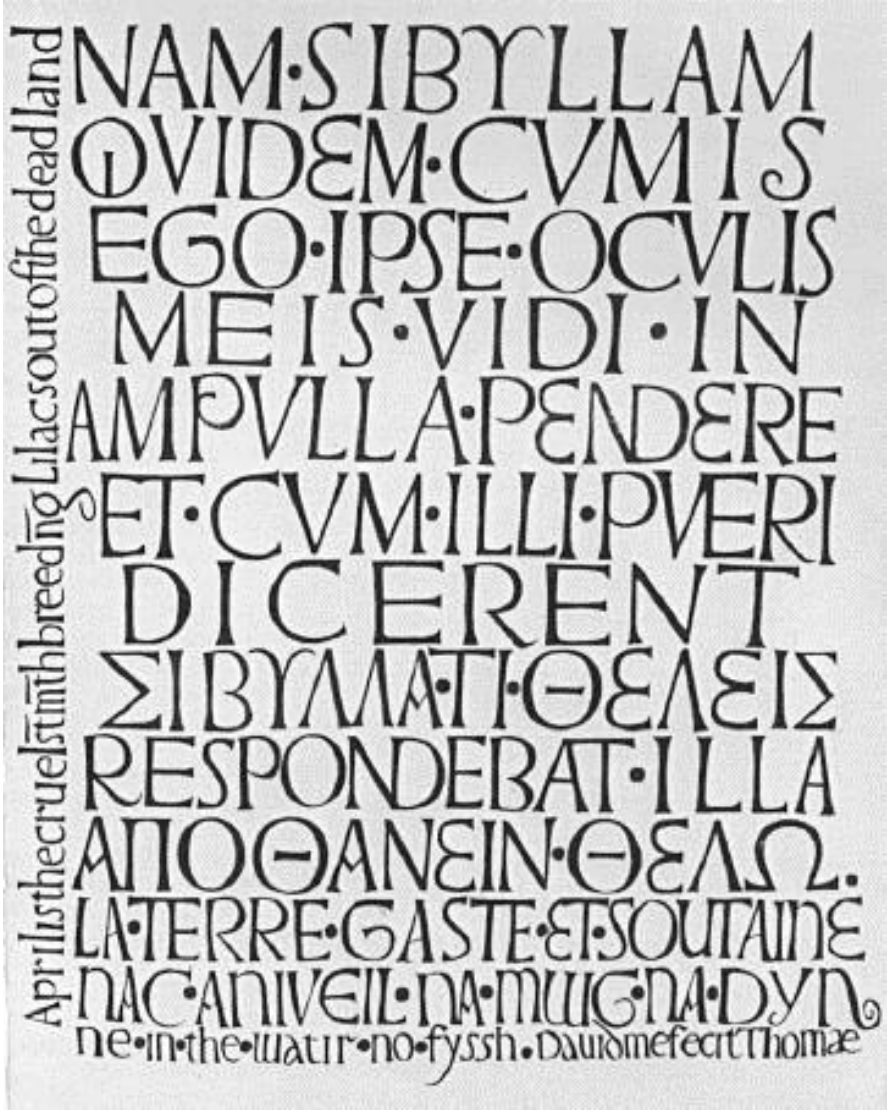

Thesis submitted to Charles Sturt University for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Peripeteia: The Somersault Divine and England's interwar Converts to Catholicism and Communism

Paul Chigwidden B.A. (Hons) Charles Sturt University

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Frontpiece:
David Jones' painted inscription,
'Nam Sibyllam (1958).

This inscription was done as a gift for T. S. Eliot. It combines phrases from Eliot's poem *The Waste Land*, including the phrases Eliot took from Chrétien de Troyes and Thomas Malory. The title obviously links Eliot's work with the Cumaean Sibyl and with the works from which Eliot borrows. The different fonts and styles create an effect of timeless artistic engagement with the same questions; creating, in turn, a unity of fragments. This unity is central to the conversions we are looking at while also being central to the work produced by many of these converts.

'...and I became a wasteland unto myself.'
St Augustine, *Confessions*, II. x

Oh God, make me incapable of prayer,
Too brave for supplication, too secure
To feel the taunt of danger! Let my heart
Be tightened mightily to withstand pain,
And make me suffer singly, without loss.
Now let me bear alone the ageing world
On firmer shoulders than the giant Atlas.
Make me symbolic'ly iconoclast.
The ideal Antichrist, the Paradox

Nancy Cunnard, 'Prayer' published in *Outlaws* (1921)

Abstract

It is common knowledge that a number of important English intellectuals became Communist or Catholic during the interwar period. These conversions shaped some of the most famous literature of the period, not to mention the socio-political and even military events of the day. While most historians of interwar Britain have acknowledged this phenomenon, and the biographers of the more famous intellectuals have attempted an explanation for the individual conversions, no explanation for the phenomenon as a whole has been attempted.

On the surface both conversion movements are somewhat counterintuitive. The Communist Party in Great Britain was never a mainstream movement and its membership was predominantly from among the working classes and yet the search for what Muggeridge called, 'romantic materialism' would attract John Cornford, Giles and Esmond Romilly, The Cambridge Five and the Auden Group. The interwar poetry of W. H. Auden, Stephen Spender and Cecil Day Lewis would, in consequence, bear Communism's mark. Moreover, the Cambridge spies would have a profound influence on the Cold War. Equally surprising was the fact that religious affiliation was in decline for most of the period and yet Catholicism continued to grow and attract some very unlikely converts such as Evelyn Waugh, Graham Greene, David Jones and Roy Campbell. These conversions ensured that some of the most memorable literature from the period was overtly Catholic. Given the repercussions of these conversions an explanation for the phenomenon is important to our understanding. Combining the methodologies of prosopography — that is, collective or group biography — and intellectual history will give this thesis the scope and organisation it requires to attempt such an explanation.

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Introduction

Posing the Question

For Britain the interwar years were a time of profound instability. During the twenties striking miners and tanks patrolling through London jostled with the well-publicized excesses of the bright young people for publicity in the newspapers. By the thirties things had changed. The contest was now between stories featuring pristine suburbia and household conveniences and stories of police in Hyde Park making baton charges into the amassing hunger marchers. As many fell below the poverty line, others rose above it into the new middle classes and still others lost stately homes and landed fortunes. In just over twenty years of peace, Britain had undergone ceaseless change. One feature of that change that has been recognized by countless historians but rarely explained was the seemingly unpredictable conversion of unprecedent numbers of young men and women to either Catholicism or Communism.

During the interwar period a generation of English intellectuals reached maturity and then, seemingly, abandoned the faith of their fathers and embraced Catholicism or Communism. Where the flower of the previous generation had been squandered in Flanders' fields, the flower of the interwar generation were to be found fighting in Spain, stealing secrets from the Foreign Office or writing novels that centered on the transformative nature of the Church's sacraments. Historians of the interwar period have always been aware that it was a period marked by conversions to Catholicism and Communism among the intellectual classes. However, few historians have attempted a detailed explanation for either phenomenon.

It is important to clearly define the group under discussion from the outset. A useful guide comes in the first pages of Noel Annan's intellectual history of the period *Our Age*. Citing the criteria offered by the famous Oxford Don Maurice Bowra for the members of their generation, Annan restricts his study to 'those who make their times significant and form opinion.' (1990, p.3) These were the educated elite who comprised what Samuel Taylor Coleridge called the Clerisy. In line with the assumptions of the peirod, Annan continued, 'It goes without saying that [Bowra] expected them to come from the upper or middle classes, to grow up in a public school and go to Oxford or Cambridge.' (p. 3.) Whilst there were obviously a number of important

intellectuals to emerge from outside this fairly narrow definition, it must be said that such narrowness has its advantages. For one thing, many of the intellectuals that fit this criteria knew each other and had been exposed to very similar influences during their formative years. They were formed in very similar socio-cultural and religious landscapes and faced many similar challenges in their lives. These generalised similarities allow for a more meaningful prosopgraphical study. The alternative, though providing a more diverse group, reduces the similarities to the experience of conversion itself which makes a general explanation more difficult. As it is we have a group that is narrow enough to be the subject of a single study and similar enough to create meaningful discussion points regarding a range of disparate conversion expeirences.

The Catholic conversions have been the most neglected by historians. They are universally recognised but often dismissed as a quirk of the period. Yet every discussion of the Church and even the period seems to make the conversions more surprising and therefore more in need of a detailed explanation. For instance, Martin Pugh's highly detailed social history of the interwar period, *We Danced all Night* (2008), saves his most detailed discussion of the Catholic Church for the chapter on 'Sex, Sexuality and Gender Confusion.' Here the Church is discussed as a powerful opponent of contraceptives and abortifacients. The Anglicans and non-conformist churches tended to have a more diverse range of opinions while the Catholics maintained their firm but ineffectual opposition. 'Although the Catholic Church made people feel guilty about birth control, it often failed to change their behaviour…' (Pugh, 2008, p. 169) The Church's inability to play its designated role as a querulous party pooper would seem to make its ability to attract large-scale conversions even more difficult to explain. Other historians have written about English religion during the period and noted that for most denominations religion was a declining force. John Stevenson's *Social History of Britain: British Society 1914-1945* showed that Church attendance and even affiliation was on the decline but that the Catholic Church experienced continued growth throughout the period. (1984, pp. 361-362) Stevenson notes the growth of Irish immigration and the power of the Catholic Education system in resisting secularism. Neither of these factors can explain the conversions.

Some writers such as Robert Graves and Allen Hodge attempt an explanation. In their *Long Weekend: A Social History of Great Britain 1918 -1939* they discussed the growth of

Catholicism in their chapter entitled 'Amusements.' As that chapter title suggests, the writers were somewhat dismissive of the Church from the beginning, complaining that 'one was not allowed to think for oneself.' (Graves & Hodge, 1963, p. 127) Such a criticism should surely make the intellectuals' conversions *more* interesting and worthy of serious analysis but clearly the authors do not see it that way. They begin by discussing the new types of amusements that emerged following the relaxation of the Government's war powers. With an awkward sense of chronology, the authors link the hi-jinks of Oxford and Cambridge undergraduates to the Bright Young people and the amusements of Chelsea and Mayfair respectively. (1963, pp. 117-125) Then they note that, after a while, the 'recreations… became increasingly hard work.' (1963, p. 127) Disillusion set in, ably expressed by the poetry of T. S. Eliot. 'This was the opportunity for the Catholic Church to make some Converts.' And thus 'a great many university Aesthetes, Mayfair people, and middle-aged cynics were now jocularly reported by their friends to have embraced the "Scarlet woman."'(1963, pp. 127-128)[1] It must be remembered that this constitutes one of the more serious attempts to explain the phenomenon. A. J. P. Taylor's *English History 1914-1945* simply noted that the two most prominent writers of the thirties, Evelyn Waugh and Graham Greene were both Catholic converts 'though this only served to increase their woe.' (Taylor, 1992, p. 180) Again, such a comment surely makes the conversions more counter-intuitive and therefore, more worthy of study. Even works that take the conversions seriously often fail to attempt an adequate explanation which would include a comparative analysis. For instance Joseph Pearce's book *Literary Converts*, published in 1999, limits itself to separate biographical accounts of the most notable converts and their individual paths to Rome.

Because of the exploits of the Cambridge Five and the place of the Spanish Civil War in popular consciousness the conversions to Communism have been treated in greater detail. A relatively coherent explanation emerges in most of the interwar histories. Namely, that the crises of the period, the strikes, the depression and the rise of Fascism, all seemed to validate the Communist explanation of Capitalist decay. Francois Bédarida showed in his *Social History of England*

[1] Evelyn Waugh, G. K. Chesterton and the Hon. Evan Morgan are the three examples given and we must assume that Chesterton is the cynic because by the time he converted he was certainly middle-aged.

1851-1990 that Communism never really took root among the working classes as a political force and that its membership was never particularly high during the period.

> '[However] it acquired a certain cachet among intellectuals amounting to a mild form of snobbery, and won the support of some distinguished literary figures and a great many students. By the same token the cause of Anti-Fascism, Popular Front tactics, the Spanish Civil War and during the Spanish Civil War the heroism of the Soviet Army recruited a good many 'fellow travelers' to Communism.' (Bédarida, 1991, p. 183)

Again the facts seem counterintuitive and demand a more detailed explanation. Why would young, mostly bourgeois intellectuals embrace a movement that was statistically unlikely to succeed? Neal Wood wrote a fascinating study of Communism and British intellectuals in which, like Graves and Hodge, he argues that it was dissatisfaction with hedonism that drove many to Communism. 'Their pursuit of pleasure ceased to be satisfying. A new seriousness came to the fore in the place of the former *joie de vivre*... Whereas sex and aesthetics had been the major topics of conversation, now everybody began to talk politics. As Time passed the politics of the intellectual moved leftward to socialism and Communism.' (1959, p. 37) There are two problems with such an explanation. Firstly, the subsequent biographies of the Cambridge spies, most notably Guy Burgess, did not reveal a deep-seated dissatisfaction with the pursuit of pleasure. And secondly, the movement leftward does not necessarily manifest itself in Communist membership.

A brief overview of the most well-known histories of the period reveals a pattern of inadequate explanations for a phenomenon that seems to be universally recognized. Moreover, few, if any, historians have considered the possibility that the two conversion impulses might be linked, that they might well be two similar responses to the same intellectual climate. One writer who observed, at least, their connectivity was George Orwell. In his social history, *The Road to Wigan Pier*, he wrote 'the typical Socialist [is]… a youthful snob-Bolshevik who in five years' time will quite probably have made a wealthy marriage and been converted to Roman Catholicism.' (2001, p. 161) Orwell clearly sensed that those intellectuals who were attracted to Communism were experiencing an impulse that might just as well yield a Catholic conversion. It

is the purpose of this study examine the causes of these conversions to two very unEnglish faiths and to assess the extent to which they may be described as similar responses to the same context.

Methodology

Prosopography provides a biographical structure for the thesis which reveals a common pattern of conversion. Intellectual history helps to discern a genealogy of ideas that were influential during the period and later reflected in the work produced by the converts. While intellectual history is frequently constrained to the fields of philosophy, political theory, cultural history, and sociology, this work will, perforce, borrow from all four fields in an attempt to recognise the different causes and process of conversion among the subject group. Of particular importance will be the work of the Canadian philosopher Charles Taylor and his magnum opus *The Secular Age*. Using the key terms and historical stages from Taylor's work it becomes possible to see the interwar conversions as both a reaction to and a product of the secularisation of English society.

In many ways this is a prosopographical work of intellectual history. In order to tease out the roots of these conversions it is necessary to write something of a group biography. Indeed prosopography provides a very useful means of gathering the information and forming something of a pattern.[2] However prosopgraphy, as a methodology, is limited in its ability to form conclusions. It enables one to isolate the target group, identify commonalities and shared contextual pressures. However the approach is far too quantitative to be of complete use in my search for an explanation for the interwar conversion phenomenon.

It was the interwar historian, R.G. Collingwood who once wrote, 'The historian is not concerned with events as such at all. He is only concerned with those events which are the outward expression of thoughts and is only concerned with those in so far as they express thoughts. At bottom, he is concerned with thoughts alone.' (1946, p. 217) In order to more fully understand, and explain the ideas that precipitated these conversions, it is crucial to utilize an intellectual historical approach. Some historians have suggested that intellectual history 'is about intellectual change, about the way that people re-work, re-fashion and readjust their meta-notions [or root

[2] See: Verboven, K., Carlier, M., & Dumolyn, J. (2007, October). 'A Short Manual to the Art of Prosopography'. Retrieved August 2nd, 2012, from the *Guide to the Principles and Practices of Prosopgraphy:* http://prosopography.modhist.ox.ac.uk/course_syllabuses.htm

realities]... This process of readjustment goes on all the time, even though most of the time most people are not engaged in intellectual change.' (Stuurman, 2000, p. 313)

The best expression of these ideas came in the books the converts read and the books that they themselves would write. Maynard Keynes wrote that 'practical men, who believe themselves to be quite exempt from any intellectual influences, are usually the slaves of some defunct economist. Madmen in authority, who hear voices in the air, are distilling their frenzy from some academic scribbler of a few years back.' (Cited in Maciag, 2011, p. 743) The intellectuals were influenced by a range of scribblers before becoming scribblers in their own right. Thus, in order to tease out the genealogy of ideas that influenced the converts and even precipitated their movement into their respective destinations it will become important to analyse the influential literature of the period and then the literature that they themselves produced. Consequently this thesis combines literary history, social history and life writing but with a particular focus on the literature of the period and the literature produced by the converts themselves. It should be noted that the literature of the period is not necessarily the literature published in the interwar years. Like the memoirs of the Great War that were published in the thirties, there is a necessary period in which the lived experience is transformed into the artwork. Consequently many of the novels and poems studied in this thesis were written after the period. However all bear the mark of the period and, for that reason, must be a part of our study.

The nature of this work demands an unusual reliance on literary sources. Any biographical stud of intellectuals, be they a group or an individual, demands a focus on the work they produced *as* intellectuals. Admittedly there are a number of historians who dismiss this as being, somehow, less historical. However the trend of much history, certainly intellectual history, over the previous decades has been one in which there has been a 'blurring of disciplinary boundaries.' (Gluck, 2013, p. 125) Indeed, the American academic Carol Gluck has argued that as an historian she is as likely to be exploring the history *of* literature as history *in* literature. (p.127) She found support for this particular perspective in the work of French theorists who have long argued that even minor literature can be viewed as ''the fossil remains of what had once been a living and problematic present,' also known as history.'(p.125). It should be mentioned that this is not just the latest excess by postmodernist historians. In 1941 in his *mimesis*, Erich Auerbach was arguing that the work of naturalist writers such as de Balzac should be considered *Zeugnisse*

– witnesses to the epoch from which they emerged. (Scholz, 1998, p. 20) If literature can tell us about the cultures that produced them, it is surely logical to argue that they can tell us about the intellectuals that produced them.

Moreover, to exclude literary source material is, in a sense to limit the subject matter available to historians. Kristian Hvidt has adopted this empiricist perspective, arguing that 'there are historical relations which can never be described by means of historical source material - a sort of blind point or black hole where historians cannot see and find the right words.' (Hvidt, 1984, p. 67) Yet such arbitrary restrictions on the investigative prerogatives of the historian, inevitably divorces history from its ancient roots and reduces it to the collection and collation of facts; what might be termed the local museum approach to history. Dorothy Burton Skårdal responded to Hvidt's proposition by arguing:

> My kind of history can't afford to reject any sources because its goal is to understand as much as possible about the past, focusing on different periods not just to reconstruct their "facts" but to attempt to portray their unique quality, their distinctive characteristics, their typical consciousness- on their own premises, not ours - to the extent possible. (1984, p. 75)[3]

This work is, at heart, a work of intellectual history. For that reason, while it will not be purely empirical in its approach (it cannot be)[4] it will be relentless in its pursuit of understanding. To that end, it will rely on a very broad range of sources from life writings, fiction and poetry, letters and diaries, all the way through to economic and sociological sources of a more empirical nature. Ultimately the patterns of meaning that emerge across a broad range of literature produced by the interwar intellectuals will reveal a pattern of anxieties, ideals, reflections and

[3] Burton Skårdal added some useful conditions on the historian's use of literary sources: 'I agree, that authors are valuable as historical witnesses only when portraying periods they have lived in themselves. The historian must investigate what the author could know, and what he could not know, from his own experience. He must also investigate what the author could count on his readers knowing. This reader knowledge limited the author's imaginative freedom, for he could not violate with impunity what they considered to be fact. The historian must also judge the author's purpose in writing: whether to inform, to attack, too persuade or to entertain. This purpose will mould all his material, and must be taken into account.' (1984, p. 77)

[4] Stephen Davies' argues in *Empiricism and History* that 'Intellectual history, or history of ideas, is the most problematic area of history from the empirical point of view. This is because it is difficult to combine empirical methods and the history of ideas by virtue of the very nature of the topic.' (2003, p. 110)

reflexive responses to the myriad of pressures that seem to assail the interwar converts. They will yield important insights into the purpose and process of conversion, as well as giving expression to the convert's new role as a Catholic or Communist intellectual.

To cite but one example: Reba Soffer has written about the contribution to intellectual history made by the novels of Evelyn Waugh. Soffer describes Waugh as a particular elite with the 'power to disseminate and implement their ideas….an adapter and propagator of ideas…allow[ing] us entry into more pervasive mentalities shared by greater numbers of people both within and without those elites.' (2012, p. 45) In essence then, Waugh represents a particular way of thinking; a particular voice responding to the chaos of the interwar years. 'His attacks on 'modernity' and 'progress', aimed at liberal and socialist ideals, provided a conservative, traditionalist alternative among the new ideas stridently clamouring for attention.' (p.46) While Waugh's novels have much to tell us about his developing consciousness as a Catholic writer, when taken in conjunction with the work of other Catholic convert writers of the period, they become part of a broader intellectual movement. Indeed they may be considered 'an accurate barometer of much of the educated thinking of his time'. (p. 55) It would be pointless to seek an understanding of numerous writers who converted to Catholicism without reference to their work. Particularly because of the converts propensity to repeatedly re-evaluate their root-realities; a re-evaluation that often played out across the pages of their work. By including the formal expressions of their convictions, we are able to gain an understanding of pervading intellectual movements of the period; a period unlike our own. As Soffer concluded: 'Waugh drew a particular portrait of a historical period when people thought and believed and behaved very differently than we do now. His skewed lens allows us to imagine habits of thinking about the meaning and purpose of life that were buried in the bombed cities and bloody battle fields of the Second World War.'(p.68) In that sense Waugh's work, much like the work of other convert writers in the period, makes a significant contribution to any intellectual historical work on the interwar years.

As mentioned earlier, Charles Taylor's *The Secular Age* is a landmark achievement both of philosophy and intellectual history. Taylor unpacks the fundamental intellectual movement that has shaped the modern era and has influenced the majority of historical events in modern times. Secularism provides the general context in which we in the West live our lives. Consequently the

questions of what constitutes secularism, and what have been the responses to secularism are of primary importance in any intellectual history. Taylor provides the key terms to describe the common experiences of living in a secular age. In his account of the rise of secularism he provides a means of understanding the interwar conversion phenomenon as both a product of and reaction to the secular age.

