

'England, my England': Lawrence, War and Nation

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The constituent elements of D. H. Lawrence's short story 'England, My England' may be related both to Edwardian preoccupations with Englishness and to the conditions of the text's production, revision and reproduction. The interpretation which follows seeks to focus upon a number of interrelated issues thrown up by a theorised reading: first, contested definitions of Englishness current at the time of the text's initial production; secondly, the specific context of the tale in the cultural situation, particularly relating to the folk music revival; thirdly, the history of textual rewriting and revision as evidence of Lawrence's predicament as a cultural producer; and finally, the insertion of this text into new European artistic projects as part of the movement away from realism. As a starting point, the two interdependent versions of the story might fruitfully be interrogated through a formulation of T. W. Adorno's:

Social forces of production and social relations of production return in the very form of the work, divested of their facticity, because artistic labour is also social labour; works of art are also the products of social labour.¹

The contested configurations of Englishness which predominate in the period prior to the Great War possess deep, if fractured, ideological resonances which 'England, My England' in both of its textual embodiments circles around. A reading of this tale may be facilitated by reference to Homi Bhabha's conception of 'nationness as a form of social and textual affiliation'.² 'England, My England' amply bears out, in its textual ramifications,

Bhabha's contention that the act of writing the nation works to produce 'a continual slippage of categories, like sexuality, class affiliation, territorial paranoia, or cultural difference'.³ Lawrence's story provides us with a form of knowledge, a mode of getting to grips with English cultural identities at the time of the Great War; indeed this symptomatic text aptly exemplifies Adorno's suggestion that works of art are 'unconsciously the historiography of their own epoch', and that 'history is not the least form of knowledge they mediate'.⁴

In January 1915 the Lawrences moved into a cottage in Sussex, and Lawrence informed his old Eastwood friend Willie Hopkin:

It is the Meynells' place. You know Alice Meynell, Catholic poetess rescuer of Francis Thompson. The father took a big old farm house at Greatham, then proceeded to give each of his children a cottage. Now Viola lends us hers.⁵

Whilst living in the cottage Lawrence proceeded to compose a story, originally intended for the *Strand* magazine, drawing in its detail upon life at Greatham, the estate cottages of the Meynell family, and the domestic life of Madeline, one of the Meynell daughters, and her husband, Perceval Lucas. Perceval had been a keen gardener at Rackham Cottage, and it was in the garden that Sylvia, the eldest daughter, fell on a sickle left by a visitor in the summer of 1913 and injured her leg. Perceval Lucas enlisted in September 1914, and died of wounds in France in July 1916, at which point Lawrence wished the story 'at the bottom of the sea'.⁶ The original version of 'England, My England' had appeared in the *English Review* in October 1915, and was subsequently published in a slightly revised form in the American magazine *Metropolitan* in April 1917. When Lawrence, now actively seeking an American audience, began to prepare a collection of short stories for publication in 1920, he altered 'England, My England' radically, expanding it to double the length and changing the ending. The first edition of *England, My England and Other Stories* was published in New York by Thomas Seltzer in October 1922, and in England by Martin Secker in January 1924.⁷

In the 1921 version both Evelyn Daughtry (now Egbert) and Winifred exemplify qualities of Englishness which the tale problematises. Egbert loves the ancient 'savage England' (5) he discovers in the gorse common below the South Downs, but Winifred also emerges, the narrator remarks, 'out of the old England, ruddy, strong, with a certain crude, passionate quiescence and a hawthorn robustness' (6). Her dark colouring is schematically contrasted with Egbert's blond slimness, 'like an English archer' (6). The cottage in fact belongs to Winifred, given to her by her northern self-made father, Godfrey Marshall, and whilst Egbert loves to work in the garden, his labours are characteristically slovenly and haphazard:

If he terraced the garden, he held up the earth with a couple of log narrow planks that soon began to bend with the pressure from behind, and would not need many years to rot through and break and let the soil slither all down again in a heap towards the stream-bed. (9)

The couple are held in a passion which is fuelled by the silent house, redolent with the 'hot blood-desire of bygone yeomen' (8), to such an extent that they reject modernity and begin to feel 'they did not belong to the London world any more' (8). Egbert is protected from the 'real world' of his father-in-law by a small private income, and it is his carelessness in leaving the sickle unattended that triggers the central event, the leg-injury to his eldest daughter, Joyce, who is transformed from a 'quicksilver little thing' (17) into a cripple, 'with iron supports to her leg, and a little crutch' (25). The accident polarises relations between the couple, leading Winifred to cultivate her role as *Mater Dolorata* ('To the man she was closed as a tomb' (23)), and Egbert to revert alone to a desire 'for old gods, old, lost passions' from 'long days before the Romans' (pp. 24–25). It is as a result of this marital tension that Egbert, though his 'whole instinct was ... against war', and he possesses 'no conception of Imperial England and Rule Britannia' (27), enlists in the artillery and is killed at the Front.

