Vintage, 1994), p. 326.

[163] Eliot, 'Burnt Norton' II, l. 16; IV, l. 10.

[164] Eliot's allusion to Thomas Gray has been widely written on. One of first studies in this respect is George T. Wright, 'Eliot Written in a Country Churchyard: The Elegy and *Four Quartets*', *ELH*, 43.2 (1976), 227-42 (p. 230).

swiftly move on with a series of provocative questions that attempt to invert the ordering of power inherent to the location:

> Time and the bell have buried the day,
> The black cloud carries the sun away.
> Will the sunflower turn to us, will the clematis
> Stray down, bend to us; tendril and spray
> Clutch and cling?
> Chill
> Fingers of yew be curled
> Down on us?[165]

The assumption of these lines is coherent with the rose-garden scene in 'Burnt Norton' I, where the empowered 'metics' are represented as hosts accepting the 'guests' that occupy the site. What happens in these lines registers a tendency for the authority of the 'sun' to be taken over by 'us', as the sunflower's turn indicates.

The beseeching to subvert the structural opposition between the centre and its periphery is furthered in the following section where the centre is represented as 'a Chinese jar', which resonates with one biographical reference widely acknowledged but not thoroughly investigated by Eliot scholars. In 1928, Eliot is reminded of an old school friend whose family is for generations rooted in New England and whose grandmother 'had collected Chinese pottery brought home by the Salem clippers'.[166] The seemingly incidental recollection is actually consistent with Eliot's early fascination with sea exploration and the enterprising spirit it symbolises. Salem in the colonial settlement of Massachusetts is where his own ancestor Andrew Eliott first arrived and settled

[165] Eliot, 'Burnt Norton' IV, ll. 1-10.

[166] Eliot, 'Preface to *This American World*', in CP3, p. 492.

after setting sail from Somerset. It is a town which later saw 'the hightide of New England's naval energy' in the early nineteenth century, and which once flourished with its 'China fleet' loaded with oriental treasures: the decline of this sea trade route was positively bemoaned by Eliot in an undergraduate essay entitled 'Gentlemen and Seamen'.[167] The reference to the Chinese pottery from Salem clippers occurred in the 1928 preface to *This American World* by Edgar Ansel Mowrer, and serves Eliot's broader argument on the subdivision of two varieties of Americans: 'the early-settling families which have remained in the East' like that of his school friend, and the 'descendant[s] of pioneers' that kept moving westward, himself included.[168] The migrant life of the colonial pioneers is the chosen life over the one securely fastened to a New England identity, living 'in the same house in the same New England seaport for two hundred and fifty years' and waiting only passively for the colonial objects to be 'brought home'.[169]

At the heart of the comparison and confrontations between the two American subdivisions is an important paradox. In the preface Eliot confesses his own conflict of identity regarding his New England roots and his Missouri upbringing as a result of his ancestors' westward expansion.[170] Paradoxically, the geographical distance from New England brings him closer to it in the colonising spirit that first defines the early settlement and then America: 'those branches of the early-settling families which have remained in the East, in New

[167] T. S. Eliot, 'Gentlemen and Seamen', *The Harvard Advocate*, 87 (1909), pp. 115-16, in CP1, p. 22.

[168] Eliot, 'Preface to *This American World*', in CP3, p. 491.

[169] Eliot, 'Preface to *This American World*', in CP3, pp. 491-92.

[170] On Eliot's being torn between these two spatial identities that are both American but nonetheless different, see section 2.4 of the thesis.

York, Boston, Philadelphia and the towns of the southern seaboard, are further removed from the "pioneer" than those whose grandparents moved west'.[171] The rivalry between the city and the country once more emerges. Americanism here is attested less in terms of spatial proximity than by activities of expansion and conquest: those by nature antithetical to a cocooned urban life in secured settlements. Eliot's compression of an element of agrarianism with the colonising spirit is redolent of Henry Nash Smith's seminal study, which construes the westward expansion as the propagation of the master symbol of the garden, and the nature of the movement as the domestication of the West by pushing forward the agrarian frontier of Jeffersonian America.[172]

The agrarian context of the westward expansion sits appositely within the overall concern of Eliot's preface to Mowrer, namely the discussion of 'the future of Americanism both within and outside of America'.[173] The latter prospect, of fostering Americanism outside its homeland, is of 'peculiar interest' both to Mowrer's book and to Eliot. As Eliot observes, Mowrer traces the origin of Americanism back to Europe 'and finds that what are supposed to be the specifically American qualities and vices, are merely the European qualities and vices given a new growth in a different soil'.[174] Following this line of argument, Americanness is paradoxically an extension of the pastoral ideal of the garden that puritan forefathers carried from across the Atlantic. Meanwhile, transatlantic migrations and explorations may just turn out to be

[171] Eliot, 'Preface to *This American World*', in CP3, p. 491.

[172] Henry Nash Smith, *Virgin Land: The American West as Symbol and Myth*, reissued with new preface (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1970), pp. 123-25, 174.