This thesis does not enter into the field of gender studies, nor take much advantage of the insights offered by historians who have interpreted the experience of modernism and secularism in the specificity of gendered lives. Partly, the reason for this is simply that of length. In taking on a topic which lacked a standard, authoritative historical work, I have been obliged to offer a narrative of my own and this task dominates the structure of the thesis. I have eschewed extra analyses which would add great interest to this work, but would make it unwieldy, and would divert from the direct task before me. There is a volume of British intellectual history still to be written on the subject of how the experience of women writers in the twentieth-century Catholic world differed from that of men, and also how gender roles were defined and represented within the religion. This thesis does not attempt this valuable task, but it does aim to provide an understanding of the general social milieu which conditioned the conversion experience of both men and women of that generation.

The role of women in the Communist Party during this era is also one which is yet to be fully explored by historians, although those who have researched this field inevitably noted 'the dearth of women in the CPGB leadership'. (Hunt & Worley, 2004, p.2) The issue of the intersection of class and gender roles in the field of Communist interwar converts is complex and important enough for another thesis. Yet another potential historical question, of great significance, can be raised around the issue of why the Cambridge spies were an exclusively male group, and what role women played both in the intelligence agencies and the wider society which supported their work.

Without any question, writers and journalists looking for the unknown collaborators of the Cambridge spies asked who was 'The Third Man'. This is also the title of Graham Greene's 1949 novel about espionage. As years passed and further revelations were made people speculated about 'the Fourth Man' and by 1994 Roland Perry's book about the Cambridge spies

was entitled *The Fifth Man*. In those phrases, one sees the automatically segregated gender roles of the elite of British politics and the security services. No one was looking for any Fifth Woman, and there is a powerful assumption in this choice of words. Women were, in fact, active as intelligence agents, Melita Norwood's career as a British clerk who passed vital information about the atomic programme to the Soviet Union is proof of that. However I will refrain from offering readers of this thesis an analysis of why a member of the interwar generation such as Melita Norwood (b 1912), who attended a grammar school but not university, had such a different life experience and career path to her fellow spies such as Anthony Blunt or Kim Philby. (Cunningham, 2005)

The question of what Communism offered women, as distinct from men, and also how intelligence services enacted gender roles, remains still to be answered. One can observe, throughout this thesis, that the British interwar generation were conditioned to accept markedly different gender roles as natural and inevitable, and that, in this respect, Communists did not seem very revolutionary. The networks of 'comradeship' which sustained the Cambridge spies and Spanish Civil War activists appear to have been as exclusive, and all-male, as the clubs of Mayfair and the elite public schools.

Writing this thesis has made me all the more aware of these important manifestations of gender history, but also all the more aware of how these issues cannot be addressed in passing but would require a separate work. I will content myself to note, here, that most, but not all, of the writers and activists whose lives I analyse are British men of the more privileged classes. There are significant women writers also, and their insights are among the most valuable primary sources. Together they made up a generation which endured huge amounts of change, cultural turmoil, and a search for meaning and transcendence. Women tended to be more visible, and to play a greater role in propaganda and self-defining representations, within Catholic circles rather than Communist ones.

The structure is largely prosopographical and though many figures are used only in one or two chapters there are enough names common to every chapter to get a clear sense of the group who constitute this group biography. The first chapter, 'The Modern Conversion Phenomenon', is concerned with defining conversion in the modern era and explaining the way that the secular

world includes both traditional[5] and secular religions like political religions. Chapters two and three, 'The interwar Narrative' and 'Religious Renewal', are contextual chapters in which I seek to show that the interwar period was both a period of crises and a period of conversion. Chapters four, five and six, 'The Age of Almamatricide', 'Come to Reason' and 'The End of Laissez-Faire', are prosopographical, following the converts from school to university and through the conversion experience itself. In these chapters a clear pattern emerges of disenchantment, religious questing and conversion. This pattern links both the Communist and Catholic converts in a common process. They are also connected by the their shared experience of the interwar narrative and many of the conversions, both Catholic and Communist are directly related to this experience. Chapter seven, 'The Pattern and the Hard Core', is intellectual history, looking at the arguments put forward by the converts to explain their decision. This chapter takes a particular look at the symbolism used by many to represent the experience of conversion and a very clear pattern emerges; a pattern which reveals that many of the converts found a sense of certainty and even mystical uplift in their new religion. Chapters eight and nine, 'La Trahison des Clercs' and 'Sub Specie Aeternitatis', explain the way that conversion shaped the intellectuals' sense of vocation, producing Communist soldiers and spies as well as Catholic writers. Again an assortment of memoirs and literature are used to understand the converts' conception of their new religions. However at this point we see a very clear distinction between the Communist converts and their desire for action and the Catholic converts and their focus on the writing as an end in itself.

By the end of the thesis it has become clear that there were many common factors that unite the Catholic and Communist conversions among the intellectuals. It becomes reasonable to suggest that these intellectuals, mostly male and middle class, were responding to a civilisation that seemed to be fragmenting socially, politically, economically and intellectually. Their response was to convert to a religion that was clear and infallible in its teachings, a religion that offered the possibility of salvation and communicated a mystical apprehension capable of re-enchanting their crises-bound world.

[5] By the term traditional religion I essentially mean Christianity however, because of the religions conversions of Christopher Isherwood and J. B. S. Haldane to Hinduism, there is a need to use the broader term. For the overwhelming majority of intellectuals referred to in this thesis traditional religion means Christianity.

Chapter One: The Modern Conversion Phenomenon

'The Mass has been abolished, but what more holy has been put in its place?'
Erasmus of Rotterdam (1529)

So long as man remains free he strives for nothing so incessantly and so painfully as to find someone to worship. But man seeks to worship what is established beyond dispute, so that all men would agree at once to worship it. For these pitiful creatures are concerned not only to find what one or the other can worship, but to find community of worship is the chief misery of every man individually and of all humanity from the beginning of time. For the sake of common worship they've slain each other with the sword. They have set up gods and challenged one another, "Put away your gods and come and worship ours, or we will kill you and your gods!" And so it will be to the end of the world, even when gods disappear from the earth; they will fall down before idols just the same.

Fyodor Dostoevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov* (1880)

It is perhaps less often observed, though it requires observing, that those who reject the postulates of supernatural religion are no less bound than are the men of religion by the allurements of a Prudentia; indeed this is most marked. ... [Prudentia] is full of does and don'ts. She is on intimate terms with a number of party leaders, and before we know where we are she induces us to become party-members; and the party is of necessity a prudential society concerned with oughts and ought nots. So that, no less than the saints or the men of primitive cults or the enlightened world-improvers of yesterday or their disillusioned inheritors of today we all are committed to a Prudentia of sorts.

David Jones, *Art and Sacrament* (1955)

The prism through which this historical work is constructed comes from Charles Taylor's seminal work *A Secular Age* (2007). Taylor provides a description, even a diagnosis, of the modern era that makes such unprecedented conversion patterns somewhat comprehensible. Taylor quotes Erasmus's letter and the question posed by the Dutch reformer, '[t]he Mass has been abolished, but what more holy has been put in its place?' might well act as a metaphor for Taylor's entire thesis. (2007, p. 76) For some time intellectual historians have viewed the progress towards secularism as a series of what Taylor calls 'subtraction stories'. (2007, p. 22)

> Concisely put, I mean by this the stories of modernity in general, and secularity in particular, which explain them by human beings having lots, or sloughed off, or liberated themselves from certain earlier, confining horizons, or illusions, or limitations of knowledge. What emerges from this process – modernity or secularity – is to be understood in terms of underlying features of human nature which were there all along, but had been impeded by what is now set aside.' (2007, p.22)

Taylor rejects such a thesis as untenable and the conversion movements that comprise this study reveal the inability of 'subtraction stories' to convincingly offer an explanation of modern history.

The quotes from Dostoevsky and David Jones, both written at key moments during the long march towards the secular age, reveal that the religious instinct is retained even in the absence of religious belief. Jones uses the term 'Prudentia' or 'Holy Wisdom' to describe this religious impulse. We use Prudentia for convenience to denote, as it were, the tutelary genius who presides over the whole realm of faith, moral, religion, ethic; she is thought of as Holy Wisdom.' ('Art and Sacrament.' In D. Jones, 1959, p. 145) Taylor provides the fully developed philosophical arguments to validate the ideas of Jones and Dostoevsky, making explicit what was only implicit in their work. Namely that the modern age might be a secular age but it is still a religious age.

The purpose of this first chapter is to provide a simple overview of Taylor's explanation for the rise of the secular age and to isolate several key elements of the secular age that can provide an explanation for the interwar conversion phenomenon. At the heart of Taylor's explanation is the notion that secularism fragments rather than abolishes religion. However the intellectual and

religious landscape in the secular era is increasingly rationalized and disenchanted. Into this period emerges the largely secular phenomenon of political religions, perhaps the most famous of which is Communism. Whilst Taylor doesn't discuss political religions, he discusses 'self-sufficient humanism' of which political religions is surely a part. (Taylor, 2007, p. 18) This chapter will also seek to explain why Communism must be considered a political religion and how it has emerged as part of the movement towards secularization.

At the heart of my account of the interwar converts is the belief that this conversion phenomenon was both a reaction *to* the intellectual instability or 'fragmentation' and the rationalized 'disenchantment' of the secular age, as well as being a symptom *of* that same age. In a recent article on Taylor's work and the theory of political religion Stefan Fisher-Høyrem identified a tension in Taylor's explanation for and description of the secular age.

> Taylor insists that the notions of an 'ordinary' world and autonomous individuals with an innate urge to transcend it–both notions underpinning most studies of political religion–cannot be accepted as *a priori* but must be historicized and explained. (Fisher-Høyrem, 2013, p. 326)

In a sense this thesis will attempt to historicize these notions by providing a prosopographical case-study of religious conversion to two very different conversion destinations among the same group of people in the same period.

The Rise of Secularism

In his award winning study, *A Secular Age*, Charles Taylor posed the deceptively simple question, 'why was it virtually impossible not to believe in God in, say 1500 in our Western society, while in 2000 many of us find this not only easy but even inescapable?' (Taylor, 2007, p. 25) Such a stark contrast of dates gives us an immediate insight into the radical nature of secularization and can easily inspire a false narrative of lost religion. But as we shall see, the process of secularization is not the gradual elimination of religion; it is a process by which religion is fractured, diversified and expanded. Consequently, secularization becomes a process by which the nature of conversion is also changed, diversified and expanded. As Taylor puts it, a hyperpluralist society 'consists of new conditions of belief; it consists in a new shape to the experience which prompts to and is defined by belief; in a new context in which all search and

questioning about the moral and spiritual must proceed.' (2007, p. 20) In this thesis we are concerned with conversion and belief in the interwar period which was increasingly hyperpluraslist.[6]

The Age of Faith

On the surface, it would seem grossly inadvisable to begin a thesis on England's interwar conversion phenomenon by looking at the Middle Ages. However, intellectual history needs to break free of the excessively tight periodisation that seems to grip modern historical studies. Intellectual history is the genealogical study of ideas and, like genealogy, makes little sense when only one generation is studied. In his recent study of the Reformation and its influence on the modern world Brad Gregory defends his survey of the distant past's continuing influence by citing Smail's caution that when history withdraws from engagement with the deeper past it becomes flattened and historicity becomes confused with modernity. (Gregory, 2012, p. 6) In order to understand the context in which significant numbers of English Intellectuals converted to Catholicism or Communism, it is crucial that we understand the key features of that context. These are really only brought into sharp relief by contrasting them with the distant past, particularly as the modern era often defines itself as a repudiation of the distant past. By contrasting the two the historian is able to isolate key intellectual changes which enable a clearer understanding of the religious landscape and the experience of conversion in the modern era.

The British historian R. Martin Goodridge published a much-cited article in 1975 wherein he challenged the popular notion of the Middle Ages as a golden age of Faith. He cites a number of studies that reveal Latin Christendom to be constantly torn between unbelief, apathy and pious resurgence. He quotes the French Dominican, Humbert of Romans a thirteenth century Master General of the Order who wrote, 'It must be noted that the poor rarely go to church, rarely to sermons; so that they know little of what pertains to their salvation.' (Goodridge, 1975, p. 387) Such was the perceived irreligiosity of the period that the thirteenth century alone witnessed the foundation of the five great mendicant orders, the Fransiscans, Dominicans, Carmelites, Servites

[6] For a discussion of hyperpluralism see Chapter Three.

and Augustinians. Such a proliferation of preaching orders in the one period, often in similar areas, points to a genral problem with religious knowledge and adherence.[7]

So, if it could also be described as an age of unbelief, what was it that made Latin Christendom different to the modern era? The first point is that it enjoyed an unusual unity. Whilst it was perpetually confronted by various heresies, abuses, both clerical and lay, and some entirely recalcitrant populations, the Church provided a uniquely unifying voice. As Gregory puts it, 'the late medieval Church was a large playground, but one enclosed by forbidding fences – an almost riotous diversity held together in an overarching unity by a combination of ingrained customs, myriad institutions, varying degrees of self-conscious dedication and the threat of punishment.' (2012, p. 84) In short, though people might accept or reject Christianity during this period it was a profoundly different experience to the modern equivalents. If one accepted Christianity in the thirteenth century it was hardly counter-cultural. If one rejected Christianity in the thirteenth century there were few alternative denominations or religions.

Secondly it was, in Taylor's words, 'an "Enchanted" world.'[8] (Taylor, 2007, p. 25) It was a world in which the supernatural forces of good and evil were held to be really present and played a part in the daily life of large swathes of the population. Not only that but the drama of their interplay presupposed that good would ultimately triumph. (2007, p. 26) The central focus of this drama was, of course, the Mass. Frequently it fell into disuse and abuse but just as frequently it was revived, reformed and returned to its place as the centre of communal life. Jean Gimpel estimates that in France and England there was one church for every two hundred people, 'and that the English cities of Norwich, Lincoln, and York, with populations in the range of 5,000 to 10,000, each had forty to fifty churches.' (Cited in Scott, 2011, p. 11) The number and quality of these churches reflects the enchanted viewpoint. 'To the people of the Middle Ages, it was obvious that sacred spaces had to be *created* and that the act of creating them demanded the

[7] The previous century had seen similar important foundations, Gilbert of Sempringham founded the Gilbertine Order of Canons Regular in England, Robert of Arbrissel had founded the abbey of Fontevrault and Norbert of Xanten had founded the Order of Canons Regular of Prémontré, (Premonstratensians). All three founders were great preachers who found themselves combating many of the abuses that would later be cited by the leaders of the Reformation. (Antry & Neel, 2007, pp. 1-15)

[8] He uses this term in opposition to Weber's description of the modern condition as being 'disenchanted; commonly referred to as his Disenchantment Thesis.

highest forms of *artistic expression* of which human beings were capable.'(Scott, 2011, p. 154)[9] It is easy to dismiss the piety manifested in these great buildings as simple superstition but they clearly articulate the status of the Mass in the minds of the millions of people who contributed to their erection. As Steve Bruce reminds us, the medieval Mass was something of an unusual achievement, 'the fact that such large numbers of people in the Middle Ages attended Church services that made almost no concessions to their presence suggests that, despite their failure to comport themselves in the manner we now expect of churchgoers, our medieval ancestors were religious people.' (Bruce, 2002, p. 52) The question that we must answer is, has that religiosity survived in their descendants? And how has its expression changed?

Another point of difference between the Middle Ages and the modern world was the relative social stability. As Taylor puts it,

> We can read mediaeval Catholicism in one way as incorporating a kind of equilibrium based on hierarchical complementarity. This was certainly recognized as an organising principle for the society as a whole. For instance the famous formula: the clergy pray for all, the lords defend all, the peasants labour for all, encapsulates the idea that society is organized in complementary functions, which nevertheless are of unequal dignity. (2007, p. 45)

Yet despite the unequal dignity, the solid social hierarchy also contained an implicit equality. An equality that, according to Taylor, was expressed through carnival days. These feasts of misrule featured an inversion of the ordinary order of things. Roles were often reversed and the peasant placed in charge. Such events broadcasted the limits of civil and temporal authority and, by generally coinciding with feast-days, pointed to a broader salvific context, before which all men were ostensibly equal.

The benefit of this equilibrium was the strong sense of vocation that was communicated through the Christian hierarchy. In his discussion of 'Mans Various Duties and States in General'

[9] Scott goes on to quote Abbot Sugar, the Abbott of St. Denis who rebuilt the great church in the 12th century, and argued with Bernard of Clairvaux, that 'Everything that is most precious should be used above all to celebrate the Holy Mass… if, according to the word of God and the prophet's command, the gold vessels, the gold phials, the small gold mortars were used to collect the blood of goats, the calves, and a red heifer, then how much more zealously shall we hold our gold vases, precious stones, and all that we value most highly in creation, in order to collect the blood of Jesus Christ.' (Scott, 2011, pp. 155-156)

Thomas Aquinas cites Paul's letter to the Romans, 'As in one body we have many members, but all the members have not the same office, so we being many are one body in Christ.' Thus the various, 'duties, states and grades,' achieve a basic unity in their broader context of the Christian vocation, (*Sum* II-II, 183, ii.) William Carl Placher has argued that part of Aquinas's rejection of usury was that it was an unnecessary end and therefore could not be considered a calling from God. (2005, pp. 112-113) The diminution, and in many cases destruction, of the Church's intellectual world, the enchanted world provided by its sacramental life and its clear sense of vocation, would have profound effects on twentieth century conversion trends. For the intellectuals who found Catholicism it was often the unity of the Church and the enchantment of her sacraments and the clear sense of vocation that proved most attractive. Whilst many of the young Communists often seemed to find similar consolations in their particular conversion destination.

The Reformation as a Path to the Enlightenment

It is important to remember that Taylor is engaged in conjectural rather than empirical history and can therefore only make claims about the past using, what the intellectual historian Jonathan Sheehan terms, 'a generalised logic'. ('When Was Disenchantment? History and the Secular Age.' In M. Warner, J. VanAntwerpen, & C. J. Calhoun (Eds.) 2010, p. 226) When making claims about the deep-past the empirical demands have to be sacrificed for the sake of brevity and coherence. Consequently the claim that the Reformation was a catalyst for many of the secularising processes found during the Enlightenment period, might be liable to innumerable counterclaims. There were pre-Reformation and Tridentine catalysts as well[10] but there can be no doubt that the Reformation legitimized, unified and emboldened many of the destabilizing and excarnational trends that existed on the margins of the Medieval Church. Taylor defines these as 'a transfer out of embodied, "enfleshed" forms of religious life, to those which are more "in the head". (2007, p. 554) This is an important trend that helps to understand what we will later see as the resurgence of sacramental Christianity in the interwar period.

[10] Wolfgang Reinhard's influential article 'Reformation, Counter Reformation and the Early Modern State a Reassessment' begins by listing the many social pressures that induced reform such as the rise of the cities and the diversification of the educated classes. Reinhard's thesis was that the Reformation and the Counter-Reformation were not so much opposites as two reform movements with common origins and common methods, while still acknowledging that the 'early "evangelical movement" initiated by Luther remained something particular, since it proved an innovative force of modernizing tendency.' (Reinhard, 1989, p. 385)

Taylor calls the Reformation 'an engine of disenchantment' because it abolished 'the enchanted cosmos' and enabled 'the eventual creation of a humanist alternative to faith.' (Taylor, 2007, p. 77) It would obviously be impossible to trace all the aftershocks of the Reformation with any degree of nuance so I will simply isolate three elements and suggest a potential genealogy of ideas which they may be said to have fathered. The first might be embodied in Luther and his attack on the Church's hierarchy, driven by the doctrine of sola scriptura. This innovation began a movement that fragmented traditional sources of spiritual and moral authority and set in motion a process that can be said to have resulted in modern hyperpluralism. (Gregory, 2012, p. 94) The second can be found in Zwingli and Calvin and their simplification of the faith which, driven by the doctrine of sola fides, in a rationalizing of religion expelled much of the mystery that might be found in ritual and the sacraments. (Taylor, 2007, p. 80) The third element of the Reformation movement may be said to emerge from both doctrines and that was the drive to socially re-order society. Sola fides distances God by expelling much of the sacred from worship and social life, (2007, p. 83)[11] which, in turn, soon becomes more exclusively concerned with temporal issues; while sola scriptura, bypassing the church's authority, ends up demanding more responsibility from secular authorities to fill the consequent void. This, as we shall see, opens up a space for political religions.

For the first generation of reformers the abuses and injustices (both real and imagined) that were perpetrated throughout Catholic institutions demonstrated that those institutions were ignoring the word of God in pursuance of their own advantages. Consequently, 'All these reformers along with others who rejected the Roman Church's authority, were on board with *Sola Scriptura.* Their shared goal was to discern and to follow what God had revealed in scripture.' (Gregory, 2012, pp. 88) By rejecting the authority of Rome[12] the reformers rejected a cohesive intepretive framework. The goal of submitting only to scriptural authority had practical implications, as

[11] Here we can turn to the Irish historian Eamon Duffy for the empirical examples which Taylor cannot provide. For instance, Thomas Cromwell's iconoclastic visitations of the monasteries reveal a vibrant network of intercession and healing surrounding a myriad of relics, some highly questionable, that was soon dismantled in the fight against what he regarded as superstition and exploitation. (2005, pp. 384-5) Yet as Duffy says, 'Everywhere one turns in the *comperta* and other records of the visitation one finds evidence of large-scale resort by the people to the monastic shrines as centres of healing and help.' (p. 384) The destruction of those centres can only be described as disenchantment in action.

[12] Gregory goes so far as to suggest that the word Protestantism is simply an umbrella term for 'groups, churches, movements and individuals, whose only common feature is a rejection of the authority of the Roman Catholic Church.' (Gregory, 2012, p. 94)

Benjamin Kaplan put it, from the start 'Protestantism was irrepressibly fissile.' Luther and the reformers freed the people from tyrannical clergymen, only to find that many considered *them* tyrannical. (Kaplan, 2009, p. 142) While reformers such as Luther, Zwingli and Calvin all tended to value the exegetical framework provided by the Church Fathers,[13] more radical protestants favoured *scriptura nuda* thus opening the way 'to an individualistic, hermeneutical anarchy…' (Gregory, 2012, p. 95) This anarchy was soon manifested in a plethora of religious wars that plunged the continent into confused violence, yielding martyrs for almost every side. These wars made pluralism a pratical necessity. The Peace of Augsburg (1555) the Edict of Torda (1568) and the Edict of Nantes (1598) began peace processes dependent on establishing multiconfessional communities. Thus, pluralism emerged as a stabalising factor.