'England, My England', Lawrence claimed, was 'the story of most men and women who are married today – of most men at the war, and wives at home'.⁸ Its thesis was that 'man must find a new expression, give a new value to life, or his women will reject him, and he must die',⁹ and in its expanded exploration of this theme the tale may be read not only as a satire upon the artistic Meynell clan but also as a lesson for the Georgians. Lawrence himself had been anthologised in Edward Marsh's *Georgian Poetry 1911–12* anthology, and in a rhapsodic review of the volume in *Rhythm* for March 1913 he hailed the new movement's 'joy of natural things', and what he termed 'exultation after fear, the exultation in the vast freedom'.¹⁰ However, he was soon to become critical of Gibson, Abercrombie and others, his own art deepened and made more complex through the composition of 'The Sisters', embitterment over the outbreak of hostilities, and the banning of *The Rainbow*: 'The war meant the end of Georgian optimism, both for English culture as a whole and for Lawrence in particular'.¹¹ Thus whilst the 1915 version simply describes Evelyn as 'refined and tending towards dilettantism' (221), the 1921 revision expands its portrait of Egbert as a representative of a certain strand of English culture:

He had no profession: he earned nothing. But he talked of literature and music, he had a passion for old folk-music, collecting folk-songs and folk-dances, studying the Morris-dance and the old customs. Of course in time he would make money in these ways. (7)

Crockham is a place reserved, set apart from the ‘spear of modern invention’ (8), an arena for the cultivation of ‘the old enduring things of the by-gone England’ (9) epitomised specifically by ‘the old music and dances and customs of old England’ which are set against ‘the spirit of the world of business’ (10) embodied in Godfrey Marshall. Furthermore, the narrator satirically adds, ‘Egbert had plenty of friends, of the same ineffectual sort as himself, tampering with the arts, literature, painting, sculpture, music’ (10). With the birth of the daughters, Winifred’s passion and allegiance shift subtly away from her husband:

She began to resent her own passion for Egbert – just a little she began to despise it. For after all there he was, he was charming, he was lovable, he was terribly desirable. But – but – oh the awful looming cloud of that *but!* – He did not stand firm in the landscape of her life like a tower of strength, like a great pillar of significance. (12)

Thus her dependence on her father begins to increase the distance between the couple:

[Egbert] was of a fine passionate temper, and of a rarer steel than she. He knew it, and she knew it. Hence she was only the more baffled and mad-dened, poor thing. He, the higher, the finer, in his way the stronger, played with his garden and his old folk-songs and Morris-dances, just played, and let her support the pillars of the future on her own heart. (13)

In this milieu it is the ‘robust, sap-like faith’ of the father-in-law which keeps things going: ‘Bit by bit every establishment collapses, unless it is renewed or restored by living hands’, the narrator remarks (15) – a paradoxical Lawrentian endorsement of the business ethic and of the Marshalls’ Catholicism.

The representation of Evelyn/Egbert, whilst owing something to the biography of Perceval Lucas, takes its substance from the emergent invented tradition of rural England which developed from the late-nineteenth century as a response to urban crisis and the debate surrounding supposed physical and racial degeneration. This epistemic shift produced a cultural response in music, painting, literature and architecture up to and beyond the Great War, and its core signifier was that of an idealised ‘south country’ of the imagination.¹² This generally idyllic landscape was to function as a mirror-image of bourgeois anxieties about urban squalor, over-population, social-Darwinist eugenics and a premonitory sense of imperial decline, as John Fordham indicates in his article. It is thus no accident that in the first version of ‘England, My England’ Evelyn is represented as coming from ‘an old south-of-England family’ (221), nor that in its expanded form the tale lays stress upon Egbert’s involvement with the folk-song revival. The return to the countryside envisaged politically by the Liberal Party campaign to reform land-ownership, or the Morrisian ILP rural programme, which proposed the development of

smallholdings and a minimum wage for farm-labourers, was reinflected culturally by the folk-song revival in which Egbert participates. The English musical renaissance sought by Cecil Sharp and his co-workers in the field was based upon a number of mutually supportive tenets: first, a rejection of the dominant European musical tradition; secondly, the rediscovery of Elizabethan music (signalled for instance by the publication of virginal pieces and madrigal collections, and by the establishment of Arnold Dolmetsch's musical workshop at Haslemere in the heart of the 'south country'); and thirdly, the large-scale project centred upon the English Folk Dance and Song Society and its collectors. Thus Egbert is imagined taking part, as Perceval Lucas did in fact, alongside Sharp, Vaughan Williams, Maud Karpeles, Percy Grainger, George Butterworth *et al* in a folk revival conceived as rooted in the soil:

The sunlight blazed down upon the earth, there was a vividness of flamy vegetation, of fierce seclusion amid the savage peace of the commons. Strange how the savage England lingers in patches: as here, amid these shaggy gorse commons, and marshy, snake-infested places near the foot of the south downs. The spirit of place lingering on primeval, as when the Saxons came, so long ago. (5)

Such writing may be read off against Homi Bhabha's contention that landscape becomes 'the inscape of national identity', generated by an inwardness which arrests or fragments the kind of linear progressive modernity represented by Godfrey Marshall. The inflections of progress, business and the new are placed in a contradictory relation to the evocation of an atavistic, folk-oriented past in ways which are illuminated by Bhabha's remark that the 'language of culture and community is poised on the fissures of the present becoming the rhetorical figures of a national past'. Representations of the nation's modern territoriality which led to the outbreak of war are thus 'turned into the archaic, atavistic temporality of Traditionalism'.¹³ During 1911 a series of articles appeared in *New Age*, a journal well-known to Lawrence, which intervened in, and symptomatically articulated, this process. In them the political writer J. M. Kennedy argued:

it is the territorial influence of the landowners and 'lords of the manor' which has been effectual in preserving for so long the feudal spirit in England.

Kennedy's aim, it has been suggested, was to 'circumvent the present capitalist plutocracy by reviving traditional values of craftsmanship and ... prolonging established rural communities in their inherited social organisation by decentralising power to parish and manor-house'.¹⁴ The implications of this kind of writing were taken up politically in such projects as Lord Winchelsea's 'classless' National Agricultural Union, and culturally in the evocation of the 'south country' in the prose of W. H. Hudson, Edward

Thomas, George Sturt and others, and in the poetry selected by Arthur Quiller-Couch for his widely-read Oxford anthology first published in 1900, and by Edward Marsh for the Georgian poetry collections. Egbert's cultivation of landscape and folk-song and dance may be inserted into this resonant ideological formation. Cecil Sharp, in his key work, *English Folk Song* (1907), held that folk-song was 'a communal and racial product, the expression, in musical idiom, of aims and ideals that are primarily national in character'.¹⁵ It is Egbert's affiliation to this communal (and racial) movement which is then problematised by the onset of the war. As Georgina Boyes has observed in her history of the folk revival:

For the cultural strand which defined metropolitanism as 'un-English' and produced the 'flight to the rural', the Revival offered additional expressive forms – a music that was of the countryside, a source to inspire the settings for Georgian poetry; songs and dances which could aptly be performed in rooms decorated with Arts and Crafts products, or against a backdrop of vernacular architecture.¹⁶

In the light of the sexual politics of 'England, My England', and the tension which arises between Egbert and Winifred following the accident and his withdrawal to the land, it is pertinent to recall the contested status of women in the folk revival: there was much debate in the EFDS on this issue, particularly centring upon the allegedly all-male form of Morris-dancing. Intriguingly for the reader of 'England, My England', it was in fact Perceval Lucas who, early in 1910, proposed to Sharp the formation of an all-male demonstration 'side' of Morris dancers.¹⁷ Dave Harker has aptly characterised Sharp's ideological position as 'a bizarre mixture of radical and reactionary elements', arguing that folk-song collectors 'performed a significant ideological role in relation to the cultural needs of capital, at the heart of the British Empire'.¹⁸ This serves to expose the bad faith of Egbert's position as a 'pure-blooded Englishman, perfect in his race', possessing 'no conception of Imperial England' (27), a bad faith nicely exposed in Homi Bhabha's observation that

the narrative and psychological force that nationness brings to bear on cultural production and political projection is the effect of the ambivalence of the 'nation' as a narrative strategy.¹⁹

Lawrence's characterisation in 'England, My England' expresses this ambivalence in its representation of varieties of Englishness: Egbert's essentially pre-Christian, fair-haired 'pagan' type, Winifred's darker 'hawthorn robustness' (6) founded in Catholicism and maternity, and Godfrey's 'Christmassy' fighting spirit and energy (7). In the dichotomies of the narrative the Marshalls are imaged as holly trees to Egbert's rose, which Winifred worships 'as a