[173] Eliot, 'Preface to *This American World'*, in CP3, p. 490.

[174] Eliot, 'Preface to *This American World'*, in CP3, p. 490.

yet another manifestation 'outside of America'.[175] Mowrer states, and Eliot agrees, that '[n]ot to have the frontier in one's blood makes emotional understanding of the United States impossible'.[176] 'We shall not cease from exploration | And the end of all our exploring | Will be to arrive where we started': thus Eliot concludes the quartets.[177] There is very little point to distinguish the end from the beginning, the colonised from the colonisers, and the home by Mississippi from the garden of the imperial home. 'Here or there does not matter', as the centre is by definition inflected by the empowered savages—the 'metic' visitors in the rose-garden, the Indians, the Chinese jar—and is itself shaped by the geographical 'movement'.[178]

The contexts of Eliot's preface to Mowrer informs a reading of 'The Dry Salvages', where the American guests in the garden are made into hosts. Flanked by three other quartets named after and featuring locations in rural England, their orderly landscapes respectively steeped in the local history of the nation, 'The Dry Salvages' seems in itself a renegade: a barbarian in the garden. However, its interpolation or even culmination of the English locations and plots (Eliot's original plan was to end the series with the American quartet) illuminates an important fact about the poems as a group: the quartets remain consistent only in so far as they are less about any particular nationality than about a state of liminality in translational politics and poetics.[179] In the poem's opening section the poet's dual allegiance with the American geography is

[175] Eliot, 'Preface to *This American World'*, in CP3, p. 490.

[176] Ibid.

[177] Eliot, 'Little Gidding' V, ll. 26-28.

[178] Eliot, 'East Coker' V, l. 32.

[179] Gordon, *The Imperfect Life*, p. 350.

distilled into different landscape symbols: the river and the sea, respectively corresponding to the home in Missouri and shores of New England. A sense of liminality, already inherent in this dual allegiance, emerges as a pattern in the poet's account of his own birth and upbringing in the 1928 Preface: he has always been self-consciously 'a New Englander in the South West, and a South Westerner in New England', and confesses that 'in New England I missed the long dark river, the ailanthus trees, the flaming cardinal birds, the high limestone bluffs where we searched for fossil shellfish; in Missouri I missed the fir trees, the bay and goldenrod, the song-sparrows, the red granite and the blue sea of Massachusetts'.[180] In a letter to Herbert Read in the same year he extended his liminal identity from within to beyond the American borders. His recent conversion and naturalisation as a British citizen are in this light only symptomatic of, instead of the solution to, his inherent liminality: the 'metic' status. He was, as he describes, born to a 'border state':

> Some day I want to write an essay about the point of view of an American who wasn't an American, […] who wasn't a southerner in the South because his people were northerners in a border state and looked down on all southerners and Virginians, and who so was never anything anywhere and who therefore felt himself to be more a Frenchman than an American and more an Englishman than a Frenchman and yet felt that the U.S.A. up to a hundred years ago was a family extension.[181]

The account of the confused plethora of identities is reminiscent of 'Mélange Adultère de Tout', only that the transcontinental peregrinations no longer find their signifier in the 'placelessness' of Africa, but in the poet's native America

[180] Eliot, 'Preface to *This American World'*, in CP3, p. 492.

[181] T. S. Eliot to Herbert Read, 23 April 1928, L4, p. 339.

where he is rooted in a rootlessness. As David Chinitz observes, the 'wan sense of homelessness' is integral to the poet's American experience, so much so that the destiny of exile is 'thrust upon' the poet rather than by voluntary choice.[182]

Typically of T. S. Eliot, the letter on the inherently American origins of his exile is composed on St George's Day, the national day of his recently adopted motherland. Similarly, 'The Dry Salvages' with its vivid American reminiscence was written amidst England's moment of crisis: during the latter half of 1940 London was constantly bombed. It remains Eliot's mental habit to contemplate his two motherlands in a relational light, which is arguably another legacy of his exile. It is therefore not entirely accurate to loosely refer to the poem as the 'American' quartet: not so much for Esty's reasoning that the poem still points the reader back to the poet's ancestral home of England depleted of its imperial control, but for zooming in on the frontier and the contiguous points—destabilising and ever moving—to which his American experience is only subservient.[183] Nor, pace Donald Davie, does the poem epitomise cultural chauvinism for its accused univocality, whereby 'Eliot couldn't harmonize his American with his British voice' and the 'Anglo-American consensus tends to split apart, nationalistically'.[184] The river, we are told, is 'at first recognised as a frontier',

> Useful, untrustworthy, as a conveyor of commerce;
> Then only a problem confronting the builder of bridges.
> The problem once solved, the brown god is almost forgotten

[182] David Chinitz, *T. S. Eliot and the Cultural Divide* (London: University of Chicago Press, 2003), p. 51.

[183] Esty, *A Shrinking Island*, pp. 150-01.

[184] Donald Davie, '"The Dry Salvages": A Reconsideration', *PN Review*, 17.5 (1991), 21-26 (pp. 26, 22).