The violence of the religious wars and their termination by secular authorities created an historical paradigm which posited religion as an obstacle to progress while secular authorities were seen as the guarators of progress. Hugh Trevor Roper's essay on the 'Religious Origins of the Enlightenment' suggested that numerous Enlightenment figures subscribed to the view that the achievements of Galileo, Bacon and others in the 15th century were overshadowed by religious wars, a phenomenon that arose once again in the middle of the 17th century when, 'barbarism prevailed.' (Roper, 1984, p. 199) Thus a host of Enlightenment thinkers as disparate as Locke and Newton, Voltaire and Gibbon saw 'enthusiastic' religion as an enemy of intellectual progress and propounded an intellectual predilection for latitudinarianism and/or quietism. (Roper, p. 200-203) The notion that the stability of society could be violently traumatized by conflicting 'promptings of the spirit' was repugnant for many thinkers of the Enlightenment and soon reason was promoted as the ultimate authority. Blount followed Spinoza in rejecting the miracles of the Bible and slowly but surely rational exegetes began to fashion a sort of 'Christian Deism' whose most popular expression would found in the Unitarian church.[14]

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[13] Although all three were highly selective about which sources they utilized and which they rejected. See: Backus, I. (Ed.). (1996). *The Reception of the Church Fathers in the West: From the Carolingians to the Maurists* (Vol. I). Leiden: Brill. (Essays 15-17, pp. 573-700)

[14] Taylor describes Unitarianism as being similar to its intellectual forefather, Arianism; it is 'an attempt to hold on to the central figure of Jesus, while cutting loose from the main soteriological doctrines of historical Christianity.'(Taylor, 2007, p. 291) Or, as they themselves would have put it, 'Christianity in its simplest and most intelligible form'. Initially a rationalizing movement which sought to eliminate any doctrine that seemed contrary to the scientific discoveries of previous centuries, Unitarianism in the post-modern age is, ironically enough, home to many members who 'prefer to look elsewhere for their inspiration, finding it in the other great World Faiths, in Celtic Spirituality, 'Green Theology', or even in the various forms of 'New Age Religion' - including Neo-

(Gregory, 2012, pp. 108-109) This initial fissure would, in turn, give birth to an arrray of more secular denominations in the twentieth century and even wholly secular religions.

It is useful to remember that the reformers were unanimous in rejecting the doctrines of Eucharistic sacrifice and transubstantiation. (Burnett, 2011, p. 79) Whilst Luther maintained in his lifetime that the consecrated host contained the Real Presence, the reformers were progressively more opposed to that concept. It was Zwingli who took the concept of Sola Fides to its most radical conclusions, rejecting incarnational Catholicism and promoting a religion of spirit. 'In his theology the Eucharist could have no salutary efficacy in the present...' (Clark, 1967, p. 108)[15] Regardless of the differing explanations for the Eucharist, the Protestant reformers, to varying degrees, distanced the proximity of God to man by lessening, or rejecting outright, his presence on earth in the tabenacle. According to Max Weber's disenchantment thesis this was a powerful moment in history wherein reason triumphed over superstition. In essence Weber was promoting a progressive narrative in which he believed that the Reformation effectively stripped religious discourse and practice of what he saw as sacramental magic and enchanted notions of time, creating a path for a more enlightened and rational understanding of reality.[16] The Reformation historian Robert Scribner has demonstrated quite clearly that the Reformation was not a clean break into an intellectualized form of religion. He notes that sacramentals persisted in the evangelical churches for quite some time. Indeed, 'pilgrimage sites and the healing water sometimes associated with them, persisted in many Protestant territories into the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.' (Scribner, 1993, p. 484) In her study of disenchantment and the Reformation Alexandra Walsham concludes that disenchantment is an historical reality but several revisionist studies in the last twenty years, most notably those of

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Paganism.' (Long, 1999, p. 46) This rejection of rationalistic faith is also manifested in the life of G.K. Chesterton. Raised a unitarian, he moved from agnosticism to mysticism, largely due to its liberalism (see chapter seven).

[15] The sixteenth century English Bishop, Stephen Gardiner,[15] made the same connection between Sola Fides and the Mass, 'Whoever holds this new doctrine about justification is bound to deny the Sacrament of the Eucharist as we preach it...' (Clark, 1967, p. 141) Calvin wanted to bring 'concord out of discord' between the Zwinglians and the Lutherans.[15] (Partee, 2008, p. 271) To that end he promoted a compromise solution to the problem of what the consecrated host actually was. The result was the awkward doctrine of substance rather than symbol or presence, 'Though I confess that our souls are truly fed by the substance of Christ's flesh, I... repudiate the substantial presence which Westphal[15] imagines...' (p. 275) Later, in England, Cranmer would promote his own confusing compromise solutions which have been described by theologians and historians as Suvermerian as well as Zwinglio-Calvinistic. (Clark, 1967, p. 162)

[16] The problem with such a narrative is that it was clearly a product of a regressive method; and therefore reflects 19th century concerns far more than the realities of the Reformation. (Scribner, 1993, pp. 476, 493)

Scribner and Duffy (See: ft.9), have shown that it 'did not travel steadily in one direction.' (Walsham, 2008, p. 517) This is a very important consideration. Too many historians have seen disenchantment as the inevitable result of progress. In reality the process of disenchantment has always been balanced by a sense of nostalgia, for want of a better word, and a constant return to the sacramental life. This is precisely what we find in the interwar era with the Catholic converts and even in the Anglo-Catholic revival which was an important feature of the same period.

However despite the unevenness of the changes, the Reformation clearly began a movement that slowly deconstructed the incarnational church and its authority, two elements which would have made such disenchantment less likely. Clark's useful dichotomy of incarnational religion (Catholic) versus a religion of the spirit (Protestant) neatly reflects the central shift that occurred in the Reformation. The process of disenchantment was made possible and begun by a movement from exogenous factors embodied in the sacraments to more endogenous factors embodied in the faith of the individual.

Importantly, Taylor links the seeds of disenchantment found in the Reformation with the rationalistic impulses of the Enlightenment.[17] As the visibility of Christ's salvific work fades an anthropocentric shift takes place. Taylor sums it up by saying, 'once disenchantment has befallen the world, the sense that God is an indispensable source of our spiritual and moral life migrates.' (Taylor, 2007, p. 233) The migration is only very slight but it is a movement that, for many, can no longer be restrained by a unified authority and thus the Enlightenment thinkers of the late 17th century would expedite, what Bilgrami has termed, the 'deracination of God.' ('What is Enchantment? In M. Warner, J. VanAntwerpen, & C. J. Calhoun (Eds.) 2010, p. 147) Such a removal would eventually make room for more secular religions, and revolutionary ideas.

The most notable example of this secular radicalism came in the Peasants War which raged for nearly three years (1524-1527) and the Anabaptist Siege of Münster (1534-5). In both cases a fairly liberal interpretation of scripture, particularly the social elements of the Gospels, reinforced unrestrained rebellion against civil authorities. The Twelve Articles of the Swabian Peasants which proved so influential in Germany's Peasant Wars used scriptural authority to

[17] It is important to note that he identifies the Enlightenment, rather than the Reformation as 'the turning point.' See Chapter Six, *Providential Deism*.

demand the abolition of serfdom,[18] promote common ownership of wild animals and forests,[19] and improve labour conditions and the rights of the peasant workers.[20] The articles also demanded an overhaul of the rental industry, and the criminal and taxation systems.[21] These socialist ideals[22] were taken even further a decade later when the anabaptist rebels violently took control of Münster and established a short-lived quasi-Communist society based on Gospel ideals, under the leadership of the doomsday preacher Jan Matthijszoon. (See: Forster, 2008, p. 121)

Thus in the early Reformation we see an attempt at a scripturally based and salvific political activism by some of the reformers, which often made demands similar to those of the Cambridge students who converted to Communism in the 1930s. Also, in the case of both groups, we see their radicalism definitively in opposition to the state. However, there was a major teleological difference separating the two groups of 'enthusiastic' reformers. It was not a case of there being a slight contrast between the two groups, with modern youths simply wanting a completely secular version of their ancestor's utopian ideals. The whole purpose of reform changed. From being a response to the will of God and, very often, a preparation for the next life, the reform of society was to become an end in itself.

In response to the radical reformers and the anarchic violence they inspired, the "magisterial" reformers presented two very different responses to the problem of civil authority and its relationships with the new Churches. Luther presented a neo-Augustinian solution in which the Church and State were to operate in separate spheres.[23] Calvin on the other hand sought a public religion under which the civil government worked to establish peace and religious orthodoxy; the state was to enforce the Church's religious decisions and run the day to day affairs of society.

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[18] Article three
[19] Articles four and five
[20] Articles six and seven
[21] Articles eight, nine and eleven. Tom Scott and Bob Scribner, eds., 1991, *The German Peasants' War: A History in Documents* cited in Hatlie (Ed.) N.D.
[22] One interesting line of thought was a nostalgic demand to return to village life, a sort of medieval version of 19th century medievalism. Michael Gaismair's Tyrolean *Landesordnung* of early 1526 promotes a nostalgic rural equality: "All city walls, as well as all fortresses in the land are to be broken down, so that there be no more cities but only villages, in order that there be no distinctions among men, and that no one consider himself more important or better than anyone else, for from this may flow dissension, arrogance and rebellion in the whole land. There is to be absolute equality in the land." (Cited in Stayer, 1991, p. 55)
[23] Interestingly Luther's logic was to protect the independence of the churches. A key indicator of the secularisation trend is the reversal of the church/state logic which now seeks to protect the state from the churches.

Both solutions dramatically increased the role of the civil authorities by freeing them from the dictates of the Church in temporal matters and restricting the Church to the interpretation of the Bible and the pursuance of religious purity. (Forster, 2008, p. 122-135) While Luther's ideas about civil government were increasingly inspired by practicalities, Calvin's public religion inspired what the American sociologist Philip S. Gorski has termed the 'disciplinary revolution.'[24] He argues that Calvin's public religion intensified the activities of government by pacifying the general population through far-reaching socio-religious reforms and surveillance. There was now a greater harmony between the religious and moral goals and the goals of the political elite. And, perhaps most importantly of all, socio-political reform was intensified by being tied to salvation anxieties. (Gorski, 2003, pp. 158-159)[25] Taylor sums it up nicely when he says, 'spiritual recovery and the rescue of civil order go together.' (Taylor, 2007, p. 107)

Taylor cites the Reformation as a key event in the movement towards the secular age. In the Reformation we find the seeds of disenchantment and fragmentation as well as some of the precursors to political religion in the religiously inspired socialist reformers of the sixteenth century.[26] These seeds will become key elements of life in the secular age and may be seen as providing the basis for answer to the question, were the converts to Catholicism and Communism reacting to similar contextual pressures?

The Emergence of the Secular Age

Taylor is quick to point out that none of the processes that can be said to have engendered modern secularism was inevitable or even necessarily permanent.[27] However he traces a clear

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[24] Also cited in Taylor, 2007, pp. 785, ft. 89, 788, ft. 49.

[25] To that end he notes that welfare states tended to emerge in areas heavily influenced by reformed Protestantism, principally England and her colonies. (Gorski, 2003, p. 163) To that it might also be added that violent socialist revolution only occured in countries that had not been inherently changed by the Protestant Reformation, namely France and Russia.

[26] The earliest Socialists were overtly religious reformers who sought a divinely inspired utopia on earth. As mentioned in the previous chapter, many of the early protestant reformers, such as Thomas Müntzer, saw theological reforms as the first step towards the necessary social reforms. England had their own inspired anarchists who rejected the civil authorities for exegetical reasons. The Civil war produced an impressive array of dissident groups seeking essentially Socialist utopias; the Levelers, the Diggers, the Fifth Monarchists and the Ranters. Many in this final group became Quakers whose descendents would re-emerge to play key roles in the Socialist revival of the 1880s.[26] (Manuel & Manuel, 1979. pp. 334-335)

[27] A classic example of the unpredictability of belief is cited by John Milbank who points out that 'Fairy belief was actually *revived* and given new intellectual support in eighteenth century Scotland thanks to the influence of the more liberal and neoplatonically inclined theology of the "fairy minister," Robert Kirk.' ('A Closer Walk on the Wild Side.' In M. Warner, J. VanAntwerpen, & C. J. Calhoun (Eds.), 2010, p. 60)

genealogy of thought through the long 18th century, from Protestantism to moralism to devout humanism or deism and onto exclusive humanism. This final stage appears when the enchanted world fades and 'a viable conception of our highest spiritual and moral aspirations arise such that we could conceive of doing without God in acknowledging and pursuing them.' (Taylor, 2007, p. 234) This is a much bigger intellectual shift than simply the loss of faith. This is the moment when wholly secular religions emerge.

Richard Pipes begins his history of Communism with Hesiod's poem 'Works and Days' in which the poet laments the dangers of avarice after his brother swindled him out of the family farm by bribing judges. From Hesoid to Virgil and Ovid then back to Plato, Pipes shows that the desire for social equality and a golden age free from 'boundary posts and fences' was an important element in the intellectual life of Classical Antiquity. (Pipes, 2001, pp. 3-4) One of the great achievements of Judeo-Christian Culture was tempering the utopian impulse with the doctrine of original sin. Thomas More's *Utopia* which literally translates from the Greek as 'no-place' features a city of ruthless and hellish conformity. Despite many modern humanist interpretations of More's speculative fiction it is clear that he had no confidence in the ability of mankind to establish a viable egalitarian golden age. Richard Marius, one of More's biographers, wrote that the rigour of Utopia's customs reveal More's 'melancholoy awareness of the inevitable power of sin. … More was to the marrow of his bones a medieval Christian, saturated with pessimism about a frail humankind weakened by original sin'. (Marius, 1999, p. 167)

The limitations of More's utopian vision when compared to the visions of Marx and his intellectual descendents reveals the important role original sin played in the intellectual life of Christendom. One of the few sources of unity among the enlightenment thinkers was in their rejection of the doctrine of original sin. As Ernst Cassirer put it, 'the concept of original sin is the most common opponent against which the different orientations of Enlightenment philosophy unite.' (Cited in Wiley, 2002, p. 109) John Locke was one of the first, denying Original Sin in *Vindications of the Reasonableness of Christinity* and, it might be argued as a consequence of this denial, later claiming in his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* that mankind's values came from sensory experience rather than innate ideas and were therefore completely malleable. Over fifty years later, Claude Adrien Helvetius was claiming that proper laws and education alone could 'compel humans to attain complete virtue.'(Cited in Pipes, 2001, p. 7) A world

without ‘boundary posts and fences’ was therefore possible, it was only limited by the power of human reason. Thus what Taylor calls ‘self-sufficient’ humanism became possible; it just needed a program. Following from these thinkers came, perhaps inevitably, the speculative system of the ‘parousiastic thinkers’. (Voegelin, 1997, p. 34) Voegelin takes his term Parousiasm from the Greek word ‘Parousia’ which means arrival and was used in the New Testament to describe the Second Coming. ‘Parousiastic thinkers’ were those who seek to usher in the new heaven and new earth without recourse to any divine power. They are the founders of the political religions.

While Christianity fragmented during the Reformation, this fragmentation would be nothing compared to the growing fragmentation that would emanate out of the Enlightenment and into the secular age. An infinite number of programs would emerge, an army of isms, each attempting to legitimize Helvetius’ theory while really only inspiring further theories. Taylor describes this as the nova effect, which takes place among the intellectual elites. He describes it as the desire for a third way between religious orthodoxy and unbelief, which quickly becomes an ever increasing number of third ways. (Taylor, 2007, p. 302) As the Parousiastic speculations of the intellectuals share move into popular consciousness the nova effect becomes a supernova of fragmentation that takes in whole societies. (p. 299)

Louis Duprè, the phenomenologist and religious philosopher, offers another view of the need for Parousiastic speculations. He argued in similar terms to those of Taylor that secularism destroyed the cultural unity created by the Christian world view.

> The unity of the integrated culture on which Western metaphysics once rested became fragmented into isolated spheres: nature, the meaning-giving mind, the inscrutable God. The transcendent component gradually withdrew from culture. The process now appears to have become completed. It is, of course, not the case that contemporary culture *denies* the existence of God or of the divine. But transcendence plays no vital role in the integration of our culture. The fragmentation, it ought to be noted has not halted at the ultimate principles. Once the human subject became solely responsible for the constitution of meaning and value, tradition lost its former authority. Each group, if not each individual, eventually felt free to advance a cultural synthesis of its own, ransacking the tradition for spare parts. (Dupré, 1994a, p. 45)

Moreover, the need for coherence and unity has not disappeared: 'For the unity of metaphysics to be possible, the culture in which it takes place must already have formed a coherent synthesis of its own. Its members need to agree on the most basic values and to share an overall vision of the real.' (Dupré, 1994a, p.42) The drive to formulate that coherent synthesis has been a recognisable feature of any intellectual history covering the previous three centuries. For Duprè the ransacking mentioned earlier was part of the reason that so much religious language finds its way into purely secular syntheses. (Dupré, 1994b, p. 12)

In this era of hyperpluralism there certainly emerged the mass movements that I will be describing as political religions but the more common experience was that of confusion in the form of what Jean Marie Guyau described as anomie.[28] Writing in the late 19th century Guyau wrote a prediction about the morality of the future.[29] He predicted that it would no longer involve either obligation and sanction and would be increasingly individualized and speculative. 'This variation, Guyau adds, 'is the absence of a fixed law, that can be described as anomie…' (Orru, 1983, p. 504) Guyau considered anomie to be 'the defining characteristic' of the secular future but considered it to be a positive liberation. However Alasdair MacIntyre, living in the secular age Guyau accurately predicted, had a very different perspective. 'Each moral agent now spoke unconstrained by the externalities of divine law, natural teleology or hierarchical authority; but why should anyone now listen to him?' (MacIntyre, 1981, p. 66) MacIntyre had noted, as early as the mid 1960s, in his Riddell Memorial Lectures, that modern anomie had robbed communities of a shared moral vocabulary and concluded, 'the notion of moral authority is no longer a viable one.' (MacIntyre, 1967, pp. 51)[30] As we shall soon see, many of the subjects of this study would encounter anomie as they abandoned the religion of their childhood but, for a time, found no replacement, only moral confusion. Whether consciously or not, they would soon be moving towards more demanding and dogmatic faiths such as Catholicism and Communism. The experience of anomie might easily be seen as a cause for conversion.

[28] It is often claimed that Durkheim invented the term but rather he discovered it in Guyau's book, *The Non-Religion of the Future* and completely reinvented it to suit his interpretative framework. (Orru, 1983)
[29] In *A Sketch of Morality Independent of Obligation or Sanction* (1884)
[30] It is certainly interesting timing that, on a wave ultramontane support, the Catholic Church formalized the doctrine of Papal infallibility, with relatively few resulting apostates, in 1870; a time of rapidly growing secularization.

Secular Religions

Guyau also discussed the concept of religious anomie in which religion became thoroughly relativised. In *The Non-Religion of the Future* (1887) he predicts that, 'natural religion is divested of its moral function; individuals are nowadays left to their metaphysical speculation, to their religious individualism, to their religious anomie.' (Cited in Orru, 1983, p. 505) What is telling about this observation is that Guyau, writing over a hundred years before Taylor, does not predict the disappearance of religion, only its fragmentation. Gustave Le Bon, the social psychologist and contemporary of Guyau's, noted with surprise that, 'At the end of the last century, in the presence of destroyed churches, of priests expelled [from] the country or guillotined, it might have been thought that the old religious ideas had lost all their strength, and yet a few years had barely lapsed before the abolished system of public worship had to be re-established in deference to universal demands.' (2001, p. 49) The survival of religion must come as a surprise to many students of secularism. Le Bon, although plainly convinced that religion was an illusion, refused to deny its value. In the same work he quotes Daniel Lesueur:[31]

> If one destroyed in museums and libraries, if one hurled down on the flagstones before the churches all the works and all the monuments of art that religions have inspired, what would remain of the great dreams of humanity? To give to men that portion of hope and illusion without which they cannot live, such is the reason for the existence of gods, heroes, and poets. During fifty years science appeared to undertake this task. But science has been compromised in hearts hungering after the ideal, because it does not dare to [make] lavish enough promises, because it cannot lie. (Cited in Le Bon, 2001, p. 64)

It is particularly telling that even those, like Le Bon and Lesueur, who were convinced that religion was false, were equally convinced that religion responded to an inherent need in mankind. The Romanian historian of religions, Mircea Eliade, argued that any "liberation" from religion was illusory, 'nonreligious man in the pure state is a comparatively rare phenomenon, even in the most desacralised of modern societies. The majority of the 'irreligious' still behave religiously, even though they are not aware of the fact.' (Cited in Gentile & Mallett, 2000, p. 30)

[31] Daniel Lesueur was the pen name of the French writer, Jeanne Lapauze (1860 – 1920).

Thus, while formal religions may have declined in the secular age, the religious impulse itself has not.

Secularism caused a paradigm shift in religious definitional theory rather than its complete eradication. The survival of the religious impulse in an ever-broadening array of religious faiths necessitates a broader definition for religion itself. The two key elements of religion are faith and morals. Some scholars attempt to impose numinosity[32] as a third element, but the prevalence of many modern religions that might easily be described as disenchanted suggests that this is not universal enough to qualify as a foundational element. Taking this inclusive definitional approach we can cite writers like Gerhard Lenski who wrote, '[We] propose that religion be defined as a system of beliefs about the nature of force(s) shaping man's destiny, and the practices associated therewith, shared by the members of a group.' Or John Milton Yinger who concluded that, 'religion is a system of beliefs and practices by means of which a group of people struggles with the ultimate problems of human life (both cited in Aldridge, 2007, p. 34). Robert Bellah defined religion 'as a set of symbolic forms and acts which relate man to the ultimate conditions of his existence.' (Bellah, 1964, p. 359) All these definitions contain the basic elements of faith and morals.[33]

However it is possible to find a deeper commonality than merely faith and morals. John E. Smith, developing Paul Tillich's definitional work, isolated the common pattern of all world religions.