higher being' (8). There is thus a complicated nexus of cultural affiliations which functions as the signifier of 'Englishness' here, but it is Egbert's cult of folk-art which haunts the tale, his taste for the archaic emerging, to adopt Bhabha's terms, 'in the midst of margins of modernity as a result of some psychic ambivalence'.²⁰ The territorial imperative of modern nationhood is marked with traces of a turn to folklore here in ways which were curiously borne out, some years after the publication of *England, My England and other Stories*, in Lawrence's relationship with Rolf Gardiner. Gardiner presented himself as an iconoclastic avatar of the folk revival whose break with Sharp enabled him to set up his dance-group the English Travelling Morrice, which was constituted as a type of masculine brotherhood. Gardiner's emphasis upon the racial qualities of the folk-project took him away from his beginnings in a brand of Guild Socialism of the kind espoused by Orage's *New Age* towards a more right-wing orientation. Revitalising customary performance would, in his programme, revive 'organic' communities under an ethos of leadership, and this conceptualisation led to his involvement with both English Mistery, an anti-democratic back-to-the land cadre, and English Array, a rural project centred upon leadership philosophies. Gardiner's attempt to establish an ecologically-based farming estate at Gore Farm in Dorset in the late-1920s, with service camps and a calendar of festivals and celebrations, considerably interested Lawrence, and Gardiner even tried to enlist the ailing novelist into a sword-dance team.²¹

Evelyn/Egbert's cult of the garden and the folk invites further interrogation in relation to the fragmented history of the text's production. The integrated labour which characterises the relation of the early generations of Brangwens with the land, or even Will and Anna's participation in the corn-harvest, is here reduced to a dilettantism which gives place to that alienation of labour whose final upshot is the war. The hero's insouciant cultivation of the wild garden, followed by his contradictory immersion in the war, may be read off against Lawrence's sense of his predicament as an artist which is so fully recorded in the letters. The function of art as commodity, openly espoused in Lawrence's quest for an American public, is set against the concept of art as pure signification which the garden emblematises. The first version begins significantly with a flashback from the Western Front:

The dream was still stronger than the reality. In the dream he was at home on a hot summer afternoon, working on the edge of the common, across the little stream at the bottom of the garden, carrying the garden path in continuation on to the common. He had cut the rough turf and the bracken, and left the grey, dryish soil bare. (219)

As the opposition between dream and reality implies, the garden marks a place of retreat from the market, represented by Godfrey Marshall, to a realm of folk-art and play characterised by its functionless function. The

headly conjunction of art and folklore is nurtured in a Morrisian 'ancient, changeless, eternal hollow of flowers and sunshine and the sloping-roofed house', a hollow which 'had no context, no relation with the world' (219). As Anne Fernihough's incisive analysis reminds us, a number of Lawrence's key texts reveal traces of the Ruskinian cult of Gothic, an arts-and-crafts aesthetic which offered 'a valuable undercutting of a dangerously homogenizing instrumentalism, an antidote to the wrenching of the multifarious human spirit into the standardised shapes of the machine'.²² The demise of Evelyn/Egbert shadows the split in Lawrence's own career as a cultural producer torn between the fields of popular and restricted art. The tale, as a piece of cultural merchandise, exists as both commodity and symbolic object. The vicissitudes of competition which determine and mark out the dominated field of cultural production lead, on a global scale, inexorably to the Great War. Egbert's self-annihilation enacts something of his creator's sense of alienation as the pressures of contending literary 'fields' strip away any illusion of freedom and creativity. The strange mutations within Egbert upon joining up signify his embodiment as the radically decentered subject of modernist aesthetics, one who registers that isolation of the artist recorded in such phrases in the first version as 'cold of all interest, intact in his isolation' (228) which leads to a state of disembodiment which finds him 'looking at his own body', 'detached from his wounds and his body' (230). In *No-Man's-Land* Evelyn/Egbert hovers indecisively between life and death in a twilight zone which replicates the characteristics of the aesthetic work of which he is part. The vaunted autonomy of art and the free-standing qualities of the aesthetic realm emblematised by the garden are replaced by the mass servitude, mechanical destruction and blasted landscape of the Western Front. The 1915 version ends melodramatically:

The German cut and mutilated the face of the dead man as if he must obliterate it. He slashed it across, as if it must not be a face any more; it must be removed. For he could not bear the clear, abstract look of the other's face, its almost ghoulish, slight smile, faint but so terrible in its suggestion that the German was mad, and ran up the road when he found himself alone. (232)

The mutilation of Egbert's face here perhaps mirrors that textual self-mutilation to which Lawrence was so often compelled by the apparatus of the literary field embodied in circulating libraries, editors, publishers, critics and censors.²³

Lawrence's own class-formation placed him quite outside the production of the south-country idyll which Egbert and the folk revival embodied. Indeed the protagonist's dependence upon a pastoral identity grounded in literature and folk-music exerts no purchase on the world of modernity represented by his father-in-law. The invented tradition of the old England is extinguished in the service of a cause which Egbert does not actively espouse.