By the dwellers in the cities—ever, however, implacable,
Keeping his seasons and rages, destroyer, reminder
Of what men choose to forget. Unhonoured, unpropitiated
By worshippers of the machine, but waiting, watching and waiting.
His rhythm was present in the nursery bedroom,
In the rank ailanthus of the April dooryard,
In the smell of grapes on the autumn table,
And the evening circle in the winter gaslight.[185]

The river is defined as 'useful' and 'untrustworthy', but more significance is apparently attached to the latter. The reference to 'builder of bridges' in particular evokes the pragmatic air of Harvard around the time of Eliot's enrolment, which the young Eliots were known to resent. Eliot's cousin Fred used to deplore the death of classics at Harvard: the subject was considered useless by the university for it 'never helped build better bridges, or manipulate a market, or win battles'.[186] Viewed in this context, the river in the poem serves as a symbol exclusively reserved for the domesticating energies that extend the frontier beyond the wild west, rather than for the already-domesticated normative 'dwellers in the cities'.

In indicating the river to be another '*lieu de mémoire*' as a 'reminder | Of what men choose to forget', the opening stanza harks back to the rose-garden and the country house in the opening sections of the first two quartets. Moreover, the allusion to the garden keeps lurking beneath the text as the image of the river gives way to the sea:

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

[185] T. S. Eliot, 'The Dry Salvages' I, TP1, p. 193, ll. 3-14.

[186] Quoted in Gordon, *The Imperfect Life*, p. 31.

Its hints of earlier and other creation:
The starfish, the horseshoe crab, the whale's backbone;
The pools where it offers to our curiosity
The more delicate algae and the sea anemone.
It tosses up our losses, the torn seine,
The shattered lobsterpot, the broken oar
And the gear of foreign dead men. The sea has many voices,
Many gods and many voices.
The salt is on the briar rose,
The fog is in the fir trees.[187]

The liminality of the speaker's position, only hinted through the image of the river, is brought to the fore with the image of sea. The description of the sea in 'The Dry Salvages' in many ways recapitulates 'Death by Water' in *The Waste Land*. The 'losses' the sea spits out are evocative of Phlebas the Phoenician's 'profit and loss', the 'many voices' of the sea and the 'seagull' in the following verse paragraph of similar imagery in the latter text and its earlier, longer draft, and both works (including the earlier draft of 'Death by Water') rely heavily on the sonorous rhymes or internal rhymes of bell/(s)well/(s)hell.[188] 'Death by Water' is organically linked to 'The Burial of the Dead', the connection established by an earlier poem 'Dans le Restaurant' (1918) where a prototypical hyacinth garden appears in the same breath with the drowned Phlebas. The association is corroborated by John Hayward's note to the section: 'Phlebas, the drowned god of the fertility cults'.[189] If James Frazer's *The Golden Bough* and especially the book on *Adonis, Attis, Osiris*—an important source of the fertility myth of *The Waste Land*—is called to mind, one finds the drowning of Phlebas at sea an anthropological counterpart to the burial and

[187] Eliot, 'The Dry Salvages' I, ll. 15-26.

[188] T. S. Eliot, '*The Waste Land*: An Editorial Composite', TP1, pp. 340-42.

[189] Quoted in TP1, p. 685.

resuscitation of the garden plot. Frazer's study records the primitive ritual of 'the garden of Adonis' observed in both European and Indian cultures, where cut flowers and crops preserved in a basket of earth are tossed into sea or springs as a charm to 'secure a due supply of fertilizing rain' and to 'promote the growth or revival of vegetation'.[190] In its allusion to 'Death by Water', the opening of 'The Dry Salvages' rehearses and reinforces its association with the regenerative garden. The presence of anemone in the reference to 'sea anemone' hints at the affinity between the sea and land creatures. The process, where 'hints of earlier and other creation' including 'the gear of foreign dead men' resurface, is also analogous to the sprouting corpses in Stetson's garden and the resurrection of scattered bones in the rose-garden of 'Ash-Wednesday'.[191] The allusion to the garden, and more specifically the rose-garden in the context of the quartets, culminates in the imagery of the interpenetration of landscapes: 'The salt is on the briar rose, | The fog is in the fir trees'.

The association between the sea and the garden here arguably serves a different end than in *The Waste Land*. In 'The Dry Salvages', the sea-garden analogy no longer prioritises the land and its fertility, but represents more squarely the interstices of the two. 'The sea is the land's edge', but not its 'terminus' or 'end', the latter word resounding throughout the rest of the poem. 'The Dry Salvages' is a poem positively seeking an end ('[w]here is there an end of it'), but if we follow the poem's instruction in its second section we

[190] James Frazer, *Adonis, Attis, Osiris* (London: Macmillan, 1906), p. 14.

[191] Eliot, 'The Dry Salvages' I, ll. 21, 18, 24.

learn that '[t]here is no end, but addition'.[192] The regenerative sea, in breeding the sea anemone and producing the once dead creations from undersea, is as much the land's end as its extension, the frontier that separates them a fruitful one.