1. The *diagnosis* of the human predicament or man's fallen state,
2. The *quest* for the reality that has the power to overcome the flaw and restore the wholeness of our being.
3. The need for a deliverer who/which overcomes the flaw and restores the wholeness of our being. (J. E. Smith, 1994, p. 3)

[32] The German religious philosopher Rudolf Otto coined the term numinous to describe 'suprarational religious feeling.' (O'Meley, 1995, p. 241)
[33] Or as Yinger puts it, beliefs and acts, or Lenski, 'beliefs and practices' or Bellah, 'ultimate conditions and acts.'

It is clear that these three stages, which are common to both eastern and western religions, can also be applied to a number of political ideologies from the 19th and 20th centuries.

It is often argued that such inclusive definitions transform everything into a religion. But to measure hyperpluralism by the number of denominations is to miss the point; it is to ignore the concept of anomie, and the relativising trends of the past one hundred years. Clearly writers, like Lenski, Yinger and Bellah, are merely responding to prevailing attitudes.[34] Indeed it is worth noting that the definition of religion has a history of its own which can be said to parallel the history of secularization sketched out above. The definition offered by Lactantius in the third century AD, was that religion was a 'chain of piety' by which we were 'bound and tied to God'. (Lactantius, 1885, p. 289) This definition reflects a strictly Judeo-Christian perspective. In the midst of the seventeenth century, a period of religious fragmentation perspective known as the *konfessionalisierung*,[35] we can see Lactantius's definition broadened in the definition offered by Lord Edward Herbert of Cherbury. Herbert isolated five unifying features of religion, these being: '(1) A belief in a supernatural power; (2) a belief that this power is to be worshipped; (3) the stipulation that this worship is to consist not in outward ceremony, but in piety and holiness; (4) a belief that sin can be expiated; and (5) a belief that there are rewards and punishments after this life.' (Wilson, 1998, p. 144) In the secular era, the most commonly cited definition would have to be Durkheim's claim that 'a religion is a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things... beliefs and practices which unite into one single moral community called a Church, all those who adhere to them' (Cited in Wilson, 1998, pp. 150-151) The shift in definition from Lactantius to Durkheim is obvious, i.e. the diminished focus on the supernatural and the emphasis on the functional. This reflects the phenomenon of secularization, in which the focus on the supernatural recedes while what might be termed the other functions of religion are still clearly being fulfilled by a supernova of philosophies, ideologies and rapidly changing

[34] Emilio Gentile, cites Owen Chadwick when dealing with this complex problem of defining a political religion. 'I think that he task of the historian is not to give an answer to the question about the truthfulness of a belief system but to answer real questions of historiography – why a belief arises, in which way it is believed, how its axioms influence society and in what way it disappears.' (Gentile, 'Political religion: a concept and its critics – a critical survey,' 2005, p. 28)

[35] I have borrowed this term from Reinhard who notes that the German word Konfessionen covers both the confessions of faith of the individual and that of their respective communities and so calls this period of new churches, *konfessionalisierung*. (Reinhard, 1989, p. 390)

traditional religions. Thus the definition of a religion needed to be broadened to reflect the full gamut of religious experiences.

Paul Tillich argued that religion is ultimate concern: 'religion is the state of being grasped by an ultimate concern, a concern which qualifies all other concerns as preliminary and which itself contains the answer to the question of meaning our life.' (Cited in Smith, 1994, p. 2) The modern tendency to define religion by scope rather than content is itself a neat reflection of the phenomenon of hyperpluralism. As the supernatural recedes from many people's lives it is not surprising that it also recedes from their religious landscape, leaving a largely humanist creed with its completely temporal teleology. In this context politics is often sacrelised into a fully formed religion. According to Gentile and Mallett:

> The sacralisation of politics takes place when politics is conceived, lived and represented through myths, rituals and symbols that demand faith in the sacralised secular entity, dedication among the community of believers, enthusiasm for action, a warlike spirit and sacrifice in order to secure its defence and its triumph. In such cases, it is possible to speak of *religions of politics* in that politics itself assumes religious characteristics. (Gentile & Mallett, 2000, pp. 21-2)

One could easily argue that politics has always been sacralised[36] but only now is it being sacralised for its own sake. Where earlier politics was sanctified by an exterior religion it has, more recently, been transformed into a religion in its own right. A king in ancient Israel or even the Middle Ages would have argued that God's grace would transform him and, through him, his polity. Now, in the modern era, there are political systems which, of themselves, 'create the *new man*, who is dedicated in body and soul to the realisation of the revolutionary and imperialistic policies of the totalitarian party.'(Gentile & Mallett, 2000, p. 19) This is a political religion.

The Bohemian writer, Franz Werfel, explicitly linked the new political religions with secularization. 'There is a deep and secret sore festering in the world. Its feverish pain is alleviated by the thick surgical dressings of modern philosophies and ideologies.' (Werfel,1944,

[36] The formula cited by Taylor, 'the clergy pray for all, the lords defend all, the peasants labour for all,' can be viewed as part of a sacred conception of politics, in which the entire system is viewed as a manifestation of the Divine Will. (2007, p. 45)

p. 79) In his 1932 lecture, ‘Can We Live Without Faith in God’ Werfel reflected on the situation in Germany and Austria in which countless young men were being drawn to Fascism or Communism. ‘They are seeking a connection with a higher order, a super order, an authority to which they can passionately subject themselves, and for which, if occasion arises, they can sacrifice their lives. World history teaches us that man cheerfully offers his life only for one thing, for his faith.’ (Werfel,1944, p. 91)

Eric Voegelin argued that the political religion of Communism was essentially a secular or disenchanted version of Gnosticism which ‘sees the world as an alien place into which man has strayed and out of which he must find his way back home to the other world of his origin.’ (1997, p. 7) In other words it is a modern faith that gives mankind an ennobling purpose. The solution is knowledge or Gnosis. Voegelin calls it parousiastic Gnosticism, the system by which ‘man’s creative power’ transforms the world into ‘a perfect and just order.’ (Voegelin,1997, p. 35) Voegelin notes that even though parousiastic Gnosticism is a secular phenomenon, it is still a religious phenomenon. ‘The Marxian *homo novus* is not a man without religious illusions, but one who has taken God back into his being.’ (Voegelin, 1997, p. 44) The source of religious meaning might change from the transcendent to the immanent but the quest for salvation still remains. This was expressed quite neatly by the American journalist, Albert Rhys Williams, following a visit to the Soviet Union in 1923; he came to the conclusion that the October Revolution had completely ‘supplanted the Second Coming of Christ.’(Cited in Heller, 1988, p. 46)

Communism as a Religion

Both Voegelin and Werfel isolated Fascism and Communism as the 20th century's major political religions. This was more than a response to their context; it reflected the fact that only totalitarian systems are overtly sacralised. This is partly because, as Voegelin put it, they seek to become the 'absolute principle of collective existence' and 'the main source of values of individual and mass behaviour.' (1997, p. 18) In a sense it needs the explicit authority and universality of a religion to take in the entire population. Secondly, 'totalitarianism is a continual process' therefore it demands 'veneration and dedication, even to the point of self-sacrifice.' (Voegelin, 1997, pp. 21, 19)

According to Marx's critique of religion the problem was not so much religion itself, as false religion. 'Man sought a supernatural being in a fantastic heaven but what he found was only a reflection of himself, which is not his true being but only a semblance… the abolition of religion with its illusory happiness is, at the same time, a call to find true happiness. (Cited in Smith 1994, p. 55) One can find in Marx's revisions the same logic as that which inspired the author of Psalm 115. In this psalm the speaker rejects the gods of other nations in favor of the real and free God of Heaven. (Ps. 115.2-8)

The religious historian James Thrower[37] argued that by the time Marxism was Marxism-Leninism, it had become 'a total world view… a system of thought comprising views about the most general and significant features of the universe, and about the principle purposes of human life.' (Thrower 1992, p. 3) Whilst Thrower labels it as a 'Philosophy in the wide sense of the word' most historians have argued that Communism was, in fact, a religion. The Russian logician Aleksander Zinoviev, wrote in *The Reality of Communism* that '[Marxism] had been converted into an ideology' while Karl Jaspers noted that Marx's attitude marked him as a religious founder, 'believing he was in possession of a total system of knowledge, Marx, like the theologians, was the enemy of agnosticism and skepticism.' (Both cited in Thrower, 1992, pp. 12, 16)

[37] In his study Thrower uses the term, 'civil religion', based on Bellah's definition. I can see the logic behind this term but Bellah's definition was, itself, based on Rousseau's who described civil religion as a system of beliefs which is differentiated from the state but to which the state pledges allegiance. Given that this study is concerned with a group whose Communism was sorely at odds with the civil religion of their homeland, the more obvious concept of political religion seems more appropriate for Communism because it takes into account the lived experiences of Communists outside the Soviet Union..

The completeness of Marxism and later Communism was one of its chief attractions. As Douglas Hyde noted, 'I would say that the majority who come to Communism do so because, in the first instance, they are subconsciously looking for a cause which will fill the void left by unbelief, or, as in my own case, an insecurely held belief which is failing to satisfy them intellectually and spiritually.'(1951, pp. 273-274) Admittedly this was written at the time of his own conversion from Communism to Catholicism but Hyde's theory rings true with many of the first generation of converts to Communism. The conversion of the Hungarian philosopher, György Lukācs[38] to Communism is a perfect example. He rejected socialism because it did not have the 'religious power capable of filling the entire soul.' According to a close friend, Paul Ernst, Lukācs saw in the Russian Revolution the pathway to 'a free world in which the Spirit will once again rule and the Soul will at last be able to live.' (Both cited in Priestland, 2009, p. 110) In 1920 Bertrand Russell visited the Soviet Union as part of a British delegation. Ever the controversialist, he returned home as the only member unimpressed by Lenin's Russia. In his subsequent book, *The Practice and Theory of Bolshevism*, he argued that Bolshevism was clearly more than a political doctrine.

> It is also a religion, with elaborate dogmas and inspired scriptures. When Lenin wishes to prove some proposition, he does so, if possible, by quoting texts from Marx and Engels. A full-fledged Communist is not merely a man who believes that land and capital should be held in common, and their produce distributed as nearly equally as possible. He is a man who entertains a number of elaborate and dogmatic beliefs–such as philosophic materialism, for example – which may be true, but are not, to a scientific temper, capable of being known to be true with any certainty. (1920, p. 8)

While some critics argue that Marxism and its Russian derivatives were merely economic systems there is no denying the fact that many of its adherents, explicitly sought religious consolation in Communism, and believed themselves, however briefly, to have found it as Communists. Moreover a significant number of the academics who describe Communism as a

[38] A brief study of Lukācs' life marks him as one of the great survivors of the Communist era. Somehow he negotiated the line between critics and supporters of the regime and survived in each political era. He was placed under house arrest during Stalin's great terror and, while around eighty per cent of Hungarian émigrés were murdered, he survived with only a brief spell in Tashkent.

religion are those like Mikhail Heller, Leszek Kolakowski, Marcin Kula and Aleksander Zinoviev who all lived in Communist countries.

Charles Taylor is remarkably silent on the topic of political religions. He describes Communism and Fascism as 'modes of anti-religion' but acknowledges that they are trying to 'recapture something of a higher purpose for secular life in purely immanent terms.'(2007, p. 267) Taylor also argues that this immanent search for a higher purpose, 'quasi-religious in tone' emerges 'from a specifically Western and Christian context.' (Taylor, 2007, p. 207)[39], It is Communism's Christian context that is so crucial to our understanding of its religiosity because it goes some way to explaining why it seems to borrow so heavily from the Christian tradition.

In the 1960s there was an increasing dialogue between Christian theologians and Communist theorists and philosophers. Milan Machoveč, a Czech Communist wrote *A Marxist Looks at Jesus*. Borrowing from Marx's historical theory of continuity, Machoveč linked historical Christianity and Marxism by virtue of their 'radical eschatology' and the demands they make upon men in every age. Indeed he suggested that these Christian elements were what made pre-revolutionary Communism so attractive; 'early Marxists[40] were often enchanted by the prospect of 'a leap into the realm of freedom'. (1976, p. 27) They were the young men that Werfal was writing about and Communism was one of the super orders for which they were searching.

The Polish historian, Marcin Kula, studied those dogmatic beliefs, so reviled by Russell, and found that they had much in common with Christian dogma. Communist belief held that history was pre-ordained. Following the Christian cycle of 'Christ came, Christ left, Christ will come again', Communism taught that a classless society existed among the earliest people, that it disappeared but that it would come again. This paradise would be the culmination of all history – the end of time so to speak. (Kula, 2005, p. 372)[41] Whilst it is clear that Communism

[39] See also Fisher-Høyrem, S. (2013). Charles Taylor and Political Religion: Overlapping Concerns. *Religion Compass* , *7* (8), 326–337. p. 335.

[40] And our converts, never having lived in Soviet Russia, are really 'early Marxists', in the sense meant by Machoveč. He differentiates pre-revolutionary Marxists with post-revolutionary Communists who have seen through the radical optimism of their forbears and now find it impossible to believe that 'the expropriation of private property, given the correction of a number of faults that happen to have been made en route, will eventually have such wonderful consequences as to bring about an 'absolutely different' form of life and soon put within everyone's grasp all possible beauty and pleasure.'(Machoveč, 1976, p. 27)

[41] Indeed Marxist paradise is preceded by a sort of purgatory in which the chosen were purified. (Kula, 2005, p. 372)

appropriates heavily from the Judeo-Christian tradition, I want to judge it against the three elements of a religion that have been suggested by Smith.[42]

1. **The Diagnosis.**

For Marx, original sin came in the form of Alienation. Alienation has much in common with the Judeo-Christian understanding of man's fall, first in the recognition that man is fallen and second in the recognition that the fall was the fault of man. In this instance, industrialized capitalism had sundered man from his true nature and he describes that break as, 'a mistake, a defect which ought not to be.' (Cited in Churchich, 1990, p. 39) Man moves from being a conscious worker to 'an appendage of a machine.' (Cited in Sayers 1998, p. 192) The result mirrors the curse spoken by God in Genesis:

> [The worker] does not confirm himself in his work but denies himself, feels miserable not happy, does not develop free mental and physical energy but mortifies his flesh and ruins his mind…. His labour is therefore not voluntary but forced; it is forced labour. It is therefore not the satisfaction of a need; but a means to satisfy needs outside itself. (Marx, *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844*, Cited in Sayers 1998, p. 193)

2. **The Quest.**

As Kula was suggesting, at the heart of Communist dogma was an Economy of Salvation that, in many ways, mirrored the Christian Economy of Salvation, or as St. Paul calls it in his letter to the Ephesians the "plan of the mystery". The sacrament of the revolution, enacted by the saviour figure of Lenin, gave birth to the new man. Critics will rightly point out that none of this comes directly from Marxist or even Leninist theory. However the rapidity with which the revolution and Lenin were interpreted through the hitherto exclusively Judeo-Christian soteriological framework speaks volumes about the appeal of these ideas. Max Eastman,[43] a radical American Socialist, said of his conversion, 'I need never again cry out: "I wish I believed in the Son of God and his Second Coming!"'(Cited in Klinghoffer, 1996, p. 68) His new religion provided him with an equally consoling Economy of Salvation.

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[42] For the sake of clarity I have divided the third point (The need for a deliverer which overcomes the flaw and restores the wholeness of our being) into two points, namely the deliverer and the restoration.

[43] Eastman married Elena Krylenko, the sister of Nikolai Krylenko, the infamous Commissar of Justice behind many of the show trials in the 1930s.

The Polish intellectual historian Leszek Kolakowski has argued that central to both Christianity and Marxism was the possibility of eschatology with all its salvific connotations. (Cited in Thrower, 1992, p. 18) For both religions their eschatology was defined by the possibility of salvation, won by the actions of a messianic figure. For Christians, the sacrifice of the cross was the central event in the salvation economy because it opened the gates of the 'Kingdom of God.' For Communists the sacrifice of the revolution achieved something equally transformative, it opened the gates to the dictatorship of the proletariat and the opportunity to destroy alienation. From the very beginning the revolution was the focus of all activity that might be described as Marxist and/or Leninist. The German sociologist, Klaus-Georg Riegel pointed out that in the years before the revolution Lenin painstakingly organized a brotherly group of revolutionary virtuosi, 'longing for salvation for themselves and their respective societies.' (Riegel, 2005, p. 101) These were the men and women that Thrower describes as Communism's priesthood. (1992, p. 42) As we shall see, the Cambridge spies were their successors in this vocation.

When the revolution actually took place, John Reed wrote in his popular account, *Ten Days that Shook the World*, 'Vast Russia was in a state of solution.'(2007, p. 147)[44] Aleksandr Blok's poem, *Twelve* echoes Reed's confident sense of salvation:

> Ahead of them – with bloody banner,
> Unseen within the blizzard's swirl,
> Safe from any bullet's harm.
> With gentle step, above the storm,
> In the scattered pear-like snow,
> Crowned with a wreath of roses white,
> Ahead of them – goes Jesus Christ. (Blok, 2010, p. 14)

Whilst the poem is far more complex than a simple Christian allegory, the association of Christ's redemptive work with that of the soldiers is unmistakable.[45]

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[44] Reeds ends the Chapter entitled victory with a jubilant old Workman driving exultantly into the city of Petrograd, '"Mine!" he cried, his face all alight. "All mine now! My Petrograd!"' (Reed, 2007, p. 218)

[45] Indeed Blok himself wrote in the margins of his poem, that the Twelve might be associated with the traditional song, *Once There Lived Twelve Robbers*, which is about the conversion and redemption of Kudeiar, the Robber Chief. (Tumarkin, 1983, ft 6, pp. 3-4) Clearly Blok saw the October Revolution as a key moment of redemption.

3. The Deliverer.

At the heart of this so called redemptive work stood the increasingly mystical figure of Lenin. Even within his own lifetime he was gradually transformed, in the popular consciousness, into a prophet, a saint, and finally, a saviour. After a failed assassination attempt in 1918, Lev Sosnovsky, a Bolshevik journalist argued that Lenin could not be killed and in his account, he repositioned the wounds Lenin suffered, as a voluntary sacrifice for the sake of the revolution. (Tumarkin, 1983, pp. 83-84) The effect of this was to link Lenin with a long line of 'Princely passion sufferers' such as St. Andrei Bogolyubsky. (Tumarkin, 1983, p. 6) In the period that followed, the Russian poetess, Seifuhna noted that Lenin and the revolution were often interpreted by peasants through the mystical logic of the Bible. For many of his Christian supporters 'Lenin was the bearer of the righteous wrath of God, who was to fulfill the prophecies of Isaiah.'(Fulop-Miller, 1927, p. 29) As Lenin lay, debilitated by a series of strokes, at his dacha in Gorki, the party, despite their ideological atheism, deified him for the sake of unity.[46]

When Lenin died the Central Committee, appropriating the doctrine of the Mystical body of Christ, reassured the people that all was not lost. 'Lenin lives in the soul of every member of our party. Every member of our party is a particle of Lenin. Our entire communist family is a collective embodiment of Lenin. Lenin lives in the heart of every worker. Lenin lives in the heart of every poor peasant.' (Cited in Tumarkin, 1983, p. 148) Thousands upon thousands braved temperatures of minus thirty five degrees to attend Lenin's funeral which lasted for more than six hours. Many of them filed past his coffin chanting, 'Lenin's grave is the cradle of freedom of all humanity.'(Tumarkin, 1983, 162) This simple statement embodies the logic of the resurrection and reveals that for many, what started as a mixture of pragmatic propaganda and popular legend had become a matter of firm, pseudo-Christian, faith.

[46] The most obvious manifestation of this process was the development of Lenin corners to replace the traditional Icon corner in most Russian homes. (Tumarkin, 1983, p. 127)

The Restoration

Led by Lenin, the saviour, through the salvific sacrifice of revolution, the Communist Economy of Salvation was able to propose a New Man and a community of believers in which he could operate free from his former attachments. Salvation now came from the individual. Communism dictated that the way to redemption was through the suffering of the party member, 'present day renunciations and sufferings would be made up for by the grateful memory in which they would be held by their descendants.' (Kula, 2005, p. 372).[47] The actions of the good and faithful party member were governed by a strict moral code that the Marxist philosopher Herbert Marcuse describes as a 'competitive work morality'.

> The moral values converge on the subordination of pleasure to duty – the duty to put everything into service for the State, the Party and society. Translated into private morality, this means strict monogamic relations, directed toward the production and raising of children; discipline and competitive performance in the established division of functions; and leisure activities as relaxation from work and re-creation of energy for work rather than as an end in itself.... in Soviet society, "love for one's work" is per se one of the highest principles of Communist morality.[48] (Marcuse, 1958, pp. 233-234)

The adherent to this moral system, the communists 'saint', was known as Homo Sovieticus whose 'party mindedness manifests itself in his entire world outlook, his clear vision of the Ideal, to which he is selflessly devoted.' (Heller, 1988, p. 46) For many of the young Communists of England and France, far away from the materialist liturgies of the Red Square, the chief attraction that Communism offered was its sense of moral and intellectual stability grounded in a clear sense of vocational purpose; it offered a direct solution to the confusion of hyperpluralism and the paralysis of anomie.

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[47] Ernst B. Koenker's *Secular Salvations Rites and Symbols of Political Religions* discusses this view of history and points out that it gave the Communist an 'amazing ability to live in the future and ignore the present,' (1965, p. 37) which is clearly similar to a religious ability to transcend suffering in the present, or more specifically to the Christian 'dialectic of the Cross' which communicates the hope of a complete transformation of circumstances. (Machoveč 1976, p. 84)

[48] Marcuse goes on to explain that the rigidity of Communist morality was generally softened when it adversely affected productivity levels.