The aggressive priorities of capital are not to be gainsaid by the retreat to the rural which typified Georgianism, in ways notably exemplified by the Dymock project. Indeed, Egbert's action in joining up might usefully be contextualised by reference to the cognate position adopted by Edward Thomas, another avatar of the folk-song revival. In his 1914 essay, 'This England', Thomas recalled the motivation behind his decision to enlist:

it seemed to me that either I had never loved England, or I had loved it foolishly, aesthetically, like a slave, not having realised that it was not mine unless I were willing and prepared to die rather than leave it as Belgian women and old men and children had left their country.²⁴

Stan Smith's commentary on Thomas's dilemma, with its categorisation of the 'superfluous man', speaks directly to the situation dramatised in Lawrence's text:

Tragically, the war became, for a generation of superfluous men, the supreme experience that could vindicate their absurd and redundant existences. It represented a spiritual commonwealth which offered shelter from the anomie of history. The war became more than a mere defence of something they already had. It became, instead, the process by which they could acquire that from which they had always been excluded. It seemed to offer a liberation from the dead shell of an alienated order which, in the pre-war world, had cancelled out or confiscated those momentary intuitions of an older and more authentic way of life, where significance was real and immediately apprehended.²⁵

In 'England, My England', as Brooker and Widdowson remark, the values of this traditional definition of Englishness are brutally exposed as a cultural fiction:

Lawrence's story confirms how aestheticism, and an aloof Romanticising, would inevitably be conscripted into general ideology and the national war effort. True-born Englishness, having entered *via* aestheticism a phase of unconnected negation, was in the event impotent to refuse or oppose the war.²⁶

The underlying implications are made manifest in the injury to the little girl's leg when she stumbles over the sickle left lying in the garden by her father:

"How are you, Joyce darling?" [Godfrey] said to the child. Does your knee hurt you? Does it hurt you, dear?"

"It does sometimes." – The child was shy of him, cold towards him.

"Well dear, I'm sorry for that. I hope you try and bear it, and not trouble mother too much."

There was no answer. He looked at the knee. It was red and stiff. (21)

Joanna Bourke has noted how, in the period leading up to the Great War, 'disabled children were morally suspect: their sufferings were the "wages of sin"', which is how Winifred interprets her daughter's injury. By contrast, Bourke observes, 'the wartime mutilated were regarded as the responsibility of the nation'.²⁷ The 'dismemberment of the male' which Bourke pertinently traces went hand-in-hand with a perceived 'feminisation' of post-war society and consequent redefinition of Englishness which the characterisation of Winifred gestures towards.²⁸ The textual change from the 'sharp old iron' (222) of the first version to the sickle of the final version may constitute a subliminal memory of the slaughter of the Somme offensive of 1916:

Attackers moved forward usually without seeking cover and were mowed down in rows, with the mechanical efficiency of a scythe, like so many blades of grass.²⁹

Indeed, the injury to Joyce marks the precarious emergence on Egbert's part, from the Imaginary into the Symbolic. Lawrence's adoption of a new prose style in the death scenes signals an epistemic break, a rupture between the pastoral ideal and the forces of modernity. The ending of the tale in *No-Man's-Land* is rendered in a radically defamiliarised kind of prose through the adoption of a markedly different style from the ironic realism of the body of the text, a stylistic disjunction which is a notable feature of both versions. Evelyn Cobley has suggested that the classic autobiographical memoirs of the Great War, by Graves, Sassoon, Blunden et al, in concentrating on 'publicly verifiable factual information', exclude 'all those experiences which might have described the war as ... a hysterical or mythopoeic event'. As a result, 'no matter how many statistics about the high number of neurasthenic cases the war writers cite, their own relationship to the nightmare of war is consistently marked by emotional restraint and reasoned explanation'. Thus, such writers 'protested against the horrors of war while remaining indebted to the ideological forces underlying this crisis of civilisation'.³⁰ It is these ideological forces which the non-combatant Lawrence exposes in the closure of his war story. The distinctively rhythmical, incantatory and metaphoric prose of the final pages relates 'England, My England' unequivocally to the post-realist effects of contemporary European Expressionism, with its emphasis upon the chaos and unknowability of reality and the isolation and destructiveness of human experience. The Oedipal conflicts which dominate Expressionist art and literature underlie Egbert's fraught relations with his father-in-law, a figure explicitly associated with the Old Testament God.³¹ Eric Leed has suggested that, in Great War literature, 'in so far as the combatant identifies with the mechanisms of war, he is granted autonomy from his parental origins':

The war then provides a set of surrogate progenitors, a maternal womb, and a patriarch operating through industrial processes that ‘hammer, cast, and temper’ an entire generation.³²

Lawrence’s tale aptly corroborates Peter Nicholls’s contention that Expressionism is characterised by the theme of ‘death as the ultimate horizon of the aesthetic’.³³ The haunted landscape of the closing scene, with the ‘pure mechanical action at the guns’ which leaves ‘the soul unburdened, brooding in dark nakedness’, is quintessentially Expressionistic in its rendition of ‘soul states and the violent emotions welling up from the innermost recesses of the subconscious’³⁴ – a technique which, as John Fordham indicates, was to be further developed by Lawrence’s successors. In the first version Lawrence writes:

All was so intensely, intolerably peaceful that he seemed to be immortalised. The utter suspension of the moment made it eternal. At the corner of the high-road, where a little country road joined on, there was a wayside crucifix knocked slanting. So it slanted in all eternity. Looking out across the wintry fields and dark woods, he felt that everything was thus for ever; this was finality. There appeared a tiny group of cavalry, three horsemen, far off, very small, on the crest of a field. They were our own men. So it is for ever. The little group disappeared. The air was always the same – a keen frost immovable for ever. (227)

In the second version the horsemen are again associated with the crucifix:

Nothing could be seen but the road, and a crucifix knocked slanting and the dark, autumnal fields and woods. There appeared three horsemen on a little eminence, very small, on the crest of a ploughed field. (31)

Egbert’s dying moments take place in ‘thick darkness of blood’, an ‘agony of dissolution’ which returns the soul to ‘the black sea of death’:

To break the core and the unit of life, and to lapse out on the great darkness. Only that. To break the clue, and mingle and commingle with the one darkness, without afterwards or forwards. Let the black sea of death itself solve the problem of futurity. Let the will of man break and give up.

What was that? A light! A terrible light! Was it figures? Was it legs of a horse colossal – colossal above him: huge, huge? (33)

The extremity of war and the mutilation of the body produce a referential instability which verbally acts out the inexpressibility of this limit-situation. Elaine Scarry has observed how the soldier in battle is required to “unmake” himself, deconstruct himself, empty himself of civil content “for his country”.³⁵ The effects in these closing moments resemble what Nicholls

identifies as Kokoschka's 'association of the visionary with a fantasy of uterine return'.³⁶ 'Let the psychoanalysts talk about father complex. It is just a word invented', the narrator protests a little too readily (16). Much Expressionist theatre was marked, it has been suggested, by 'the classic double bind of castration by a yet secret dependence upon a more or less sadistic but absent Father',³⁷ and this version of the family romance sheds light both upon Egbert's conflictual relations with Godfrey Marshall and upon the Oedipal crippling of the daughter as a displaced symbolic castration of the pastoralised male. Nicholls's argument that plays like Kokoschka's *Murderer* are governed by a 'fundamental tension between a narrative structure always already contaminated by sexuality and the Oedipal chain, and a displacement of libidinal energy into a form whose ecstatic "bodily" rhythms strive to defer the return of the Father',³⁸ is germane to a theorised re-reading of the final scene of Lawrence's story.

The dense metaphoricity of Lawrence's closing pages, and the marked contrast with the rest of the text, tends to bear out Homi Bhabha's thesis that culture is a field of struggle where narrative plots become contested terrain. In 'England, My England' the revolutionary moment is that of Egbert's (and therefore England's) entry into the war. The deathly scenes at the Front in both versions are dominated by the apocalyptic emblems of horsemen and crucifix. Both the verbal disturbance and rupturing of the foregoing realist fabric and the apocalyptic ensemble link D. H. Lawrence here with continental modernism. Jay Winter has suggested that, whilst artists across Europe 'shared a surge of interest in apocalyptic themes' prior to 1914, 'the Somme and Verdun were beyond their wildest dreams'. The *Blaue Reiter* movement centred upon pre-war Munich was preoccupied with the raising of the dead and other apocalyptic scenarios in ways which were obsessively explored by Kandinsky, Otto Dix, Max Beckman and others. Thus, Winter argues, the Great War:

expanded the literary space occupied by an older set of icons carrying messages about the end of time, the collapse of order, the final judgement. The implication of recourse to this body of work was paradoxical. In describing images of the end of time, these writers helped turn the clock back. Apocalyptic echoes linked the 1914–18 war with an earlier time when chiliastic notions were part of ordinary language.³⁹

Like Lawrence, the Expressionists were opposed to militarism: Toller, Kokoschka, Döblin and others rejected the conflict, and the Expressionist movement became a focus for the anti-war debate, a furore which was further fuelled by the appalling battlefield experiences of Georg Trakl. The opaquely decentered language of alterity which marked such poems as 'Grodek' and 'Lament' recorded (or failed to record) sufferings which led eventually to the poet's suicide; whether Egbert commits suicide or not, his

death is certainly in some sense a willed response to the futility of home and country. Expressionism posits an almost allegorical metaphoricity – the literal can no longer be thought except in terms of metaphor. As Fiona Becket has argued, Lawrence's 'function as a writer is to put the non-verbal into words'. Her suggestion that through metaphor Lawrence's language 'interrogates the status of the conditioned reality of empirical observation, in its relation to the world of noumena' is of peculiar relevance to these closing pages.⁴⁰ In such texts the literal comes into play within a field, a no-man's land, constituted by metaphor in a process of un-naming. Metaphor is the trope of the displacement and return of the signifier in ways which are indicated by Elaine Scarry:

The body tends to be brought forward in its most extreme and absolute form only on behalf of a cultural artifact or symbolic fragment or made thing (a sentence) that is without any other basis in material reality: that is, it is only brought forward when there is a crisis of substantiation.⁴¹

The 'final' text of 'England, My England' is a belated supplement to the 'originary' text of 1915, and by a structural necessity the formal unity of the tale lapses into Expressionist incoherence or atrophy of language in a rhythmic movement which attempts 'to render palpable the energies of the unconscious through the relaxation of the "old stable ego"'.⁴² But Lawrence's compulsive re-writing of this story may also be viewed as a type of Freudian repetition-compulsion enabling him to master the otherwise intractable subject of his own role as a non-combatant in the Great War.

Despite Egbert's individualist instinct that it is 'unnatural' to 'hate a nation *en bloc*', and his recoil from 'mass feeling' and 'the mob-spirit of a democratic army' (pp. 27–8), when he joins up he begins subtly to reject the family in favour of male camaraderie:

It had all become unreal to him, after the camp. It only set his soul on edge. He left at dawn on the Monday morning, glad to get back to the realness and vulgarity of the camp. (30)

The 'ugly intimacy' (29) of army life reduces Egbert to an integer in a process which is both resisted and endorsed in the movement of Lawrence's prose in the death-scene:

Many expressionists sought release from the burdens of personal isolation by integrating a new self-determining collective 'subject': a spiritually transformed 'community' of one kind or another.⁴³

The 1915 version of the tale tellingly emphasises both community and isolation:

He conceived of kissing as an abstraction. Isolated and suspended, he was with the guns and the other men. There was the physical relationship between them all, but no spiritual contact. His reality was in his own perfect isolation and abstraction. The comradeship, which seemed so close and real, never implicated his individual soul. He seemed to have one physical body with the other men; but when his mind or soul woke, it was supremely and perfectly isolated. (227)

The heady mixture of utopian and apocalyptic elements which fuelled Lawrence's quest for Ranim, and his adoption of an overtly modernist prose style here and in parts of *Women in Love*, invites a contextualisation which the markedly unsympathetic Lukacsian assessment of Expressionism may afford. According to Lukacs's diagnosis, Expressionism stood on the same terrain as its imperialist adversary, taking the form of a struggle against war rather than an analysis of capital:

This form of extreme abstraction, extreme idealistic distortion and evaporation, in which all appearances are reduced to an 'essence', follows organically and necessarily from the preconditions of class and world outlook.⁴⁴

Lukács's thesis that the origins of Expressionism are to be located in a romantic anti-capitalism which perceives and rejects only the superficial symptoms of capitalism, eschews the requisite economic analysis and leads towards a right-wing cultural elitism, however problematic as cultural history, does provide illumination of some of the tendencies of Lawrence's later work. 'England, My England' traces a movement from rootedness and identity to non-identity, a movement in which its protagonist takes on the qualities of a commodity in a process pertinently articulated by a cultural critic more attuned to the project of modernism:

The more the I of Expressionism is thrown back upon itself, the more like the excluded world of things it becomes ... Pure subjectivity, being of necessity estranged from itself as well as having become a thing, assumes the dimensions of objectivity which expresses itself through its own estrangement.⁴⁵

The commodification of personality which Lawrence's story envisages is also embodied in the history of its own textual production. Lawrence is caught within a characteristic paradox of capital whereby the form in which personal alienation is critiqued serves to intensify and reproduce that sense of alienation. The Lawrentian depiction of reification in Egbert, Gudrun Brangwen or Gerald Crich in some sense perpetuates and intensifies what it denounces in a prose which mimetically embodies an increasingly subjectivised world. The trajectory of 'England, My England' towards disintegration and breakdown records, with all the blindness of Lawrence's creative insight, a crucial moment of English cultural history.