This frontier, which lies as much between the sea and the land as between countries, culminates in 'Little Gidding' as the 'hedgerow'. Symmetrically corresponding to the rose-garden in 'Burnt Norton', the image of the hedgerow at once embodies and strips down the myth of Englishness. It is, to start with, also part of the quintessentially English landscape as its contemporaneous texts indicate. In the *English Country* (1934), a collection of essays on rural England compiled by H. J. Massingham, which aimed at reinvigorating the traditional ways of life, the gardener-poet Vita Sackville-West identifies the hedgerow as a unique part of the English landscape. For a Kentish yeoman, '[t]he idea of not having a hedge, and a good thick one, between his own and his neighbour's land would be inconceivable to him. […] Any governmental proposal to do away with the hedgerows would meet with consternation, if not with rebellion'.[193] Sackville-West also draws connections between the absolute necessity of hedgerows in England and the English national characteristic of '[s]eparatism, individualism, independence'.[194] A similar observation was made earlier on by Henry James in *English Hours* (1905) where he remarked of Warwickshire: '[o]ne had no need of being told that this is a conservative

[192] Eliot, 'The Dry Salvages' II, ll. 1, 7.

[193] Vita Sackville-West, 'Kent', *English Country: Fifteen Essays by Various Authors,* ed. by H. J. Massingham (London: Wishart, 1934), 201-12 (p. 205).

[194] Vita Sackville-West, 'Kent', *English Country*, pp. 205-07.

county; the fact seemed written in the hedgerows and in the verdant acres behind them'.[195]

Like the rose-garden, the way the hedgerow is represented in 'Little Gidding' debunks both the temporal and spatial dimensions involved in the construction of Englishness the image partakes in. More importantly, in taking over from the rose-garden as the predominant landscape of the final quartet—one the poet himself regards as being topical to the war-time situation—the image is reinitiated into the imagination of nationhood as a threshold space: one that both demarcates and connects landscape.[196] The poem opens with the disruption of the seasonal cycle, which harks back to the chorus in *Murder in the Cathedral* and the 'rose-garden' originating from the play. The maytime hedgerow enacts the layered time, of 'midwinter spring' and a '[z]ero summer':

> This is the spring time
> But not in time's covenant. Now the hedgerow
> 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?[197]

As in the rose-garden, the notion of linear time and history as a continuum is superseded by the coexistence of different facets of time. Again, the

[195] Henry James, 'In Warwickshire', *English Hours* (London: Tauris Parke, 2011 [1905]), 113-127 (p. 120).

[196] T. S. Eliot sent Janet Adams Smith a postcard to 'complain of your finding nothing Toppicle in the 4 4tets. If L. G. isn't Toppicle: well, it was *meant* to be the best Patriotic Poem in the language'. T. S. Eliot to Janet Adams Smith, 8 February 1953, quoted in TP1, p. 892.

[197] Eliot, 'Little Gidding' I, ll. 13-19.

simultaneity of time is spatialised in the hedgerow, where the rose-garden's implied critique of the presentism of the heritage mindset is tacitly critiqued. History and memory, specified in 'Little Gidding' as that of the English Civil War, remain like the ghost children in the rose-garden only a '*spectre* of a Rose': a long dead Rose.[198] Yet it is precisely its autonomy, with the 'pastness' of its past, that allows for history's forceful intervention into the present: history is neither adapted for the present crisis, nor is the present enslaved and encumbered by the past. In this way history *is* emphatically the present: '[h]istory is now and England', and paradoxically becomes timeless precisely by being the unredeemable past ('We cannot revive old factions | We cannot restore old policies | Or follow an antique drum').[199]

While spatialising history's relevance to the present, the hedgerow also connects the insular geography of England to a wider political landscape. The third section of 'Little Gidding' visualises a 'same hedgerow' where three conditions of one's 'love of a country' flourish: 'attachment', 'detachment', and the unflowering 'indifference'.[200] 'Detachment' is visualised as the 'dead nettle' that puns on death yet contains vibrant, stinging life. It is revealed as the desirable form of love towards one's country precisely for its conscious distance from the here and now which the speaker nonetheless recognises as one's 'own field of action'.[201] To identify 'detachment' as the heart of patriotic sentiments befits the unifying agenda that drives this final quartet: one

[198] Eliot, 'Little Gidding' III, l. 35.

[199] Eliot, 'Little Gidding' V, l. 24; III, ll. 36-8.

[200] Eliot, 'Little Gidding' III, ll. 7, 11.