However, it is worth focusing, however briefly, on the explicitly religious aspects of life in the Soviet Union because they reinforce the Mircea Eliade's point that a non-religious life is extremely difficult to live. They also reveal the ease with which the religious ideas that were inherent in Communist theory were given artistic, architectural and liturgical expression. Just as the Christian churches presented themselves as the temporal caretakers of the restored creation, so Moscow determinedly established and maintained the same role. Like the Catholic Church, Moscow repeatedly asserted itself as the sole centre of orthodoxy. Soviet Communism was soon overseeing a fairly explicit Communist religion with what may be seen as its 'saints', its 'sacred texts' and its 'pilgrimage sites' and 'liturgical calendar'. Even party meetings resembled prayer meetings during the Stalinist era, with their rote speeches and 'formulaic incantations.' (Kula, 2005, p. 379)

Despite the disenchantment of the secular age (or perhaps because of it) rituals have doggedly persisted as an integral expression of mankind's spiritual hopes and needs. In her study, *The Rites of Rulers: Ritual in Industrial Society – The Soviet Case*, Christel Lane explored the nature of Soviet Socialist rituals which covered all aspects of the individual's life from birth to death. While many of the rituals were rejected by the populace, such as the oktyabriny ritual (or October baby naming), their very introduction represents a clear statement regarding the holistic role that the Communist religion sought to play in the lives of its adherents. Lane explains that an idea of the sacred existed within the atheistic Communist state. It was a sense of holiness which allowed objects rites and places to be imbued with a sense of 'timeless importance' and become considered as part of the unalterable order of things. (Lane, 1981, p. 36) Of particular interest was the tendency of the regime to build the functional eqiuvalant of churches; 'special buildings where life-cycle rites [could] be performed separately and apart from everyday utilitarian activity.' (Lane, 1981, p. 37)

Communist rituals, although present in the early days of the revolution, took on a renewed vigor in the 1960s when A. F. Okulov, the head of the Institute of Scientific Atheism,[49] began

[49] Scientific Atheism, as practiced in Soviet Russia, is worthy of its own extensive study. Its existence, according to Thrower, disproved Marx's critique of religion which held that religion would simply 'wither away' in a socialist society. (1992, p. 46) Thus the Soviet government promoted scientific atheism as a means of more explicitly fulfilling the functions previously ascribed to religion. In fact Okulov went so far as to criticise Marxist-Leninism for failing to give enough thought to man's spiritual side. (p. 49-50)

demanding a more explicitly religious form of atheism. Appreciating their ability to unify large sections of the population he recommended 'more attractive Marxist-Leninist secular rituals.' (Thrower, 1992, p. 48) Mikhail Heller described Soviet history as, 'the history of the promise and expectation of a miracle.' (1988, p. 79) It was clear that for many in the mid-sixties that expectation was falling away and the solution was something akin to a Communist-Religious revival. The ceremonies were 'a curious mixture of Christian timing, pagan [and Christian] rituals[50] and Communist dogma.' (Thrower, 1992, pp. 61-3) It thus becomes clear that not only could Communism be considered a religion with clear Judeo-Christian parallels but that in fact many Communists wanted it to become more explicitly religious in order to ensure its survival. This in turn reveals the religious elements that were inherent in Communism and proved so attractive to the Communist converts of interwar England. In a sense the explicit religiosity of Russia's Communism helps to explain the piety and even mysticism that we will encounter in the memoirs, poetry and novels of England's Communist intellectuals. For this reason it is entirely possible to see what Fisher-Høyrem has called the 'innate urge to transcend the ordinary world' as being part of both the Catholic and Communist conversion impulse.

Conversion Theory in the Secular Age

Conversion, like religion, has required an increasingly secularized definition. The word conversion comes from the Latin, 'convertere' which means to turn around or change direction. The word conversion can also be linked with the Greek words, 'epistrephein', 'strephein' and 'metanoia' and the Hebrew word 'shub', all of which mean simply turning or returning, with connotations of repentance or intellectual change. The growth of secularization has seen a fragmentation of the potential destinations or directions for the convert to seek. In the *Summa Theologica*, Aquinas uses the word 'conversion' exclusively in the sense of a 'turning to God' which suggests a remarkably stable intellectual context in which conversion operates *within* Lactantius's definition of religion. (See for instance: ST I-II, 113, x.)

[50] For instance, the birth ceremony or as it was sometimes known, the Day of Family Happiness. The parents were lectured about their obligations, and the baby was clothed with young pioneer neckerchiefs and Komosol badges, indicating their future roles. This neatly matches the Catholic and Orthodox ceremonies in which the child is clothed in white following the sacrament of Baptism. Some Communist children were even given sponsors, whose role mirrored that of Christian godparents, in that they would help to bring the children up as committed workers. (Thrower, 1992, p. 64)

Secular hyperpluralism has naturally complicated the term, conversion. It must now take into account a more complex array of destinations, both religious and secular. Further, modern religious anomie means that the extent of a conversion and its consequences have become entirely unpredictable. Thus, more recently, Anthony Blasi has defined conversion as the 'redirection of foundational trust.' ('The Meaning of Conversion: Redirection of Foundational Trust.' In G. Giordan (Ed.) 2009, p. 11) The overtly religious word faith is replaced by the more empirical word, trust and any moral connotations, like those contained in the Greek and Hebrew words, are completely gone. Conversion has been simplified to a single choice among many possible choices.[51] As in the earlier discussion on defining religion, we see the focus on the supernatural receding while the impulse remains and thus we need to adopt a broader definition that will encompass both religious and secular possibilities.

Snow and Machalek made the helpful distinction between adhesion and conversion. The former was marked by 'useful supplementation' while the latter was marked by what Nock had earlier called, a 're-orientation of the soul.' (Snow & Machalek, 1984, p. 169) This, I think hints at the nature of the conversions that will form the basis of this study. They are characterised by 'complete disruption' and nothing less. (Snow & Machalek, 1984, p. 169) In his autobiographical history of the years 1900 – 1915, *The End of a Chapter* Shane Leslie,[52] wrote that the old Greek word, peripeteia, could be used to indicate conversion. He translated, it as 'The Divine Somersault.' (1916, p. 68) Whilst his translation is hardly literal,[53] his use of the word 'somersault' comes closest to communicating the disruption that the conversions of the interwar intellectuals caused; both in their own lives and the lives of others. It also hints at an explanation for the embittering disillusion that many of the converts suffered in later life.

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[51] Blasi himself was influenced by Lewis Rambo who defined conversion as 'a significant sudden transformation of a person's loyalties, patterns of life, and focus of energy.' (Cited in Flinn, 'Conversion: up from Evangelicalism or the Pentecostal and charismatic experience.' In Christopher Lamb and Darrol Bryant, 1999, p. 56) This is a multi-directional concept of conversion, as opposed to the stable sense of the word, as a movement towards God, that would have been familiar to writers on the subject in the Middle Ages.

[52] His full name was Sir John Randolph Leslie. A first cousin of Winston Churchill, Leslie converted to Catholicism while at Cambridge, largely under the influence of Father, later Mgr, Ronald Knox. His religious conversion was accompanied by a political conversion to the cause of Irish Home Rule. His political conversion inspired the adoption of the more Irish name 'Shane'.

[53] Peripeteia comes from the word peripiptein 'to fall around' or to change suddenly; from peri- + piptein to fall. (Merriam-Webster, N.D.) The word divine is only ever implied in 'peripeteia', for instance when it is used to describe with the conversion of St. Paul. More often it is used as a literary term.

Taylor wrote that for many converts to Christianity, 'their grievance against the established order is that it is out of joint, both with itself and with the higher order; and indeed the two go together, because it could only get back in true with itself by recovering contact with this higher, more encompassing order.' (Taylor, 2007, p. 733) It is reasonable to argue that converts to secular religions like Communism often recognize a similar sense of disequilibrium.

An interesting consequence of the somersault experience is a scorn for those whose lives are influenced by more dreary considerations. Reading the work of both Catholic and Communist writers in the years after their conversions we encounter a common distrust of the more apathetic and materialistic members of the middle classes/bourgeoisie. For instance it is implicit in Waugh's meditation on Lady Marchmain's brothers who had died along the Western Front. 'These men must die to make a world for Hooper; they were the aborigines, vermin by right of law to be shot off at leisure so that things might be safe for the travelling salesman, with his polygonal pince-nez, his fat wet hand-shake, his grinning dentures.' (Waugh, 2011b, p. 178) George Orwell showed similar disdain for the bourgeoise in his novel *Coming up for Air*. 'I sometimes thing I'd like to have the Hesperides Estate surmounted by an enormous statue to the god of building societies. …In one hand it would carry an enormous key – the key to the workhouse, of course – and in the other – what do they call those things like French horns with presents coming out of them? – a cornucopia, out of which would be pouring portable radios, life-insurance policies, false teeth, aspirins, French letters, and concrete garden rollers.' (Orwell, 1948, p. 15) Interwar intellectuals, while of vastly different political inclinations and belief systems, were disconcertingly similar in their tendency toward elitism.

Types of Conversion

Most experts distinguish between the Damascene conversion and the gradual conversion. However the idea of the Damascene conversion as being definitive in the life of the convert is clearly at odds with the lived experience of any number of converts. In the 20th century one of the most interesting converts was Edith Stein, the German philosopher, later known as Teresa Benedicta of the Cross. Stein's conversion to Catholicism from atheism is generally told as a Damascene conversion. The much repeated explanation is that, while visiting a friend, she found a copy of St Teresa of Avila's autobiography and read it in one sitting. By morning, she had finished the book and announced, 'this is the truth!' The next day she bought a catechism and began preparing for Baptism. (Borden, 2004, p. 6) However such an account ignores several important conversion experiences both before and after her encounter with Teresa of Avila. For instance she completed an Ignatian thirty day retreat while still an atheist. According to a close friend to whom she once described the experience, 'she came out of the retreat with the decision to convert.' (Borden, 2004, p. 7) And indeed she had been secretly attending Mass before her conversion. Later reorientations would include her conversion to Thomism, her decision to enter a Carmelite convent and her decision to refuse safe passage to Switzerland and to accept her inevitable internment by the Nazis. The life of Edith Stein is an important reminder that however dramatic the conversion it is often only the first step and that any study of a conversion must also be a study of its consequences. For that reason this study includes three separate chapters on the consequences of conversion in the lives of the English intellectuals that comprise this study, with a particular focus on the experience of disillusion that seemed to be a part of every conversion experience.

The Conversion Process

At the heart of the somersault, lies a change in the individual's root realities: their core beliefs and interpretative frameworks. This means, to borrow from the American sociologist, Max Heirich, something must happen to destroy the clarity of the individual's root reality. (Heirich, 1977, p. 674) This occurs after an experience of individual or collective stress that cannot be encompassed within current explanatory schemes. Heirich's explanation takes into account a

number of experiences of stress, including 'when quite unacceptable outcomes appear imminent and inevitable,' or a sudden mystical experience whether positive or negative. (Heirich, 1977, p. 675).[54] To these he adds another experience. Namely, 'if respected leaders publicly abandon some part of past grounding assumptions, that step should either weaken their authority or encourage basic reexamination by others.' (Heirich, 1977, p. 675) Whilst it is beyond the ken of prosopography to examine in detail all the stimuli that might have contributed to a conversion, Heirich's third factor will prove hugely important to this study. The majority of converts considered in this thesis lost their faith while still at school, often under the influence of a particular teacher. Secondly many took up their new religion under the influence of another convert. The influence of figures like Maurice Dobb, James Kluggman, John Cornford and David Haden Guest at Cambridge, all of whom had abandoned 'past grounding assumptions' in favour of Communism, reveals the importance of this model.

Quite often a conversion will take place in the context of destablisised root-realities. Heirich identifies three different types of conversion. First, conversion as a fantasy solution to stress; this is essentially the superficial conversion response in which the individual makes a deal with God in return for a solution to their problems. Secondly, the inevitable conversion in which the individual has been socialized to the point where they are pre-disposed to conversion. And thirdly, encapsulation, in which the individual is so convinced by the mutually consistent arguments that they see things through the eyes of the other person. (Heirich, 1977, p. 656) What will prove surprising in this study is the predominance of interwar converts who clearly fall into this third category.

Whilst many writers and theorists have suggested their own model for conversion, the most thorough model comes from Lewis Rambo in which he proposes seven basic stages of conversion. He begins with context which is not so much a stage as the circumstances[55] which either, 'facilitate or repress the process of conversion.' (Rambo,1993, p. 20) Rambo's description of the process builds (whether consciously or not) on Heirich's earlier work. A crisis is generally

[54] Hilaire Belloc summed it up nicely about fifty years earlier (In the forward to Chesterton's *The Catholic Church and Conversion*) when he wrote that people were converted '...through the action of expanded experience.' (Chesterton, 1990a, p. 17) Whilst he was talking about conversion to Catholicism, it is obvious that this simple statement can be applied to all conversions experiences.

[55] Whilst he acknowledges the role of context, Rambo believes that 'most converts are active agents in their conversion process.' (1993, p. 44)

followed by a quest, an encounter, some interaction, a commitment and the inevitable but not always forseeable consequences. (Rambo,1993,p. 44)[56] The crisis/quest/consequences process presupposes 'that people seek to maximise meaning and purpose in life, to erase ignorance, and to resolve inconsistency' but that this impetus is intensified during a crisis. (Rambo,1993, p. 56)

One aspect of the consequences stage that is often ignored by conversion theorists is the discernment and pursuit of a vocation specific to the new religion, as an extension of the conversion experience itself.[57] For most converts conversion results in a 'transformation that is almost always described in terms of a "before" and an "after," to the point of leading to a kind of "re-birth" and to the construction of a new identity.' (Giordan, 'Introduction: The Varieties of Conversion Experience.' In G. Giordan (Ed.), 2009, p. 1) A crucial aspect of this new identity is the realignment of the individual's purpose in keeping with the conversion destination. On the most basic level the vocation is concerned with the work of eliminating the perceived disharmony that prompted the first stirrings of conversion. For the Christian this is the call to holiness; for the Communist this is the call to become a party worker. In both cases the basic vocation is often manifested in more specific vocational pulls. For Edith Stein there were two separate vocations; the first was her academic career and the second was her life as a Carmelite nun.[58] For someone like Anthony Blunt a conversion to Communism at Cambridge would result in a career as a double agent and talent spotter for the NKVD. In both cases there is a movement from the basic response to the perceived disharmony to a more direct work in the service of the new religion. In this study we will be concerned with vocation as an extension and indeed fulfilment of the individual's conversion experience.

The Italian psychologist and psychiatrist Sante de Sanctis contrasts the convert's experience with that of the mystics and finds that there are three basic conscious experiences for the convert.

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[56] In a later paper Rambo points out that the 'stages are not to be seen as always occurring in the same order. Reality is far more complex, and converting is frequently characterized by a spiralling effect – a going back and forth between the stages – and thus not a unidirectional movement.' (Rambo & Farhadian, *Converting: stages of religious change*, In Christopher Lamb and Darrol Bryant, 1999, p. 24)

[57] St Paul's conversion is immediately connected with his personal vocation. "What am I to do, Lord?" The Lord answered, "Get up and go into Damascus, and there you will be told what you have been appointed to do." (Acts 22:10) Later he attempts to join the disciples but can only do so with the help of Barnabas. (Acts 9: 26-27)

[58] Ever since her conversion, she had wanted to become a Carmelite nun but had been advised to use her education and abilities as a teacher and writer in the service of the Church. However when her way was barred, firstly because she was a woman and then later because she was Jewish, she decided finally to join the convent. (Borden, 2004)

First, there is a sense of liberation and victory which he terms, 'joy of the spirit.' Secondly, a sense of nearness to God which, for Communist converts would be translated as simply a sense of wholeness or as Taylor calls it – 'human flourishing.' (See: Taylor, 2007, p. 16) Thirdly, 'in his social activities he feels himself surrounded and encouraged by a hidden flame.' (de Sanctis, 1927, pp. 170-171) These stages are borne out by both Catholic and Communist experiences, yet it is the third stage that will prove important in our study because it comes closest to explaining the incredible self-abnegation that many of the converts practised in pursuit of their respective vocations.

But it is Rambo's seven-part model that will prove most crucial to our study because it allows for the differences among individuals whilst providing a structure that ably facilitates propsopographical discussions. Chapter two discusses the crises that came to define the period and comprise what I have termed 'the interwar narrative.' In chapters four and five I discuss the education of the intellectuals at school and university. In this chapters the intellectuals generally suffered through the personal crises of disbelief while also coming into contact with the interwar crises for the first time. Often the result was a quest, an encounter and some interaction. The quest was often in the form of rebellion, hedonism or an intensification of faith. The encounter with an advocate often happened at the university stage. The interaction with the party or the church was a familiar trope in much of the literature produced by the interwar writers and generally preceeded the commitment of conversion. This is discussed in chapter six. While, as mentioned earlier, the consequences of conversion are discussed in chapters eight and nine and in the conclusion.

At the conclusion of such a study we should not only be able to get a sense as to *why* so many young men and women converted to Catholicism and Communism in an increasingly secular interwar Britain but we should also be able to identify some of the similarities and differences in those conversions and the lives that they shaped.

Chapter Two: The interwar Narrative

Unemployment is only a symptom of some hidden and mysterious disease which has come upon an over-civilised world. A trade depression, we say, a slump in the world market; but does anybody really know what is happening? Does anybody really know how soon we may be involved in the miseries of wholesale bankruptcy? Our comfortable world of prosperity, inherited from our Victorian ancestors, is threatening to tumble about our ears; and we smile nervously and hope for the best… You see, we are caught up in the wheels of our own economic system. The fields of wheat flourish, there is corn and wine and oil in abundance, there is treasure still locked in the bosom of the earth: and yet through our own laws of supply and demand, laws which have no root in nature, but depend simply upon our human actions, the whole world is at a standstill! Did we not say well that this world in which we live is a world of shadows'? When forces that have no existence outside our own wills can threaten society with destruction?

Ronald Knox, *Heaven and Charing Cross: Sermons on the Holy Eucharist* (1935)

This chapter is concerned with the popular understanding of the crises beginning with the Great War and moving on to the strikes of the twenties, the depression and the unemployment of the thirties. Out of that popular understanding or narrative emerges an implicit call to change.

John Milbank has recently argued that central to the secular understanding is the concept of chaos. 'Modern thought and politics assumes that there is *only* this chaos, which cannot be tamed by an opposing transcendent principle, but can be immanently controlled by subjecting it to rules and giving irresistible power to those rules…' (Milbank, 2006, p. 5) The Christian posits the chaos as real but, far from being original, as an intrusion on the 'harmonic peace which is yet beyond the circumscribing power of any totalising reason.' (.) Despite their opposing diagnoses of the chaos, it is clear that for both the Communist and the Catholic converts chaos plays a key role in the formation of their root realities. Thus, any assessment of the of the interwar converts must take into account the specific crises of the interwar period that did so much to create a sense of universal sense of disorder among the intellectuals of the period.

Introduction

Countless histories of the interwar period have been written. Whilst they vary widely in quality and content, they can generally be relied upon to give a consistent overview of the discontent and social upheaval that marked the period. The strikes of the twenties, the unemployment of the thirties and the rise of Fascism are generally considered the most confronting sources of discontent. However in a study of conversion the importance of these events lies in their ability to influence the root-realities of those who lived through them. Heirich noted that root realities change after an experience of individual or collective stress and the interwar crises certainly fulfilled his criteria. For much of the period 'quite unacceptable outcomes appear[ed] inevitable and many respected leaders publically abandon[ed] some part of their past 'grounding assumptions.' (Hierich. 1977, p. 655) The carnage of the Western Front, the sufferings of the depression and the perceived impotence of the government in the face of these disasters all coalesced into a powerful interwar narrative; a narrative that collected the trenches, the Somme, the Welsh miners and the unemployed of Jarrow into a single account of working-class suffering and failed leadership. It was a critical narrative, that struck at the roots of many national assumptions and challenged individual root realities. Above all, it was a narrative of lost faith.

Too often intellectual history has separated the literature inspired by the Western Front from the literature inspired by the Depression that followed. In this chapter we will be undertaking a combined study of the literature of the war and the literature of the depression. Out of that study emerges the surprising and complex interwar narrative. It was a narrative that was often quite resistant to facts. It was a narrative that rejected the status quo of the established Church and the government; it was a narrative that demanded change. It was a narrative that viewed religion as no longer relevant in the face of the suffering along the Western Front and in the depressed areas. But it was also a narrative that looked afresh at the Catholic Church and her sacraments. It was a narrative that, as we shall see, became for people like Auden a clarion call to conversion and activism, while for others, like Knox, it pointed to a more antediluvian predicament.

Fighting the War

Despite the subsequent plague of memoirs which argued the contrary, the First World War was an immensely popular undertaking among all nations. In England the war, long expected, was enough to quiet the suffragette and international socialist movements. As Ferguson puts it:

> After all the debates and resolutions, the Second International essentially dissolved into its national components when war came. The proponents of a general strike against militarism found themselves out-bid by appeals to support a war which all the combatant governments were somehow able to portray as defensive. (Ferguson, 1999, p. 178)

The progressive left in general found its ranks decimated by the declaration of war. Ramsey MacDonald attempted to convince his party to pass a resolution condemning Edward Grey for his warmongering and declaring Labour's desire to secure peace at the earliest possible moment. He was defeated in the party room and endured widespread unpopularity for some time while the Labour party became increasingly anti-German. Macdonald resigned the chair of the Labour Party and, because he could not share the completely pacifist tone of the ILP[59] toward the war but was still opposed to it, he became notably silent in the House of Commons. (Morgan, 1987, p. 61) Keir Hardie, Philip Snowden, W. C. Anderson, and a small group of like-minded radical pacifists also maintained an unflinching opposition to the government and its pro-war Labour allies. (Clayton, 1926, p. 167) But the dissident voice in English politics had been shrunk by the war; soon it would be suppressed.

One of the reasons that the post-war memoirs were so effective in shaping a crisis of meaning was that they were published in a nation that had been so heavily censored during the war. The average householder, even in 1917, the worst year of the war for the home-front, was rarely exposed to the reality of the war that was close enough to be heard in some parts of Britain. Government officials enjoyed Defence of the Realm Regulations which legitimized the 'decapitation of the dissenting machine.' (Millman, 2000, p. 303) Regulations 9A, 27 and 42 combined to control the expression of ideas and the spread of disaffection that might prove harmful to the war effort. (Millman, 2000, p. 181) The tightness of censorship and the effectiveness of Britain's propaganda campaign was perhaps most evident in the elections of

[59] The ILP or Independent Labour Party was affiliated with the Labour Party from 1906 until 1932.