Notes

- 1 T. W. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, transl. by C. Lenhardt (London, 1984), p. 335.
- 2 Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London, 1994), p. 140.
- 3 *Ibid.*, p. 140.
- 4 Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 261.
- 5 G. J. Zytaruk and J. T. Boulton (eds), *The Letters of D. H. Lawrence*, vol. ii, (Cambridge, 1981), p. 259.
- 6 *Ibid.*, p. 635.
- 7 Full details are given in D. H. Lawrence *England, My England and Other Stories*, ed. by Bruce Steele (Cambridge, 1990). All subsequent quotations are taken from this edition. Page numbers will follow in brackets.
- 8 Zytaruk and Boulton, *Letters* ii, p. 386.
- 9 *Ibid.*, p. 635.
- 10 *Georgian Poetry 1911–22: The Critical Heritage*, ed. T. Rogers (London, 1977), pp. 104, 103.
- 11 Kim A. Herzinger, *D. H. Lawrence in His Time: 1908–15* (London, 1982), p. 105. This study offers a deft overview of Lawrence's tangled relationship with the Georgians.
- 12 On these issues see Robert Colls and Philip Dodd, *Englishness: Politics and Culture 1880–1920* (London, 1986), especially Alun Howkins, 'The Discovery of Rural England', pp. 62–88; and Martin J. Wiener, *English Culture and the Decline of the Industrial Spirit, 1850–1980* (Cambridge, 1981).
- 13 Bhabha, *Location of Culture*, pp. 142, 149.
- 14 Alan Robinson, *Poetry, Painting and Ideas: 1885–1914* (London, 1985), p. 105.
- 15 Cecil Sharp, *English Folk Song: Some Conclusions* (London, 1965), p. xxiv.
- 16 Georgina Boyes, *The Imagined Village* (Manchester, 1993), p. 70.
- 17 Lucas was a member of Sharp's original demonstration team, and also edited the first two numbers of the *Journal of the English Folk Dance and Song Society* (1914, 1915), to which he contributed a bibliography of the Morris Dance.
- 18 Dave Harker, *Fakesong* (Milton Keynes, 1985), pp. 175, 147.
- 19 Bhabha, *Location of Culture*, p. 140.
- 20 *Ibid.*, p. 140.
- 21 This interest materialised fictionally in Mellors' scheme, at the end of *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, for men to wear scarlet trousers, 'dance and hop and skip, sing and swagger and be handsome' (*Lady Chatterley's Lover*, ed. Michael Squires (Harmondsworth, 1994), p. 299); earlier in the novel we learn that Connie and her sister as teenagers in Dresden 'tramped off to the forests with sturdy youths bearing guitars, twang-twang! – they sang the Wandervogel songs, and they were free' (*ibid.*, p. 6). We may also note Lawrence's insistence, in *A Propos of Lady Chatterley's Lover*, that 'We must get back into relation, vivid and nourishing relation to the cosmos and the universe. The way is through daily ritual, and the re-awakening' (*ibid.*, p. 329). For a full account of Gardiner's relations with Lawrence see W. J. Keith, 'Spirit of Place and *Genius Loci*: D. H. Lawrence and Rolf Gardiner', *D. H. Lawrence Review*, 7 (1974), pp. 127–38. Lawrence's larger debt to *volkisch* philosophy is ably treated in Anne Fernihough, *D. H. Lawrence: Aesthetics and Ideology* (Oxford, 1993).
- 22 Fernihough, *Aesthetics and Ideology*, p. 43.
- 23 This paragraph is indebted to the sociology of art propounded by Pierre Bourdieu: see especially *The Field of Cultural Production* (London, 1993), and *The Rules of Art* (London, 1996).
- 24 Cited in R. George Thomas, *Edward Thomas: A Portrait* (Oxford, 1985), p. 241.

- 25 Stan Smith, *Edward Thomas* (London, 1986), p. 199.
- 26 Peter Brooker and Peter Widdowson, 'A Literature for England', in Colls and Dodd, *Englishness*, p. 135.
- 27 Joanna Bourke, *Dismembering the Male* (London: 1996), p. 41.
- 28 See Alison Light, *Forever England* (London, 1991).
- 29 Modris Eksteins, *The Rites of Spring* (London, 1989), p. 145.
- 30 Evelyn Cobley, *Representing War* (Toronto, 1993), p. 98.
- 31 On this see David Lodge, *Modes of Modern Writing* (London, 1971), p. 170.
- 32 Eric J. Leed, *No Man's Land* (Cambridge, 1979), p. 153.
- 33 Peter Nicholls, *Modernisms: A Literary Guide* (London, 1995), p. 138.
- 34 Ulrich Weisstein, *Expressionism as an International Phenomenon* (Paris, 1973), p. 23.
- 35 Elaine Scarry, *The Body in Pain* (Oxford, 1985), p. 122.
- 36 Nicholls, *Modernisms*, p. 154.
- 37 Richard Sheppard, 'Unholy Families', *Orbis Litterarum*, 41 (1986), 363.
- 38 Nicholls, *Modernisms*, p. 161.
- 39 Jay Winter, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning* (Cambridge, 1995), pp. 146, 203.
- 40 Fiona Becket, *D. H. Lawrence: The Thinker as Poet* (London, 1997), pp. 40, 180.
- 41 Scarry, *Body in Pain*, p. 127.
- 42 Fernihough, *Aesthetics and Ideology*, p. 73.
- 43 Eugene Lunn, *Modernism and Marxism* (London, 1985), p. 63.
- 44 Georg Lukacs, *Essays on Realism*, transl. by D. Fernbach (London, 1980), p. 91.
- 45 T. W. Adorno, *Prisms* (London, 1967), p. 262.