[201] Eliot, 'Little Gidding' III, ll. 1-7.

that puts English nationalism into perspective and one that regards the war as only 'the rending pain of re-enactment' between nationalities.[202]

It is therefore important to observe that in the poem, the now and here of England is also 'nowhere', and it is also in the 'nowhere' of a London street that the poetic speaker encounters the compound ghost of two European men of letters: Yeats and Dante.[203] Being a war poem, 'Little Gidding' arises from the frustration the poet experiences of his ideal of a 'European mind': one that is crucial to the founding of the *Criterion* and the loss of which due to the rising threat of fascism directly caused the discontinuation of the journal in January 1939.[204] After the Second World War, in reviewing the achievement of the journal, Eliot envisions international fraternity within Europe: 'a bond which did not replace, but was perfectly compatible with, national loyalties, religious loyalties, and differences of political philosophy'.[205] Such an ideal finds accurate embodiment in the hedgerow: an image that is no less English, yet through whose foregrounding the closed space is superseded by the threshold space between nations that is open for contestation and potential reconciliation. The compartmentalised nations are to be 'united in the strife which divided them', which is Eliot's message regarding the war.[206]

[202] Eliot, 'Little Gidding' II, l. 85.

[203] Eliot, 'Little Gidding' II, l. 53.

[204] T. S. Eliot, 'Last Words', *Criterion*, 18 (1939), 271-75 (p. 274-75).

[205] T. S. Eliot, 'The Unity of European Culture', NDC, p. 118.

[206] Eliot, 'Little Gidding' III, l. 25.

4.7 Coda: 'Still and still moving'

Some final observations are needed to tease out the full significance of the 'Chinese jar' in relation to the foregrounding of geographical movement and cultural interstices in the quartets. In the final section of 'Burnt Norton', the centre is represented as 'a Chinese jar' that 'still | Moves perpetually in its stillness'.[207] The Chinese jar, as will be contended, ruptures from within the dichotomy between the civilised and the savage, and opens up a new dimension of interpretation related and also complementary to the (post)colonial reading of Eliot. To start with, the centring of the Chinese jar calls to mind the 'Anecdote of the Jar' (1919) by Wallace Stevens, where an anonymous jar as an embodiment of civilisation immediately 'took dominion' of the 'sloven wilderness' in Tennessee and in so doing subsumes the latter under its principle of order.[208] However, by qualifying the jar as emphatically 'Chinese', the contrast between order and chaos—and its colonial context implied by Tennessee and the slaughter of the Indians in the Cherokee village—is further complicated in Eliot's text, as the Chinese jar at the centre is in itself a colonial object. As Eliot later identified, the image of the Chinese jar comes from the International Exhibition of Chinese Art held in the Royal Academy of Arts at Burlington House, London.[209] The exhibition, which lasted from 28 November 1935 to 7 March 1936, concurred with the composition of 'Burnt Norton'.

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[207] Eliot, 'Burnt Norton' V, ll. 6-7.

[208] One of the first studies making such connections is F. O. Matthiessen, 'Eliot's Quartets', *The Kenyon Review*, 5 (1943), 161-78 (p. 168).

[209] T. S. Eliot to Sherrie Waites, 10 August 1962, quoted in TP1, p. 921.

Contemporaneous reports largely framed the exhibition as a collaborative, inter-governmental effort between the Chinese and British governments, with the exhibits an assortment of Chinese loans (pre-Forbidden City collections), loans from British collectors and the Royal collection, and the Japanese Imperial collection.[210] However, to merely understand the event within an 'internationalist' model is dangerously reductive, as the travels of the artefacts in display, both domestic and international, are in many ways attendant upon the British and Japanese imperialist activities in China. The 'Chinese jar' thus carries with it a deep geopolitical undertone.[211] The orderly installation that signifies civilisation in its every detail suppresses the savage colonial activities preceding the curation of objects. The large-scale exhibition is known to have been made possible by the archaeological digs, art-collection expeditions and pillage from the latter half of the nineteenth century up until the early twentieth century, carried out under the aegis of a series of treaties followed by the two Anglo-Chinese Opium wars.[212] According to Judith Tybil Green, China's defeat in the wars resulted in Britain's newly-acquired treaty rights and administrative presence in China, which facilitated Britain's large-scale collection of Chinese art beginning from the mid-nineteenth century.[213] The

[210] 'Cruiser's Precious Freight: The London Show, Masterpieces from the Forbidden City' [28 April 1935], *The Manchester Guardian*, 18 May 1935. For objects from the royal collection see 'Court and Personal', *The Manchester Guardian*, 4 October 1935.

[211] A recent study on the exhibition by Ilaria Scaglia, for instance, attempts to describe the exhibition as an event 'internationalist' in nature with due respect to national and racial differences. Ilaria Scaglia, 'The Aesthetics of Internationalism: Culture and Politics on Display at the 1935–1936 International Exhibition of Chinese Art', *Journal of World History*, 26 (2015), pp. 105–37.

[212] Jason Steuber, 'The Exhibition of Chinese Art at Burlington House, London, 1935-36', *Burlington Magazine*, 148 (2006), 528-36 (p. 530).