December 1918; those who had promoted peace invariably lost their seats, (including MacDonald, Henderson and Snowden),[60] while Lloyd George's campaign, based on a harsh peace and punishing the Kaiser, was extremely successful. The Prime Minister's lively excoriations of the Kaiser contrasted markedly with his alleged admission to C. P. Snow in December 1917 that, 'if people really knew, the war would be stopped to-morrow. But of course they don't know, and can't know. The correspondents don't write and the censorship wouldn't pass the truth. What they do send is not the war, but just a pretty picture of the war with everybody doing gallant deeds.' (Hammond, 1934, p. 223)[61] Whilst the authenticity of this quote is highly questionable it taps into the truth that British censorship was widespread and battle reports were rarely helpful guides to events. As Philip Gibbs,[62] perhaps the best known journalist of the war explained in his memoir, *Now It Can Be Told:* 'My duty, then, was… describing faithfully many of the things I saw, and narrating the facts as I found them, as far as the censorship would allow. After early, hostile days it allowed nearly all but criticism, protest, and…the figures of loss.' (Gibbs, 1920, Preface)

Explaining the War

The battle to explain the war in Europe and tell its story began with the deployment of the Schlieffen plan but did not stop until the mid-1930s when the narrative of that war was established in the popular consciousness and the finer details were left to the generational wrangling and myth-busting of historians. Whilst these more nuanced accounts have their place, for our purposes we are more interested in the popular understanding of the war, the accepted narrative. The race to publish characterised the war of meaning and it can be broken up into a series of competing offensives. The first were the official explanations that justified the descent into war as a necessary act. 'In Britain alone, at least seven histories were being produced by the end of 1915... What all these tomes had in common was their unshakeable confidence in the

[60]Most of the pacifists returned through by-elections but the election result was a clear message.

[61] Despite the fact that this quote is regularly trotted out by both war and media historians it must be considered fairly untrustworthy. In 1970 when Trevor Wilson edited C.P. Scott's private diaries (the supposed source of the quote) the entry for the 28th of December, 1917 did not include the above quote and indeed the majority of words that Hammond had put directly into the mouth of Lloyd George were revealed to have been part of a general paraphrase by Scott. (Ed. Wilson, 1970, p. 324) .

[62] Gibbs was actually a Catholic and in 1919 secured the first interview ever given by a Pope to a journalist. In doing so, Gibbs went a long way to restoring the image of Benedict XV whose Peace Proposals had, ironically, earned the ire of all parties. (Gibbs, 1919, p. 2)

rightness of the British cause.' (Ferguson, 1999, p.xxxiii) The lengthy defences of the war were often written by the Edwardian writers[63] who were eager to link the cause with a more romantic past. The clarity of their vision is perhaps best expressed by the Poet Laureate Robert Bridges who wrote to the times in September 1914, 'Since the beginning of this war the meaning of it has in one respect considerably changed, and I hope that our people will see that it is primarily a holy war. It is manifestly a war declared between Christ and the devil.' (Cited in Bridges, 'An Anti-Christian War.' In 1915, *Current History: The European War*, p. 129)

The more official explanations were met with the pacifist response in a war of attrition which did not end with Versailles. The Pacifist protests were based on the assumption that far from being necessary, the war was a contrived crisis and that, in the words of George Bernard Shaw: 'the heroic remedy for this tragic misunderstanding [caused by secret diplomacy] is that both armies should shoot their officers and go home to gather in their harvests in the villages and make a revolution in the towns...' (Cited by Evans, 2003, p. 95)

The official classes responded with a barrage of political and diplomatic memoirs that reasserted the idea that the war was inevitable, despite their best efforts. The officers were first in the years immediately after the Armistice and the politicians publishing memoirs throughout the twenties and early thirties. As Lloyd George put it 'the nations slithered over the brink into the boiling cauldron of war.' While Churchill blamed a 'strange temper in the air', Grey held 'the miserable and unwholesome atmosphere' responsible. (Cited in Ferguson, 1999, p. xxxv) A minority still blamed the Germans but they were a declining minority.

The Soldiers' War

The official voices were quickly drowned by the more insistent voices of the combatants. Despite being a minority among those writing about the war,[64] the soldiers had the credibility of first-hand experience and thus their narrative of the war quickly gained an ascendency during the interwar period. Their contributions came in two separate waves; first poetry and then the

[63] Names like Sir James Barrie Rudyard Kipling, G. K. Chesterton, Hilaire Belloc, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, Robert Bridges, John Galsworthy, Jerome K. Jerome, Rider Haggard, Arnold Bennett, Arthur and Edward Benson, Hall Caine, Thomas Hardy, Maurice Hewlett, Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch, Mary A. Ward, Humphry Ward all appeared among the fifty three leading British writers who signed a statement defending the war which was issued on Sept. 17th 1914. Interestingly, the name H. G. Wells also appears on that list. ('British Authors Defend England's War' In 1915, *Current History: The European War*, pp. 85-6)

[64] Recent bibliography lists 3,000 works by 2,225 poets but less than a quarter were in uniform. (Hynes, 1990, p. 29)

memoirs. The archetypal trench poetry of Sassoon and Owen was written during the war and was being published from early 1916 onwards. This poetry was later transformed into the poetry of remembrance after the war and, in that form, maintained a consistent voice of criticism throughout the interwar period. It wasn't until the mid-late twenties that the great prose pieces about the war were published.[65] It is difficult to explain the reason for what, in some cases, was a decade long delay. Samuel Hynes argues that it may have been a combination of a gestation period or a distancing period, that was needed for an act of exorcism. Or perhaps political events in Europe had necessitated a spirited warning about the realities of war. (Hynes, 1990, p. 425) In any case the war memoirs combined with the war poems to create a commonly accepted narrative of the war. Hynes offers a convincing paraphrase of that romantic narrative:

> A generation of innocent young men, their heads full of high abstractions like Honour, Glory and England, went off to war to make the world safe for democracy. They were slaughtered in stupid battles planned by stupid generals. Those who survived were shocked, disillusioned and embittered by their war experiences, and saw that their real enemies were not Germans, but the old men at home who had lied to them. They rejected the values of the society that had sent them to war, and in doing so separated their own generation from the past and from their cultural inheritance. (Hynes, 1990 p.x)

This narrative become the predominant explanation for the war and, after a period of strict censorship and propaganda, inspired a pervasive climate of criticism which came to define the intellectual atmosphere of the interwar period.

Ford Maddox Ford's tetralogy, *Parade's End*, contains an unusual narrative of the war because for the protagonist, Christopher Tietjens, the war is only one aspect among many. However the diverse events of the novel are united by the ubiquity of deceit. The rumours and outright lies that surround Tietjens and his wife and their sexual peccadilloes contribute to a world of dishonesty and social disintegration. In the first novel *Some Do Not*, (1924) we encounter Mrs Wannop who is tasked with writing some articles for the Sunday papers about 'war babies and the fact that the Germans were reduced to eating their own corpses.' Wannop, a pacifist, does not

[65] There were so many memoirs published that they very quickly became the subject of satire. As early as 1933 A.G. Macdonnell was beginning his comic portrait, *England Their England* by promising that it wasn't a war memoir.

object in any way to writing the demonstrably false articles. Unsurprisingly Gringoire, the central character of Ford's 1929 memoir, *No Enemy*, and a product of the *Parade's End* environment announces, 'I simply do not believe in atrocities,' and goes on to suggest that he even found it difficult to believe in the sinking of the Lusitania despite the fact that all sides agreed upon it. (Cited in Tate, 1997, p. 332) Ford's fiction provides an overview of the prodigious role that deceit played in the war. His writing through the twenties captures the post-war sense of disbelief experienced by a nation waking from the anesthesia of England's war time censorship and propaganda.

The memoirs and novels penned by returning servicemen filled this void of meaning and took on a 'profilmic reality.' The fact that authors like Sassoon, Jones and Graves had experienced the war and were unimpeded by censorship gave them a credibility that was often completely unjustified. Yet the personal voice of the narrator, the fact that the memoirs were limited to the camera-eye of the narrator, the litany of 'I saw' statements, and the fact that they claimed to rely on diaries and letters that were written at the same time as the events they were describing all acted as convincing indicators of truth-telling. They combined to create the documentary sensibility that characterizes many of the better-known war memoirs. It has been said that when Louis Lumière produced his single shot glimpses into various prosaic situations, their disproportionate attraction came from the impression that 'they provide a window onto the historical world.' (Nichols, 2001, p. 83) The literary output of the men who fought the war carried that same credibility and elicited the same fascination – they provided an insight into a world that, hitherto, had only existed in crude caricatures. Susan Sontag's quote about photography might easily be applied to the memoirs; 'The picture may distort; but there is always a presumption that something exists, or did exist, which is like what's in the picture.' (Cited in Spence & Navarro, 2011, p. 14)

The credibility of the eye-witness was often the most significant point for a reviewer. Orlo Williams was convinced by Hemingway's almost entirely fictitious battle-scenes in *A Farewell to Arms*, 'the actual scenes of war are biting and brilliant: they are so vivid and yet effortless that it is hard to believe one is reading fiction.' (1929, p. 998) A review of *Goodbye to all That*,[66] in

[66] Graves revealed the lack of objectivity in a follow-up essay, 'Post Script to *Good-bye to All That*' in which he admitted that he had 'more or less deliberately mixed in all the ingredients that I know are mixed into other popular

the same issue of *The Times Literary Supplement*, says that the 'sort of objective vision, which Mr. Graves almost achieves, is different from the objective vision of a writer who is attempting a work of art.' (Dobree, 1929, p. 991)[67] A year earlier Cyril Falls, the first major war literature expert, had praised Edmund Blunden's *Undertone's of War* for a similar 'objective' vision. 'It is, in the first place, a very able record of the infantryman's existence in France and Flanders: faithful observant and precise.' (1928, p. 949) Falls was himself a military historian and it is interesting to note the historical virtues that he ascribes to a work which he describes as a 'narrative.' Even Wilfred Owen was described as a 'destined recorder' of the war by a reviewer at pains to stress the historical legitimacy rather than the artistry of Owen's poetry. Once again the visual reliability is stressed, 'His aim as a poet is to make you see it [war].' (de Selincourt, 1931, p. 443)

Yet despite their reputation for historical detachment few historians have used the poetry and memoirs from the war as historical records, most discussions now involve their inaccuracy and subjectivity. A simple chronological study of the war memoirs reveals that often, rather than shaping the intellectual climate, they were heavily influenced by interwar trends. Thus memoirs published in the late twenties and early thirties directly reflect the pacifist attitudes and growing working class sympathies so prevalent among the intellectual classes. The critical stirrings so clearly present within the early war poems grew into clear-cut accusations in the later memoirs but as the popular narrative of the war crystallized it fed and was, in turn, fed by a wave of civil and religious disenchantment. As Stevenson reminds us, by 1929 a Labour government[68] headed by wartime pacifists had been elected, the slump had begun and German Nationalism was beginning to reassert itself. These factors combined to suggest that the war had been fought for nothing. (Stevenson, 2004, p. 579) Brian Bond gives a good example of this shift in the writings

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books.' (Graves, Good-Bye to All That and Other Great War Writings, 2007, p. 279) However it should be added that while many historians read this essay as one that completely obliterates the reliability of the original memoir, Graves actually goes on to defend the accuracy of his work; 'I have had a private letter from the official War Office historian of the Loos fighting complimenting me on my account which apparently gives certain details that had not come to light, while agreeing with what was already known.' (p. 288)

[67] The 'profilmic reality' of the memoirs and novels was also a selling point. Johnathan Cape's advertisements for *Goodbye to All That* and *A Farwell to Arms* appearing in the same issue of the TLS stress the 'detachment', 'honesty' and 'candidness' of the authors and the 'vivid poignant picture' that they create. (Dobree, 1929, p. 995).

[68] The political landscape was clearly not immune to the critical narrative of the war and in 1929 there were even calls in the House of Commons to end Armistice Day. Whilst that day was preserved by the Labour party its tone became increasingly pacifist throughout the early thirties; emphasising the war as one which ended all war. (Stevenson, 2004, pp. 579-580)

of the historian, B. H. Liddle Hart. ‘As a convalescing subaltern in 1916 Liddell Hart had written a fulsome eulogy of the British high command and staff, but by the 1930s his views had swung full circle and he became sharply critical, especially of Haig and Robertson.’ (2002, p. 45)

Paul Fussell noted in his literary history of the War that the war memoirs engendered lasting critical attitudes: ‘One powerful legacy of Haig’s performance is the conviction among the imaginative and intelligent today of the unredeemable defectiveness of all civil and military leaders.’ (Fussell, 1975, p. 12) Fussell’s *The Great War and Modern Memory* is most often cited for its main thesis, that ‘every war is ironic because every war is worse than expected.’ (Fussell, 1975, p. 7) The irony of the war, which soon became the irony of its poetry and memoirs, was a product of disappointment, a loss of faith; ‘the pattern of things in 1915 had been a number of opportunistic hopes ending in small ironic catastrophes, the pattern in 1916 was that of one vast optimistic hope leading to one vast ironic catastrophe [the Somme].’[69] This repeated loss of hope precipitated countless Ruskinian un-conversions.[70]

The theme of lost faith is present in most of the major pieces[71] of writing produced by former soldiers. This was not merely a religious apostasy; it was also a loss of faith in one’s civil religion which usually began as a loss of faith in the war. David Jones’ poetical memoir, *In Parenthesis* (first published in 1937) notes the loss of faith in the war: ‘the people of that town did not acclaim [the trainees marching to the front], nor stop about their business – for it was late in the second year.’ (Jones, 2003, p. 7) Siegfried Sassoon, having so publically lost his faith in the war, dismisses the initial enthusiasm of his alter-ego, George Sherston as wilful self-delusion. ‘For anybody who allowed himself to think things over, the only way out of it was to try and feel secretly heroic, and to look back on the old life as pointless and trivial. I used to persuade myself

[69] Fussell’s literary history of the war has drawn the ire of military historians who, with a touch of schadenfreude, point out the obvious mistakes in his work. ‘However Fussell presents an accurate overview of the cannonical trench literature that played a huge role in shaping national consciousness. When he is accused of failing to see the fact that by half-way through 1917 ‘no trenchline could withstand a well-munitioned and efficiently conducted attack’ (Prior & Wilson, 1994 p. 70) it is possibly because none of his authors could see that either. Niether Graves nor Sassoon bothered to mention the tactical shifts that saw efficient victories at the battle of Hamel or Amiens in 1918.

[70] Ruskin claimed that to have had a sudden ‘un-conversion’ in 1858 while listening to an English clergyman preach in Turin’s Waldensian Chapel. (Hilton, 1985, pp. 254-257)

[71] When I use this term I really mean, the ‘canonical’ poems and memoirs that have achieved an iconic status irrespective of their shortcomings. As Hugh Cecil pointed out, the patriotic war novels were much more popular than either the critical memoirs or the poems. (Cecil, ‘British War Novelists.’ In H. Cecil, & P. H. Liddle (Eds.), 1996, p. 803) But they have clearly not had the same impact on lasting perceptions of the war. (Hoult, 1932, p. 78)

that I had "found peace" in this new life... I hadn't begun to question the rights and wrongs of the war then.' (*Memoirs of a Fox Hunting Man*, 1980, p. 257) In the sequel, *Memoirs of an Infantry Officer* he tells of his unconversion, '…my mind was in a muddle; the war was too big an event for one man to stand alone in. All I knew was that I had lost my faith in it…' (1980, p. 421) Because of his attitude to war, he soon loses his faith in the civil powers that sent him there, firstly concluding that conscientious objectors 'must be braver than some I'd seen wearing soldier's uniforms in safe places...' and later concluding that 'in wartime the word patriotism means the suppression of truth.' (Sassoon, 1980, pp. 403, 472) [72] In his memoir, *Undertones of War* (first published in 1928) Edmund Blunden tells the story of the tragic death of a young Lance Corporal, seconds before his brother turns up, at which point the hardened Sergeant Simmons can only exclaim, 'it's a lie, we're a lie.' (Blunden, 1982, p. 67) Later when he goes on leave Blunden experiences the iconic loss of faith in his countrymen,

> I remember principally observing the large decay of lively bright love of country, the crystallization of dull civilian hatred in the basis of "the last drop of blood"; the fact that the German air raids had almost persuaded my London friends that London was the sole battle front; the illusion that the British Army beyond Ypres was going from success to success. (Blunden, 1982, pp. 206-7)

Though in more detached journalistic tones, Gibbs and C. E. Montague discuss the same loss of faith in the civil religion. Montague wrote, 'Great masses of men have become more freely critical of the claims of institutions and political creeds and parties which they used to accept without much scrutiny', (Montague, 1924, p. 91) while Gibbs merely remarked that victory had been gained 'at the cost of nearly a million dead, and a high sum of living agony, and all our wealth, and a spiritual bankruptcy worse than material loss, so that now England is for a time sick to death and drained of her old pride and power.' (Gibbs, 1920, p. 360)

[72] Sassoon is one of the the greatest exponents of post-war irony among the writers that I have encountered. He begins *Memoirs of an Infantry Officer* with the description of a raid which was contrived by bloody minded staff officers. In many ways the raid structurally mirrors the Flower-Show cricket match from the previous book; it comes in chapter two; it carries the same 'coming of age' significance in the narrative, the same father-figures imparting advice and the same archetypal images but this time the national pastime in idyllic Edwardian England has been replaced by tactical folly along the Western Front.

Alongside the loss of civil faith was, of course, the loss of religious faith. However it must be noted that many of the authors in question began the war as atheists or, at the very least, vaguely Christian pantheists. Edmund Blunden noted that when he went to the front and was given a New Testament, 'it was with me always, mainly unconsulted.' (1982, p. 16) Sassoon, favouring a more ironic tone, was fond of ignominious juxtapositions between grim reality and a religion that to him seemed hopelessly irrelevant. He concluded the *Memoirs of a Fox-Hunting Man* with the stark anecdote: 'Without knowing why, I remembered that it was Easter Sunday, standing in that dismal ditch, I could find no consolation in the thought that Christ had risen.' (Sassoon, 1980, p. 282)[73] In the following volume religion has moved from poignantly lacking consolation to simply being absurd. He tells the humorous story of arriving at London's Charing Cross station, after having been wounded during the Battle of Arras, 'a woman handed me a bunch of flowers and a leaflet by the Bishop of London who earnestly advised me to lead a clean life and attend Holy Communion' (Sassoon, 1980, p. 449) Even David Jones' intensely spiritual and even Catholic poetic memoir contains the traditional loss of faith in the face of the grim realities of Western Front. 'John Ball cries out to nothing but unresponsive narrowing earth.' (Jones, 2003, p. 45) And later the medical officer pointedly feels uncomfortable as the chaplain preached 'from the Matthew text, of how He cares for us above the sparrows.' (Jones, 2003, p. 107)

Of course many soldiers didn't lose their faith in the trenches but what is clear is that writers like Sassoon, and Graves found in their war experiences, significant support for their atheistic suspicions. They discovered the hypocrisy of churchmen who sanctioned war and stayed away: 'A man in the ranks might be six months in France and not find a religious service of any kind coming his way, whether he dreaded or sought it.' (Montague, 1924, p. 70) And they found that scripture gave neither comfort nor pleasure in the face of battle and they reported it as a scientist might report the confirmation of a popular hypothesis: 'Hardly one soldier in a hundred was inspired by religious feeling of even the crudest kind. It would have been difficult to remain religious in the trenches even if one survived the irreligion of the training battalion at home.'

[73] Given the agnosticism of this sentence it is perhaps surprising that the author, Sassoon, would convert to Catholicism in 1957. In many ways Sassoon combines many of the conversion strands covered in this thesis. He lost his faith during the war and practiced an almost *fin de siècle* homosexuality after the war. He was briefly involved in labour Socialism in the early twenties and was, for a long time, a renowned pacifist until the sceptre of Nazism forced him to recant his pacifism which he did in the final volume of his autobiography, *Siegfried's Journey*. Ironically, given his earlier memoir, it was during the Easter triduum in 1957 that Sassoon decided to become a Catholic.

(Graves, 2009, p. 157) And so alongside the mistrust of civil powers that emanated from trench literature came a torrent of distrust that damaged the already infirm faith of those who 'had, as a rule left church-going to others.' (Montague, 1924, p. 74)

It may well seem that the trench literature of the Great War impeded conversion but there were several aspects that would, indirectly, promote both a Catholic and Communist perspective. The first aspect is that much of the poetry and the memoirs promoted an international perspective in response to the narrow parochialism that marked the early poetry of the war. Where Rupert Brooke and Rudyard Kipling promoted an English view of the war with her righteous cause, the later poets and memoirists promoted an international perspective which united the German soldier with his colleague on the Allied side. Owen Seaman's 'Pro Patria', written in 1914, declared:

> England, in this great fight to which you go
> Because, where Honour calls you, go you must,
> Be glad, whatever comes, at least to know
> You have your quarrel just. (Clarke, 1917, p. 24)

Is soon replaced by Charles Sorley's poem 'To Germany' written a month later by a volunteer who had been on a walking tour in Germany and was briefly imprisoned in Trier before being ordered to leave the country. In England he immediately volunteered and was later killed at the Battle of Loos.

> You are blind like us. Your hurt no man designed,
> And no man claimed the conquest of your land.
> But gropers both through fields of thought confined
> We stumble and we do not understand.
> You only saw your future bigly planned,
> And we, the tapering paths of our own mind,
> And in each other's dearest ways we stand,
> And hiss and hate. And, the blind fight the blind. (1919, p. 73)

Like Sorely, intellectuals who encountered the enemy in battle were often moved to an internationalist outlook which they expressed in their writing. This perspective is particularly important in our study because both Catholicism and Communism, to varying degrees, promote an internationalist perspective. The most famous example came at the very beginning of the war when, in various parts of the line, the two armies met in an iconic Christmas Truce in December 1914.

During the Battle of Mametz wood Sassoon begins to lose faith in the war when he encounters a German corpse with 'a gentle face' in an undignified pose. Straightening the dead soldier, he muses, 'perhaps I had some dim sense of the futility which had put an end to this good-looking youth.' (Sassoon, 1980, p. 342) Eric Maria Remarque had a similar encounter which proved transformative. In *All Quiet On the Western Front*, Paul Bäumer kills a French soldier while lost in no-man's land. Forced to wait through the day with the dying man, Bäumer tries to help him. After the man dies Bäumer begins speaking to the dead soldier, 'I thought of your hand grenades, of your bayonet, of your rifle; now I see your wife and your face and our fellowship... Forgive me comrade, how could you be my enemy?' (Remarque, 1954, p. 188) Initially it may seem odd to include a German war-novel in a discussion of the British intellectual climate after the war but, as H. P. Cecil Cecil points out, Remarque's *All Quiet on the Western Front* in translation, 'was probably read by more British people than any other single book on the First World War.' (Cecil, 1996, p. 809) This fact in itself demonstrates how quickly a more international perspective had been adopted throughout post-war England.

Another attitude promoted through the trench literature was a distrust of the ruling classes and the upper classes in general. Most of the memoirists promoted the class-narrative irrespective of their own privileged background. David Jones describes the staff officers as spoiled figures gambling with the lives of the men.

> And now you Lord Walter Drakes
> whose turn was it?
> Roll bowl or pitch
> you come in stockinged-feet and go aways in

mo-ter cars[74]

like a coalition Jack Horner. (Jones, 2003, p. 131)

Robert Graves taps into a similar explanation for the war when he emphasises the privileged style of the staff-officer: '...a staff-officer came by in a Rolls-Royce and cursed us for bad march discipline, I felt like throwing something at him. Trench soldiers hate the staff and the staff know it.' (Graves, 2009, p. 92) Graves and Sassoon, both officers, both absolve their privileged backgrounds by firmly identifying themselves as trench soldiers who enjoy good relations with their men. Sassoon's relationship with the working class lance-corporal Kendle is a perfect example of his ability to transcend class by virtue of the shared experience of battle. Before the raid on Mametz wood Sherston allows Kendle to sleep 'with his head against my shoulder.' (Sassoon, 1980, p. 341) Later during the raid he observes that 'it seemed as if Kendle and I were having great fun together.' When the nineteen year old is suddenly killed, Sassoon is inspired to seek immediate revenge; 'all feelings tightened and contracted to a single – to "settle that sniper"' (Sassoon, 1980, pp. 343-344) Even Lloyd George, writing in 1938, endeavored to position himself on the side of the lower classes. In his introduction to the popular edition of his war memoirs he wrote, 'I aim to tell the naked truth about War as I saw it from the conning-tower at Downing Street. I saw how the incredible heroism of the common man was being squandered to repair the incompetence of the trained inexperts…' (George, 1938, p.v)[75] Siding with the common man against the experts was not a particularly radical move at the end of the thirties. But, as Lady Violet Bonham Carter was reputed to have said of Lloyd George, 'though he never sold his soul, he sometimes pawned it.' (Carter, 1965, p. 163)

Charles á Court Repington did not pander to the popular narratives of interwar England, and yet he did more than anyone else to justify the popular narrative of the upper classes fiddling while the soldiers endured the firestorm. Repington's diaries, which he published in two enormous and self-serving volumes, show the English governing class in wartime as 'a class that was cynical, self-seeking and indifferent to human suffering.' (Hynes, 1990, p. 289) Two days after the Battle

[74] Jones added the note that this last line was a formula from a popular game of chance. (Jones, 2003, part five ft. 41, p. 218)

[75] Lloyd George even promoted a new found pacifism in the same forward, ''When all the people that on earth do dwell are gladly scraping the butter off their own and their children's bread in order to keep the god of war fit and sleek, it is necessary to show them clearly what a fool he really is.' (George, 1938, p.vi)

of the Somme was launched he wrote, ‘Our offensive is not doing quite so well; we are hung up by some fortified villages. Lunched with Sevastopoulo[76] at his rooms; Isvolsky the Russian Ambassador, Joseph Reinach,[77] and a few more. A pleasant lunch.’ (Repington, 1920, vol. I, p. 253) Later that year, as the Somme offensive dragged on, he wrote, ‘Lady Paget's maid left her to-day after twenty-four years, and Lady P. much upset.’ (Repington, 1920, p. 406)

Yet, perhaps ironically, the private letters of the working class soldiers do not actually reflect the sense of injustice that men like Repington would seem to justify. As Peter Liddle has pointed out their letters reflect a strong sense of stoicism that remained, however much natural enthusiasm had been eroded. (Liddle, ‘British Loyalties: The Evidence of an Archive.’ In H. P. Cecil, & P. Liddle (Eds.), 1996, p. 524) For many of the labouring classes the discomforts of war and the frequency of death were not entirely new experiences. It should be remembered that, as Snape points out, ‘the British Army proved to be the only army of the major powers that entered the war in 1914 and [yet] did not experience a wide-spread failure of morale in 1917 or 1918.’ (Snape, 2005, p. 115) However, despite the fact that most people maintained the righteousness of the cause,[78] the war would reduce the inherent authority of the ruling classes and, perhaps more insistently, it would create a demonstrable divide between the rulers and the ruled. Many young men and women during the inter-war period would work hard to publicize their political solidarity with the working classes and thereby position themselves on the right side of the divide and the unfolding class narrative.

The conversion movement towards Catholicism also found a basis in the romantic narrative of the war. British historian Michael Snape once described the World War One as ‘a ‘good’ war for British Catholicism.’ (cited in Purdy, 2012, p. 2) The war narrative that rejected the ruling classes as betraying the young men of the Western Front, included the established Church in that rejection. Contrastingly the Catholic Church enjoyed a significant boost in its reputation. Catholic chaplains were seen as being ‘more willing to share the lot of their men.’ (Rafferty,

[76] Charge d'Affaires in Paris of the Russian Imperial Government
[77] French author and politician.
[78] Many maintained the righteousness of the cause for their entire lives. As Bond points out, Rupert Brook remained enormously popular during the interwar period; indeed his *Collected Poems* had sold 300,000 copies by 1930 while Wilfred Owen had to wait until the 1960s for anything like genuine commercial success. (Bond, ‘British Anti-War Writers and their Critics.’ In H. P. Cecil, & P. Liddle (Eds.), 1996, p. 822)

2011, p. 45)[79] Robert Graves praised the Catholic chaplains that he encountered arguing that they 'definitely enjoyed to be wherever fighting was, so they could give extreme unction to the dying.' (Graves, 2009, p. 158) Guy Chapman, in *A Passionate Prodigality* also located the sacraments as the differentiating factor; 'The Church of Rome sent a man into action mentally and spiritually cleaned. The Church of England could only offer you a cigarette.' (Cited in Snape, 2011, p. 333) All up, thirty four priests would die in the trenches while presenting a more public and heroic face to Catholic sacramental theology. It is commonly suggested that 40,000 soldiers converted to Catholicism during the war while a further 70,000 men and women converted on the home front. (Rafferty, 2011, p. 45) It should be mentioned that 122 Protestant ministers were also killed in action but that total did little to diminish the popular belief that they had shirked their duty and were merely the religious wing of the callously absent ruling classes.[80] As was suggested earlier the interwar narrative was often far more powerful than the complex reality.

Yet the trench literature also communicated something broader than a basic respect for Catholic Chaplains. Much of their work communicated the 'sacred landscape of northern France and Belgium, a region that was thickly planted with roadside calvaries.' (Snape, 2005, p. 42) Consequently an unashamedly Catholic culture emerged in the work of a predominantly Protestant or agnostic group of writers. What might have previously been dismissed as 'popish superstition,' was now presented as evocative theological symbols capable of communicating otherwise inexpressible realities. The most obvious example was the symbol of the crucifix, instead of the more Protestant cross without the body, which emerged as a powerful symbol of Christ's solidarity with the suffering soldier. Here Catholic culture was able to express what Protestant culture could not. John Finley[81] wrote *The Valley of the Blue Shrouds*, a poem that gives an overview of the Catholic landscape of war-time France and its aptness as a system of poetic metaphors. 'Oh images of heroes, saints and Christs,/ pierced, broken, thrust in some

[79] The reputation wasn't entirely unjustified; Catholic chaplains positioned themselves along the front lines so as to be able to administer the last rites to the dead and dying. Fr. Francis Woodlock, Fr. Willie Doyle, and Fr. C. B. Warren were well known military heroes, the last two objecting to their honours as being irrelevant. Indeed Cardinal Bourne attempted to have the Catholic chaplains paid less than their Protestant colleagues. (Rafferty, 2011, p. 43)
[80] Generally the statistics of regarding chaplain fatalities cited by historians closely reflect the proportions of each denomination. (See: Snape, Church of England Chaplains in the First World War: Goodbye to 'Goodbye to All That', 2011, pp. 320-321)
[81] John Finley was an American Academic working at the Sorbonne before the war.

hurried sepulchre.' (Kendall, 2007, pp. 46-48) Crucifix corner, which was included in Edmund Blunden's edition of Ivor Gurney's poems,[82] describes a place where 'stars that were not strange ruled the most quiet high/Arch of soft sky.' A place where song replaces the expected 'gun-noise or Last Trump' a place where music plays "Happy we've been a'together" and where '…nothing/ stayed of war-weariness or winter's loathing'. (Gurney, 1921 - 1922)[83] Even John Galsworthy began to utilise Catholic culture in his stories. In *The Grey Angel*, a tremendously mawkish story first published in 1916,[84] he writes of a rich English woman who finds her salvation in the war, suffering in the service of the French troops. Explaining her sudden decision to settle in a small village after years of restlessness he echoes the *fin de siècle* decadents, musing on the mysterious yearning for the Church's liturgy.

> Was she kept there by the charm of a certain church which she would enter every day to steep herself in mellow darkness, the scent of incense, the drone of incantations, and quiet communion with a God higher indeed than she had been brought up to, high Church though she had always been? (Galsworthy, 1933, pp. 165-6)

Later, as the women lies dying, she can only pray to the Virgin Mary, despite her Protestant upbringing. (Galsworthy, 1933, p. 175) From Galsworthy such a complimentary use of Catholic imagery is interesting because he was an agnostic progressive with a genuine distrust of organised religion.[85]

However surely the most surprising, and in some senses the most prophetic example of Catholic imagery comes in Herbert Read's poem 'The End of the War.' This unusual response to the armistice features a prose narrative of an unmitigated atrocity which Read claimed could be verified by a range of witnesses.' (Read, 1946, p. 74) The description is of the vindictive ambush of British soldiers and then the discovery of a raped and dismembered French girl. Pointedly, the English Lieutenant who verifies the crime merely finds a bed and sleeps. There follow three connected poems; the meditation of the dying German officer who tricked the English into the

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[82] Published in 1954

[83] By 1917 the image of the crucifix was being used by poets on the home front. Gretchin Warren published 'The Spectral Army' which began, 'Their heads are lifted. As they pass/They look at Christ's red wounds, and smile/In gallant comradeship: they know/Golgotha's terrible defile.' (ed. Clarke, 1919, pp. 278-279)

[84] He wrote 25 short stories on the war and a further 14 on the peace after serving as an orderly in France.

[85] See *The Country House* (1907) and *Saint's Progress* (1919) for two extremely unflattering portraits of bigoted clergymen.

path of the ambush, the conversation between the body and soul of the French girl and finally the meditation of the waking English officer. What is interesting is that in the first mediation we see the death of Nietzschean Atheism represented by the German soldier who asserts, 'for my faith was action: is action now!' But the speaker concludes the poem, 'wavering in the darkest void of nothing.' (Read, 1946, pp. 62-63) Contrastingly the waking English officer seems poised to inherit the world and his meditations do not centre on loss so much as the discovery of faith: 'There is a bell/sounding with the dream's retreating surf.' Finding himself in a peasant church, which we can assume to be Catholic, the speaker exclaims,

> Yes yes yes: it is peace, peace!
> The world is very still and I am alive!
> …
> O limbs, your white radiance
> no longer to stand against bloody shot
> this heart secure, to live and worship
> to go God's way, to grow in faith
> to fight with and not against the will!
> (Read, 1946, p. 69)

Later he asks,

> Will faith rise triumphant from the wreck
> despair once more evaded in a bold
> assertion of the self; self to God related
> self in God attain'd.
> (p. 72)

He concludes:

> …the meek heart rejoices
> doubting till the final grace a dove
> from heaven descends and wakes the mind…
> (p. 73)

Read's poem resists the theme of apostasy so prevalent in many of the literary responses to war and predicts an age of faith in which the once-doubting mind is awoken. Somehow this neglected poem by this increasingly neglected poet came closest to predicting the interwar period as a period of conversion to newly discovered faiths.

Postwar Disillusion

Whilst Read's prescience is unmatched by the other literary ex-servicemen, they too played their part in promoting the romantic narrative that really only fully crystalised between 1928 and 1931. This was narrative of ineffectual ruling classes, of an impotent national church and of mistreated working classes. It was a narrative that shattered the complacent parochialism of the Victorians and Edwardians. It was a narrative that inspired a generation of well-travelled, ideologically motivated and intensely active converts from among the nation's intellectual classes. Yet as Bond has argued, it was a narrative that probably had more to do with 'the shattering of war-time idealism and disappointment with the results of victory in the early post-war years' than the actual physical experiences of fighting. (Bond, 'British Anti-War Writers and their Critics.' In H. P. Cecil, & P. Liddle (Eds.), 1996, p. 820)

Perhaps the first glimmering of the postwar disillusion came in the unforgettable Black Book Case. This was a notorious libel case in march 1918 in which Noel Pemberton Billing was sued for libel after printing an article in his magazine *The Vigilante* accusing Maud Allen of being a seditious agent working for Germany and having lesbian affair with Margot Asquith, the wife of Herbert Asquith, the former prime minister. This was part of his broader theory that there were 47,000 British sexual perverts, mostly Catholic and mostly in high places, being blackmailed by the largely homosexual German Secret Service. Billings ended up successfully defending himself and winning the case using witnesses who later revealed that they were lying. The "Black Book of Sin" at the centre of the case, was said to have contained methods devised for "contaminating" the whole English population through the 'carefully cultivated introduction of practices which hint at the extermination of the race.' (Cited in Medd, 2002, p. 29) What is most astonishing is the widespread belief that it would be the ruling classes who would immediately succumb to the sort of 'evils which all decent men thought had perished in Sodom and Lesbia.' (Cited in Medd, 2002, p. 29) The public support for Billing's bizarre theories and the widespread belief in the Unseen Hand organization must surely be read as a loss of confidence in the ruling classes.

Despite the loss of face suffered by the ruling classes, many soldiers emerged from the war confident that they would be provided with a land fit for heroes. Stanislaw Andrzejewski developed the theory that modern wars create the need for optimal Military Participation Ratios.[86] Thus modern wars involve the participation of low-status groups and classes who consequently enjoy the leveling tendency produced by war. As Andrzejewski points out, 'the two world wars, fought with conscript armies, strengthened the leveling tendencies. The end of the first saw the introduction of universal adult suffrage; the second brought to power the Labour Party with its programme of 'soaking the rich'.' (Andrzejewski, 1954, p. 71) When the war started, volunteers were promised that they would be retrained, given adequate pensions if disabled, and that neither they nor their families would suffer as a result of their services.' (Barr, 2005, p. 10) At the end of the war the British ex-serviceman organization, The Legion, 'promised a utopian vision of a "brighter Britain" where all ex-servicemen would gain employment, adequate pensions, and decent housing' through the political pressure asserted by The Legion. (Barr, 2005, p. 6) Added to the expectations of the working classes was the fact, as J. A. Schumpeter pointed out, that the First World War produced such a slow and exhausting victory that in victorious and defeated countries alike, the 'prestige of the ruling strata and their hold on their people were impaired and not enhanced.' (1976, p. 354)[87] From the very beginning the interwar period was to be one of growing equality but somehow economic and social conditions conspired to further develop a narrative of a working class betrayed by their leaders. It was a narrative that seemed to invalidate traditional ideas and demand more radical responses.

Such is the power of the popular narrative that it seems counter-intuitive to describe the interwar period as one of growing equality. And yet there are a number of studies which prove that many of the most popular working class novels and memoirs of the period exclude far more of interwar reality than they reveal. John Stevenson responded to W. G. Runciman's musing, 'the various accounts of the Depression all make one wonder, at first sight, why discontent was not more vehement', by explaining that, 'the problem was that the accounts of the depressed areas, whilst often a true reflection of their condition, were not representative of the state of the country as a

[86] The most men a nation can possibly produce to fight for it.

[87] As evidence of this decline of the traditional ruling strata, Schumpeter points to the fact that in England 'the labour vote that had been at little over half a million in January 1910 and not quite two millions and a quarter in 1918, went to 4,236,733 in 1922 and 5,487,620 in 1924 (8,362,594 in 1929).' (Schumpeter, 1976, pp. 354-355) However, as we shall soon see, the political climate was still overwhelmingly conservative.

whole.' (1976, p. 95) In fact the iconic writings of the period, such as Orwell's *Road to Wigan Pier*, Ellen Wilkinson's *The Town That Was Murdered* and Walter Greenwood's *Love on the Dole* are consistently undermined by the more detached statistical studies that re-cast the period as one of general, if stuttering, economic growth. As British economic historian Robert Skidelsky argued: 'What is striking in retrospect is the shallowness of the British depression and the speed of recovery from it in the absence of any deliberate fiscal stimulus. British unemployment, 2.9 million at its peak in late 1932, was half Germany's and a sixth of America's at the same time.' (1993, p. 208)

Perhaps the most important statistical portrait of the period comes from Sir Arthur Lyon Bowley, whose entire academic career was spent at the Fabian-founded London School of Economics. Utilising the sampling methodologies employed by Charles Booth and Seebohm Rowntree, Bowley demonstrated that poverty was on the decline and that working conditions, and wages in particular, were on the improve. In 1925 he published Has Poverty Diminished? Using Rowntree's poverty baseline, Bowley demonstrated that in the four towns he had surveyed in his 1913 survey, the population below that baseline had nearly halved.[88] He also pointed out that the traditional causes of poverty were present in the town at the same rate but that 'the number in poverty had diminished considerably except in Stanley', where it had risen a negligible amount. (Bowley & Hogg, 1925, p. 20) Bowley subsequently published a study of wages in 1937 which invalidated much of the criticism leveled at the ruling classes for their alleged war against the working classes. For instance, real wages in 1933 had improved 31 per cent on 1914 levels despite working hours being reduced in that same period. (Bowley, *Wages and Income in the United Kingdom Since 1860*, 1937, pp. 30, 19) What is so interesting about Bowley's study is his demonstration that as the recovery from the depression began in 1936 the prices rise and real wages decreased by around 3 per cent at the outside. (Bowley, 1937, p. 30) One reviewer argued that Boweley disproved the 'iron law of wages' upon which Marxism was founded. (King, 1938, p. 606) The fact that despite the publication of Bowley's work Communist enthusiasm among young intellectuals was at its height demonstrates the extent to which the romantic narrative of

[88] He pointed out that if all the breadwinners in the town had been able to work the number of people below the line would have fallen from 12.6 per cent down to only 3.6 per cent. (Bowley & Hogg, 1925, pp. 16-17)

class warfare and the failure of the ruling classes had captured the imagination of Britain's intellectuals.

And yet Bowley showed only part of the picture. For while real wages improved government schemes also played their part in improving conditions. As John Benson pointed out in his study of Britain's working classes, legislation in the 1920s and 1930s did effect some movement of resources towards those who needed them most. 'It has been estimated that whereas in the years before the First World War working class people paid more in taxation and insurance contributions than they received in social welfare benefits, in the years after the war they paid substantially less; 86% of the cost of their benefits in 1925 and just 79% in 1935.' This is equated to a transfer of £200-250 million from those with incomes above £250 per year to those below. 'This was a major benefit and one historians have been unduly slow to recognize.' (Benson, 1989, p. 51)

Just as Bowley's research shows a consistent progression of improved working conditions from the 1830s through to the 1930s, it is possible to trace a similar pattern of democratization through the same period. Parliament itself slowly became more representative. Ellis Wasson has shown in a recent study that between 1820 and 1939 over seven hundred English parliamentary families[89] disappeared from the House of Commons.[90] (Wasson E. , 2000, p. 51) At the same time the voting population also became more representative. Working class males were formally included in the political process through various Acts of Parliament in 1867, 1884/5 and 1918 while many women entered the political sphere after the Acts of 1918 and 1928. In that sense the ruling classes were increasingly subject to the electoral choices of the working classes. As it turned out, the voters elected a conservative government in 1924, and a National government dominated by conservatives in 1931 and 1935.

The Crises

In many ways the strikes and hunger marches of the interwar period amounted to another war. From the very beginning, in 1919, the interwar strikes were described in terms of cataclysmic class warfare with everything at stake. As the spectre of unemployment sapped the strength of

[89] He defines a political family as one that contains successive or multiple members of parliament. These were being replaced by new families, generally from the industrial aristocracy.

[90] During the late 19th century they were disappearing at a rate only exceeded by the English Civil War.

organized labour in the thirties,[91] the hunger-marchers became the new face of this same conflict. Here again violent combat and the fear of socialism marked the battle. As with the actual war, it was impossible to ignore the conflagration. All agreed that the nation was facing a crisis. Middle-class writers promoted the traditional values as the solution while veterans of the distressed areas revealed the extent of the suffering with pro-filmic precision. A crisis of meaning emerged that, in many ways, parallelled the crisis produced by the First World War.