[213] Judith Tybil Green, *Britain's Chinese Collections, 1842-1943: Private Collecting and the Invention of Chinese Art* (Unpublished Doctoral Thesis, Sussex University, 2002), p. 46.

plunder of China's Old Summer Palace in 1860 and the suppression of the Boxer Rebellion in 1900 resulted in rounds of looting by British soldiers, with the art objects 'quickly brought into a legal framework through a process of auctions and prizes' after being shipped back to Britain.[214] Those objects that stayed in China, before boarding the cruiser for the British exhibition, had also just undergone a phase of domestic exile from Beijing to Shanghai for the Japanese imperialist occupation in North China.[215]

The 'Chinese jar' is therefore a cultural object displaced by imperialist activities and inflected by the particularities of global politics of its time. It is also, in contrast, represented in 'Burnt Norton' as a worldly embodiment of timelessness in a way similar to the rose-garden of the Norton estate distilled of its historicity. Its juxtaposition, or even parallel, with the garden occupying the same timeless centre therefore reveals yet another dimension of the poem's (and the quartets') devolving agenda. It is worthwhile to note how the colonial object of the Chinese jar is, first, uprooted and transplanted in the imperial centre, and then re-fashioned using the same vocabulary of antiquity and simplicity with which Englishness is constructed. A handbook on Chinese art, published at the same time with the exhibition, contains the following assessment on Chinese ceramic and pottery made by Bernard Rackham. Rackham was the curator at the Victoria and Albert Museum which had just acquired the great Eumorfopoulos collection of Chinese art and was to mount another Chinese art exhibition in early 1936. In his assessment, Rackham plays with the idea of an assumed 'simple', 'primitive' quality associated with

[214] Green, *Britain's Chinese Collections*, p. 47.

[215] 'Cruiser's Precious Freight', *The Manchester Guardian*, 18 May 1935.

Chinese art, and contrasts such assumptions with the level of accomplishment these art objects have exhibited:

> Nowhere can beauty of form be better seen than in the subtle loveliness of curve which, better than any other, the sensitive Chinese potter had the skill to translate into visible and tangible form. […] It is curious to reflect that the supremacy in their art which few would deny to the potters of China was reached by them at a late stage in the history of civilization. The wares made in China before the time of the Christian era belong to the category of what is termed 'primitive', and they certainly do not show, but such simple forms as are exhibited by the unglazed ash-grey wares of the Chou dynasty are dignified and pure …[216]

And

> A further wide expansion of craftsmanship is shown by the manifold variety of wares of the Sung period. […] The craftsmen of this age must have been encompassed by beauty as by the air they breathed. […] They may have been half savages, as we reckon things in these materialistic days […]. But spiritually they were great. Their work remains to prove it.[217]

Arguably, such an appreciation of Chinese art, aestheticising its naive purity of 'form' and necessarily ascribing its virtue to its timeless attributes, belongs to a primitive age that is in itself a continuation of, or similar to, the discourse on 'Englishness' widely circulated during the first half of the twentieth century. In a 1903 contribution to *Burlington Magazine* on 'Early Staffordshire Wares', R. L. Hobson concludes the study with the following remarks: '[t]here is something genuinely fascinating in their naive simplicity

[216] Bernard Rackham, 'Ceramics', *Chinese Art: An Introductory Handbook to Painting, Sculpture, Ceramics, Textiles, Bronzes and Minor Arts,* by Roger Fry et al. (London: B. T. Batsford, 1935), 28-38 (p. 29).

[217] Rackham, 'Ceramics', *Chinese Art*, p. 31.

and their entire lack of all that is artificial or extraneous. […] These early pots are like the potters who made them and their friends who used them, English to the back-bone'.[218] Similarly, in Virginia Woolf's final novel *Between the Acts* (1941), a vessel symbolising the timeless, primordial past stands at the centre of the dining room of an English country house:

> The room was empty. Empty, empty, empty; silent, silent, silent. The room was a shell, singing of what was before time was; a vase stood in the heart of the house, alabaster, smooth, cold, holding the still, distilled essence of emptiness, silence.[219]

Notice how pottery's pristine form, along with its 'silence' and 'stillness', is recapitulated in both Hobson and Woolf's texts on a certain quintessential 'Englishness'. A similar strategy is detected in the description of the Chinese jar in 'Burnt Norton': 'Words, after speech, reach | Into the silence. Only by the form, the pattern, | Can words or music reach | The stillness, as a Chinese jar still | Moves perpetually in its stillness'.[220] In *Designing Modern Britain,* Cheryl Buckley usefully examines the construction of an English identity through discourses surrounding artefacts. She observes that the interest British art critics (including R. L. Hobson cited above) developed in ceramics from other cultures is necessarily part of the more primary concern to identify English identity in traditional, pre-industrial values embodied by ancient pottery: early Persian, Egyptian, Spanish, Peruvian, Chinese and Japanese wares were all celebrated for their shared 'naivety, simplicity and robustness in

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[218] R. L. Hobson, 'Early Staffordshire Wares Illustrated by Pieces in the British Museum. Article I', *The Burlington Magazine for Connoisseurs*, 2 (1903), 64-69 (p. 69).

[219] Virginia Woolf, *Between the Acts* (London: Penguin, 2000), p. 44.

[220] Eliot, 'Burnt Norton' V, ll. 3-7.

terms of form, colour and decoration'.[221] The timeless 'Chinese jar' in its stillness and silence, occupying the same imperial centre with the rose-garden, is in this sense also susceptible to be 'silenced' and rendered subservient to the ethnographic gaze of Chinese art connoisseurs. In other words, with the Chinese jar and its likes described using the same stock images for Englishness, these cultural objects from a colonised history risk being made complicit with the same colonial scheme that had propelled their transcontinental travel in the first place.

This said, it is remarkable how the 'Chinese jar' in 'Burnt Norton' joins the other devolving forces of the quartets in breaking from within the paternalist discourse of the colonial centre. The 'still point of the turning world', embodied by the 'bedded axle-tree' as well as the Chinese jar, is also defined by its movement.[222] The paradoxical co-presence of stillness and movement at the centre is also rehearsed towards the end of 'East Coker', which as Matthew Hart argues complicates the supposed hierarchy between 'European' and 'imperial' texts with its 'metaphysical identification between English ancestry and American birth':[223]

> Old men ought to be explorers
> Here or there does not matter
> We must be still and still moving
> Into another intensity
> For a further union, a deeper communion
> Through the dark cold and the empty desolation,
> The wave cry, the wind cry, the vast waters

[221] Cheryl Buckley, *Designing Modern Britain* (London: Reaktion Books, 2007), p. 62.

[222] Eliot, 'Burnt Norton' II, ll. 2.

[223] Matthew Hart, *Nations of Nothing but Poetry: Modernism, Transnationalism, and Synthetic Vernacular Writing* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), p. 113.

Of the petrel and the porpoise. In my end is my beginning.[224]

With the same set of vocabulary, the ending of 'East Coker' restores the ostensibly timeless Chinese jar—collected and curated, displaced and displayed as the end result of imperial expeditions—to its original material history and colonial spatial ordering. The levelling of 'here' and 'there' enacts a possible 'deeper communion' of the supposed centre and its margins. More importantly, to place the American frontiersmanship and the 'Chinese jar' in the centre, both being the result and embodiment of geographical movement, is in itself a powerful gesture which rewrites the centre from its margins. In other words, the English identity enacted in *Four Quartets* is not entirely about the rose-garden and the 'spectre of a Rose' *per se*. Rather, it is about how the centre they represent is attendant upon colonial movements. The centre is thus both rooted and a hub of movement, a point of cultural arrivals and departures that never ceases to be inflected and (re-)inscribed by forces and objects that intervene from the margins: a Chinese jar, a metic, a 'Stranger' (Étranger).

[224] Eliot, 'East Coker' V, ll. 31-38.

EPILOGUE

In examining T. S. Eliot's poetic landscape in relation to rurality and national politics, the thesis reveals that in Eliot's case, the formation of national (or more broadly, any place-based identity) is thoroughly inflected by modernism's transnational sensibility. The idea of home in Eliot's version of modernism is shown not to be a monolithic given, but rather an open space with negotiable boundaries or flexible locations. The various instances of homecoming in Eliot's post-conversion works attest to different aspects of this transatlantic openness. As the second and the final chapters reveal, the poetic representations of inheritance, roots, or cultural landscapes emblematic of the imperial 'home' are all invariably filtered through the persona of a 'stranger' or 'metic', a resident alien inhabiting the interstices between cultures and denouncing essentialised national identities. Roots and inheritance in this light are emancipated from geographical confinements and remain retrievable from a distance, and are thus compatible with cosmopolitan projects. The cultural authority of roots, based on tradition and continuity, is in Eliot's works dismantled and dispersed into other geographical entities. In the specific geopolitical context of the British Empire, this ultimately speaks to the undoing of England's national image founded upon a rural myth that sustains the power relations of colonialism. The third chapter, being the only part in this thesis that is contained primarily within the national border, disentangles spatial and racial rootedness from nationalistic accusations. It evinces a way of writing roots and home that is fundamentally anti-cultural and destablising. The chapter connects its two flanking chapters in that it develops the preceding chapter's discussions

on Eliot's rooted ruralism by identifying in it a regionalist, devolutionary agenda, and in so doing prepares for the final chapter's analysis on the supra-national manifestations of a devolutionary and decentred concept of (the imperial) home.

As mentioned in the Introduction, the thesis is driven by the desire to revisit modernism's imbricated relationship, if not complicity, with reactionary politics. Critical endeavours on this front largely fall into two camps according to their methods. One largely takes modernism as the starting point and sets out to unravel the 'reactionary' dimensions inherent in modernism's predominant discourse of novelty. Michael North in a recent reflection on the history of newness, for instance, points out that novelty not only actually means retrieving and returning to the past, but more importantly also invents a totality 'more perfect than anything to be found in any age'.[1] North then cites Alain Badiou's claim concerning Wagner, whose version of the new man is rooted 'in mythic totalities such as race, nation, earth, blood and soil'.[2] Another approach takes the 'reactionary' as a problematic and works its way back to its tacit associations with modernism. An example is found in Terry Eagleton's assessment of the cosmopolitan modernism in relation to writers of the radical Right. Eagleton calls attention to the significant paradox that the cosmopolitan perspectives were opened up 'in a stiflingly claustrophobic England' by exiles and émigrés including James, Yeats, Joyce, Lawrence, Eliot and Pound, all

[1] Michael North, *Novelty: A History of the New* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2013), p. 154.

[2] Ibid.

associated with certain right-wing tendencies.[3] Eagleton ultimately holds deracination responsible for all the identifiable aspects of modernism: the ambition to rectify social ills, the creative verve and avant-gardism, alongside the search for certainty, authority and where possible, autocracy. For Eagleton, the right-wing politics which emerge as these writers' response to historical crisis 'is the price we have to pay for such art, if we should choose to do so'.[4]

The thesis adopts the second approach, which Eagleton's criticism cited above exemplifies. It looks closely at the numerous shades of what is normally construed as 'reactionary' especially where the land and local soil is concerned, and hopes to have demonstrated that grains of resistance are still meted out by 'reactionary' imagery and representations. The project is partly inspired by Charles Ferrall, who suggests that a certain revolutionary potential is inherent to a group of modernist writers generally considered 'reactionary', Eliot included. According to Ferrall, they are paradoxically 'drawn to various kinds of revolutionary politics' despite being suspicious of progressive values such as 'liberalism' and 'democracy'.[5] The blurry boundary between what is usually termed as reactionary and progressive is also visible in Eliot's own assessment of T. E. Hulme in 1924, which describes Hulme as 'classical, reactionary, and revolutionary' all at once.[6] The contribution of the present critical exercise is not to classify the clearly 'reactionary' and retrogressive but to observe the dynamics of their coexistence, so that a wider range of resistant

[3] Terry Eagleton, *Figures of Dissent: Critical Essays on Fish, Spivak, Zizek and Others* (London: Verso, 2003), p. 86.

[4] Eagleton, *Figures of Dissent*, p. 86.

[5] Charles Ferrall, *Modernism Writing and Reactionary Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 13.

[6] T. S. Eliot, 'A Commentary', *Criterion*, 2 (1924), 231-35 (p. 231).

strategies and activities can be identified and appraised from a historical distance. In other words, it is to rescue modernist literature from 'the ideological wallpaper' into which it is considered to have merged—to borrow Alan Sinfield's diction—and to excavate ideas which may have originally had subversive dimensions.[7]

That said, this study's methodology has been guided by an awareness that a re-evaluation of Eliot's reactionary aspects should not evolve into their 'whitewash', especially with the nightmares of the last century considered. It is, of course, not part of the project's agenda to contend that a rurality-based racist literary discourse in the background to Eliot's work does not exist. Indeed, the thesis recognises the full potency and danger of such discourse to such an extent that it forms the project's grounding controversy. As I have shown, however, deracination and displacement shape Eliot's approach to place-based identities where roots, regions and nations are concerned. At the same time, this thesis takes into account Jahan Ramazani's reminder that transnationalism is not inherently emancipatory any more than nationalism is always reactionary.[8] As I have argued, the identification of various devolutionary efforts, both within and beyond England's national borders, never rules out the existence of a Eurocentrism that equally exists in Eliot's later poetics and politics. Recognising their coexistence is illuminating on multiple fronts. Ultimately, this thesis has shown that in Eliot's case, modernism is still to a

[7] Alan Sinfield, 'Reinventing Modernism', *Literature, Politics and Culture in Postwar Britain* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 182-203 (p. 199).

[8] Jahan Ramazani, 'A Transnational Poetics', *American Literary History,* 18.2 (2006), 332-59 (p. 354).

large extent thinking *through* centres, which facilitates rather than precludes cosmopolitan practices.

This brings us full circle to the place with which the thesis began: the 'Local not Global' café in Beeston. Over time, after having taken many friends there from different countries, I have perceived the growth of a certain affinity between myself and the place. Last month, when the owner saw me walk in for the third time within a week, she greeted me with a lighthearted comment: 'you've certainly taken the place as your *own*'. The place is certainly not my 'own': in fact, my relation to it is precisely defined by my remarkable cultural distance from it. When a friend asked why I am fond of the place, I found myself immediately resorting to its authenticity (and hence its difference from my supposed cultural identity): it is, I said, 'one of the few places around where everything is so *genuinely* British and genuinely tasty at the same time'. However, I, along with other foreign regulars at table and imported objects on the shelf, could also be said to have 'owned' the local site through the spacetime that we have jointly created and our participation in each other's identity-building. Local identity and authenticity play no small part in the process: it is as if transcontinental dialogues are occasioned by a sense of authenticity that starts with a degree of essentialisation, but then evolves into something of an identity that is renewed and transformed by close cultural contact. Roots, locality, and local allegiances are therefore all the more instrumental in a transnational context: it so happens that by the end of my stay here, my adopted neighbourhood has disclosed to me the same message as has my research on Eliot.

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