It was generally feared in the years between 1919 and 1923 that industrial unrest might lead to a revolutionary outbreak. Sir David Shackleton, the senior civil servant at the Ministry of Labour, told the War Cabinet in June 1919 that the Labour unrest that had become prevalent in Britain that year was being exacerbated by the British intervention in the Russian Civil War.[92] He was surprised 'at the extent to which men of all classes were coming round to the Labour point of view that the Soviet Government ought to be given a fair chance.' (cited in Gilbert, 1997, p. 563)

These were also very different strikes. As G. D. H. Cole observed, the prewar strikes were like guerilla warfare but the strikes of the early twenties carried the full weight of the great Trade Union Bodies and involved 'great disciplined forces on both sides'; the result being that labour disputes came to symbolise broader class struggles. (Cole, 1948, p. 382) The demands for a forty-hour week in 'Red Clydeside' in 1919 ended in a pitched battle between police and 30,000 to 40,000 marchers. The government soon moved tanks into the streets of Glasgow in a show of strength that somehow also communicated their fear. Of particular concern was the contingent of ex-servicemen who were part of the protest. Scotland Yard's Director of Intelligence pointed out, 'It must be remembered that in the event of rioting, for the first time in history, the rioters will be better trained than the troops.' (Cited in Davies, 1992, p. 101) However, despite the threat that the strikers posed, in the short term things only got worse. *The Economist* calculated that, by late 1922, workers had lost three-quarters of the pay increases won during the war. (Cited in Renshaw, 1975, p. 90)

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[91] In 1920 there were around six and a half million trade union members but by 1933 numbers were down to three and a quarter million. (Davies, 1993, p. 142)

[92] The labour unrest soon worked its way into the popular consciousness of the time. Even Billy Bunter was refusing to do his work, citing his new Bolshevik faith: 'The Bolsheviks are the men for my money… Everybody's got equal rights. I've read that in a paper… We're all equal, you know, and a Form-master is just the same as a fag. See?' (Richards, 1919, p. 3) However, reason soon rights itself at Greyfriars and Bunter concludes the story bleating, 'I think it's all rot myself, sir – at least, when its applied to a fellow's own things... why under Bolshevism a fellow's own cake wouldn't be safe! ...I - I believe in hanging Lenin and Trotsky, sir! I do really!' (Richards, 1919, p. 14)

Indeed the government generally triumphed in every major strike of the twenties, most notably in 1921 and 1926. Despite the rhetoric of class-war that accompanied most strikes, the broader influence of the strikers was on the wane even before the general strike. The dream of rank-and-file workers' councils, led by revolutionary socialists 'seizing the leadership of the working class movement from reformist politicians and trade union bureaucrats, [and transforming] the strike from an action in defence of the miners' wages into a revolutionary struggle for power' was completely unrealistic by 1926. (Hinton, 1983, p. 137)

Despite Churchill parading armoured cars through the streets of London, the strike was fairly peaceful with with a relatively low number of people, 4,000, being prosecuted for violence or incitement to violence and only about a quarter receiving prison sentences for their efforts. The miners would hold out for another year but, as in 1921, starvation would force them back to work and they would ultimately accept worsened conditions.[93] Chamberlain would later say "the devastation of the coal fields can only be compared with the devastation of France." (Brendon, 2000, p. 193)

If industrial disputes embodying broader class-warfare were the defining feature of the twenties then the hunger marchers were the iconic image of the thirties. The peak of unemployment was reached in January 1933 at just under three million but this was merely the registered unemployed. The actual figure was much closer to four million. This is neatly reflected in the fact that the number of employed rose much faster than the rate at which the number of unemployed declined. (Taylor, 1992, p. 336, ft.1)

Where once emigration would have been the only solution to their plight, now modest social security payments allowed the unemployed to cling grimly to their communities. Yet because the export industries[94] were the worst affected these communities tended to be in quite specific locations. Northern Ireland, with its ship building, had an unemployment figure that was still at 26.2 per cent in 1937. At the same point, Wales with its coal mining, stood at 24.3 per cent while in the north of England the figure was at 19.1 per cent. (Ministry of Labour statistics cited by Medlicott, 1967, p. 277) Conversely in the south of England and the midlands, unemployment

[93] In this case a seven hour day had become an eight hour day.
[94] Indeed by July 1939 unemployment among insured workers was still higher than it had been in July 1929 and this was mostly because of the continued problems in the export industries. (Medlicott, 1967, p. 276)

fluctuated between six and just over seven per cent. Medlicott, 1967, p. 277This geographical displacement created the possibility that for many the problems might remain largely unseen but for the intellectual activists and working class writers of the period.

The suffering of the unemployed seemed like a flagrant rebuke to the government's failures and those of capitalism in general. Unemployment was, for those men over forty five, a life sentence, for everyone else it was a jail term. On the insurance benefit a man received 17s a week and 9s more for a wife and 2s more for any children. It was enough to ward off starvation but little else. Health soon deteriorated and, after a time, one had to pawn blankets or furniture in order to maintain the household. An illness or the breaking of essential items like a plate or boots could easily put one in arrears with rent. (Heinemann, 1971, p. 20) But there were others in an even worse position; many of the uninsured unemployed were reduced even further by the depression.

The government soon added cell inspections to the execrable lifestyle of the unemployed with the means test. Families often broke up so that the tiny sums earned by children didn't reduce the father's dole payments. When Ramsey MacDonald's government decided to reduce the unemployment benefit, he told the nation that it was not a living wage and was never meant to be. (Heinemann, 1971, p. 21)

The Means Test and the cuts to benefits inspired the hunger marches. The largest of these were national hunger marches and they took place in 1932, 1934 and 1936.[95] The march in 1932 was in response to the Government's attempt to universalise the application of the stringent means tests. The protesters were charged by police mounted on motorbikes in Birkenhead. Despite Labour Party stalwart George Lansbury's protests the police made repeated baton charges when the marchers reached Hyde Park in London and joined a waiting crowd of 100,000. The violence of the police was repeated over the ensuing days and the monster petition borne by the marchers was confiscated by the police and destroyed before it could ever reach the correct authorities. The march in 1934 was protected to some extent by the newly formed Council for Civil Liberties. This march was much more peaceful and enjoyed more widespread support. 'People, even if they didn't support the march, were sympathetic to its aims.' (Branson & Heinemann,

[95] The more well-known Jarrow crusade, also in 1936, was actually organised by the Labour government, not the NUWM (National Unemployed Workers' Movement) and was much smaller and much more successful.

1971 p. 31) The marches were a very successful way to highlight the suffering of the unemployed and the inadequacy of government action.

Explaining the Class War

Like the war that preceded them, these crises precipitated a war of meaning. Just as the officers and politicians wrote memoirs that sought to take control of the crisis of meaning, so too did some middle-class writers seek to speak out against the highly politicized conclusions of their working class counterparts. Claude Cockburn argued that middle class fiction was very influential because authors like Robert Hitchens and Henry de Vere Stacpoole would have outsold Bennett, Shaw, Galsworthy and Wells put together. Cockburn's complaint was that the bestsellers, which in a better world would have been dismissed as 'superfluous or even contemptible', were relied upon to 'produce a good grade of opium.' (1972, pp. 3, 17) However here he is too dismissive because middle-class novels from popular writers were often more adversarial than palliative. Using the three bestsellers that Cockburn himself isolates it is possible to outline an alternative narrative of crisis. We can consider Robert Keable's *Simon Called Peter* (1921), A. S. M. Hutchinson's *If Winter Comes* (1921), and Warwick Deeping's *Sorrell and Son*; (1925) and to these I would add another bestselling author, Winifred Holtby, whose posthumous *South Riding* (1936) represents a middle-class classic with a certain gentrified radicalism, at odds with Cockburn's far too elitist analysis.

All four novels engage with the problems of poverty suffering and unemployment, but rather than presenting them as products of an inherently flawed system they generally presented them as products of flawed individuals. Interestingly, all four authors, writing at different times and from very different perspectives, presented individual conversion and virtue as the key to revitalizing England and, in the work of Hutchinson and Keable, there is a very strong Roman Catholic flavor to that conversion.

Keable's rather scandalous *roman à clef* presents the spiritual conversion of the military chaplain Peter Graham who has moved on from 'orgies of drinks and ribaldry …kissing waitresses [and] putting champagne corks down ladies' stockings as to the manner born' (TLS, 5 May 1921, cited in Snape, 2011, p. 328) to a torrid affair with a progressive South African nurse, Julie Gamelyn.

His sexual escapades, and there were many, end with the dramatic discovery of a higher love. At the beginning of the novel he preaches a sermon which castigates the powers that be for the war:

> At the bidding of powers that even they could hardly visualise, at the behest of world politics that not one in a thousand would understand and scarcely any justify, houses were being broken up, women were weeping, and children playing in the sun before cottage doors were even now being left fatherless. It was incredible, colossal, unimaginable, but as one tried to picture it. Hell had opened her mouth and Death gone forth to slay. (Keable, 1921, p. 11)

Wandering about London while Julie slept in their suite, he finds himself drawn to the Catholic Cathedral. There, during Mass, he undergoes a Damascene conversion.

> And it was then that the eyes of his mind were enlightened and he saw a vision–not, indeed, of the truth of the Roman Mass[96] (if it be true), and not of the place of the Sacrament in the Divine scheme of things, but the conception of a love so great that it shook him as if it were a storm, and bowed him before it as if he were a reed. (Keable, 1921, p. 318)

It is this conversion that changes Peter[97] and allows him to return to the front rejuvenated. Where once he was sickened by the system that sent men to war, now he faces his duty without a qualm. It would not have been difficult for an audience in 1921 to apply Keable's understanding of conversion to the industrial disputes that gripped the nation. In *If Winter Comes* Hutchinson echoes this idea of spiritual renewal with his own demand for mystical religion for which he uses the phrase, 'Light! Light!'

> I am living on bread alone, and doing well on it. But I tell you, Hapgood, that plumb down in the crypt and abyss of every man's soul is a hunger, a craving for other food than this earthy stuff. And the churches know it; and - instead of reaching down to him what

[96] At a subsequent Mass that he attends with his mistress, Graham hears a sermon which was so good that 'there might never have been a Higher Critic in existence.' (Keable, 1921, pp. 325-326)

[97] In the squeal *Recompense*, published in 1924, Peter becomes a Carthusian monk while Gamelyn became the 'matron of a maternity home' in which 'audacious sexual and eugenic theories' were put into practice. (TLS, 21 Feb. 1924, 116. Cited in Snape, 2011, p. 328) There seems to be a somewhat unusual idea that worldly people should pursue progressive solutions to the world's problems while the more spiritually minded should pursue ascetic monasticism. Keable himself ended up moving to Tahiti and died a Catholic in 1927.

> he wants – light, light – instead of that, they invite him to dancing and picture shows, and you're a jolly good fellow, and religion's a jolly fine thing and no spoilsport, and all that sort of latter-day tendency. (Hutchinson, 1922, p. 328)

Both novels present conversion as the key to rejuvenation, but what is particularly interesting is that both reject the modernist tendencies that were becoming more popular in the Anglican Church and yet, while neither promote Catholic conversion as the explicit answer, both demand a mystical form of religion that will find a clearer expression in the novels of Waugh and Greene.

Deeping's *Sorrell and Son* doesn't represent religious conversion as the answer; it is an entirely humanist novel. However, like Hutchinson and Keable, he suggests that the key to changing society is the individual rather than any systemic change. His novel centers on Stephen Sorrell who begins the novel close to being pushed 'off the shelf of his class consciousness into the welter of the casual and the unemployed' (Deeping, 1951, p. 2) but he survives by virtue of the 'quiet, indomitable nature of the man refusing to complain, to appeal or to cry out.' (Deeping, 1951, p. 391) Sorrell's simpering virtue offers a clue to working-class malcontents about how to move on in the world. He tells a prospective boss "I understand you want helpers – not merely employees. I shall be a helper. You have given me – a chance – a chance to get out of hell. I'm grateful." (Deeping, 1951, p. 59) Sorrell is rewarded for his good attitude by becoming rich and ultimately being euthanized by his surgeon son who is encouraged to do so by his novelist wife.

Holtby's *South Riding* features the ultra-conservative Robert Carne who

> was courageous and kind and honest… he never ran away from failure; he never whined, never deceived himself, never blamed other people when things went wrong. In the end – it's not politics nor opinions – it's those fundamental things that count – the things of the spirit. (Holtby, 1966, pp. 494-495)

Carne, like Sorrell, is also an ex-serviceman who has fallen victim to the economic turmoil;[98] 'He would work, bent over his desk adding columns of figures that never came out right because

[98] Working class novelists, as we shall see, often present their own class as the sole victims of the depression. The middle class writers were more prepared to complicate the situation so as to justify their argument that the individual was to blame as much as they were to be relied upon for change. Indeed often the blame is laid at the feet of working class characters. In *Sorrell and Son* we have the bullying ex-sergeant Buck; in *South Riding* we have the greedy

there was a slump, because the Labour Bill was double what it used to be and because men worked for half the time and prices stayed the same.' (Holtby, 1966, p. 32) But after his death, rather symbolically, his ancestral home becomes a girl's school, a school that is run by Miss Sarah Burton, an autodidact who escapes her impoverished background through sheer hard work. Like *Sorrell and Son*, *South Riding* presents the solution to the world's problems as lying in the hands of virtuous and hard-working people rather than in the hands of an alternative political system. Indeed the novel seems to support the current system, suggesting that good people in local government can revolutionize the lives of those in their care.

The Workers' War

Where earlier we spoke of trench literature, it is now appropriate to speak of slum literature.[99] The term working class literature is obviously limited to literature produced by proletarian writers whereas slum literature, like trench literature before it, includes any writing that seeks to expose the realities of working class life to an audience ignorant of those realities. Again, like trench literature, it can be divided into two types. Firstly the journalistic efforts of writers who sought to expose the harsh realities of working class life with their documentary studies. And secondly, the proletarian novels and plays produced for a similar effect. A study of the key pieces of slum literature from the period reveals a narrative that is not only similar to that produced by the war but may even be viewed as an extension of that same narrative with the same themes of incompetence and exploitation, loss of faith and conversion.

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opportunists Huggins and Snaith and in *If Winter Comes* we have Mr. Twyning who is not only a socialist but worse, a bounder. All these characters cause misery and poverty to varying degrees and all, if not overtly working class, are associated with the working classes by their dialogue. As it happens Walter Greenwood echoed this moral structure in his *Love on the Dole*. John Constantine has shown that there was a complete absence of middle-class villains in the novel. In fact the unemployment suffered in Hankey Park is only ever vaguely attributed to government policy. Meanwhile the local unemployed vaguely look forward to when 'things buck up.' (1982, pp. 236-237) It should be pointed out that the most exploitative characters in the novel are not business owners but rather opportunistic members of the working classes like Mrs. Nattle and Sam Grundy. Constantine concludes that Greenwood avoided offending the middle classes by leaving them out of the novel. (p. 237)

[99] I use the term slum literature because just as the trench was not the entirety of the intellectuals' experiences on the Western Front it became the iconic image of their suffering, so life in the depressed areas came to be focussed on the dilapidated housing of the slums. The centrality of the images of suffering justify the emotive word slum rather than simply depressed areas, the latter term denoting statistical realities rather than the experience of hardship.

Like trench literature before it, slum literature was generally valued for its 'profilmic reality.' Communist intellectual Edgell Rickword,[100] gave a definition for slum literature[101] that stressed its claims to truth-telling.

> I think it was literature that expressed and reflected the actual struggle of the down-trodden, as it were, or could convey by realistic treatment, reportage, their actual conditions of work and communicate their humanity and the plight of their position in a flourishing society – you know, a society that was bilious with riches at the top. (Lucas, 'An Interview with Edgell Rickword.' In J. Lucas (Ed.), 1978, p. 5)

A whole documentary movement built up around the distressed areas, the most well-known works being J.B. Priestley's *English Journey* (1934), George Orwell's *The Road to Wigan Pier* (1937), and James Hanley's *Grey Children* (1937). In the last of these we are given a sense of the scope of that movement which sought to communicate the reality of the situation through the camera-eye of the investigator. An unemployed Welsh miner tells Hanley,

> The fact is… all the people down here, have grown very, very sensitive about the enormous number of people who come down here from London and Oxford and Cambridge, making enquiries, inspecting places, descending underground, questioning women about their cooking, asking men strings of questions about this and that and the other… I'll speak for myself alone. I want work and I want to be left alone. (1937, pp. 22-23)[102]

The working class novelists and playwrights were also valued for their truth-telling in exposing their plight to their middle-class audiences.[103] Perhaps the most famous novel to emerge from the distressed areas was Walter Greenwood's *Love on the Dole*, published in1933. A reviewer in the

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[100] Rickword was a published war poet who largely abandoned poetry upon joining the communist party in 1934.
[101] He called it revolutionary literature, which is essentially the same thing although it stresses its determination to effect change, something that was often absent from trench literature.
[102] In his most succesful novel, *Means Test Man* (1935), Walter Brierly even went so far as to suggest that the activists who sought to help them through their reportage were wasting their time. 'No one could know except the suffering members of this herd what the bitterest bitterness was…'(1983, p. 56)
[103] However, often their attempts to do so were surrounded by more exploitation and incompetence. Christopher Hilliard's study of working class writers and their publishers reveals that many publishers mistreated their working class clients, the worst offender being Lawrence and Wishart who, among other things, were extremely insensitive to the situation of their working class authors and lacked a reliable system for keeping track of sales and royalties. (Hilliard, 2006, pp. 47-51)

Times Literary Supplement wrote, 'As a novel it stands very high, but it is in its qualities as a "social document" that its great value lies'. Greater Manchester's *City News* even went so far as to write, 'no citizen of Manchester or Salford who wants to go about with his eyes open to what is going on around him can neglect to buy, beg or borrow this book.' (both cited in Windle, 2011, pp. 35-36) The belief that working class novels contained a profilmic reality is surely captured in the extraordinary suggestion that for people of Manchester a novel about their region was their surest way of understanding local reality![104]

This pattern of valuing slum literature for its documentary qualities was very like the credibility given to the war memoirs and poems. Among modern critics, Graham Holdernes praised Walter Brierley's novel, *Means Test Man*, for being 'wholly empirical [and] recording social facts and psychological impressions in the most literal way, scrupulously avoiding theoretical analysis or generalised reflection.' (Holderness, 1984, p. 25) It is clear that the predominant value of slum literature, like trench literature before it, is its reputation for the almost-scientific documentation of a hitherto unseen phenomenon. With this in mind it becomes clear why, even in the face of statistical studies conducted with actual scientific precision, slum literature was able to be so convincing and was able to dictate the critical narrative that came to define the period.

Much of the slum literature directly connects the suffering of the working classes to the experiences of the soldiers. Lewis Grassic Gibbon begins his trilogy of novels in 1914 and moves from the war to the unemployment marches of the thirties.[105] The novels revolve around the life of Chris and her son Ewan. During the war Chris's husband, traumatized and changed by his training, is later shot for desertion. As she is comforted by the townspeople Chris thinks of her man, 'hurt and murdered and crying for her, maybe, killed for nothing: and those bitches sat and spoke of their King and country….' (1966, p. 178) Later Long Rob, the local atheist/conscientious objector, dies a hero, expended in a relatively insignificant retreat and given a posthumous medal. After *Sunset Song* came *Cloud Howe* and the early part of the interwar

[104] Other markers of truth telling provided by the documentary studies (working class writers didn't really need to emphasise their reliability) are provided by Orwell and Priestley. Priestley makes the explicit claim: 'honesty is my policy while recording this journey.' (Priestley, 2012, p. 207, see also p. 74) Priestley, Hanley and Orwell all include sections where they simply re-produce their notes so as to eliminate any suspicion of exaggeration. (Priestley, 2012, pp. 227, 230, Hanley, 1937, pp. 151-158 & Orwell, 2001, pp. 48-51) The aim to expose hidden suffering and disturb the complacent assumptions of the readers is a further connection betewen trench literature and slum literature.
[105] The trilogy is comprised of *Sunset Song* (1932), *Cloud Howe* (1933), and *Grey Granite* (1934).

period. Here the war-time narrative is explicitly connected to the interwar narrative of crisis in a protest speech given by an ex-serviceman, Jack Cronin, when he interrupts a Remembrance Day service:

> We went to the war, we know what it was, we went to lice and dirt and damnation: and what have we got at the end of it all? Starvation wages, no homes for heroes, the capitalists fast on our necks as before. They're sacking men at the mills just now and leaving them on the bureau to starve ─ that's our reward… (p. 268)[106]

Priestley, himself a veteran, interweaves his war memories into the documentary study.[107] His study of a depressed Bradford is interrupted by a re-union battalion dinner which allows him to connect the misery of his depressed hometown with the misery of the war. Commenting on the absence of some of the original members of the platoon he echoes Cronin's sentiments:

> They were with us, swinging along, while the women and old men cheered, in that early battalion of Kitchener's New Army, were with us when kings, statesmen, general officers, all reviewed us, when the crowds threw flowers, blessed us, cried over us; and then stood in the mud and water, scrambled through the broken strands of barbed wire, saw the sky darken and the earth open with red hot steel, and came back as official heroes and also as young-old workmen wanting to pick up their jobs and their ordinary life again; and now, in 1933, they could not even join us in a tavern because they had no decent coats to their backs. We could drink to the tragedy of the dead; but we could only stare at one another, in pitiful embarrassment, over this tragi-comedy of the living, who had fought for a world that did not want them, who had come back to exchange their uniforms for rags.

Orwell echoes the same phenomenon when he describes how 'The men who had fought had been lured into the army by gaudy promises, and now they were coming home to a world where there were no jobs and not even any houses.' (Orwell, 2001, p. 131) George Garrett's documentary of

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[106] Later when confronted, Cronin justifies breaking up the service by pointing out that he fought up the front 'rather than scrounging behind...' (Lewis Grassic Gibbon, 1966, p. 178) Cronin goes on to become a Labour bureaucrat who allows his father to die of starvation while he tours the nation preaching on behalf of the National government; the interwar version of *A Rake's Progress*.

[107] He would later publish a war memoir *Carry On, Carry On! (1914-1919)* as part two of a broader memoir entitled *Margin released: A Writer's Reminiscences and Reflections*. This work not being published until 1962, Priestly found that his memoirs were competing with those written by men who had served in the Second World War. He presents a classic example of angry young men becoming the very thing that they once resented.

Liverpool in the early twenties and the first hunger marchers almost goes so far as to suggest that the majority of unemployed men were ex-servicemen. The recurring image is that of 'pawnshop windows piled with medals', while the men use their discipline and training to further the cause of the unemployed and resist the tyranny of the police. (Garrett, 1999, pp. 185, 208-210) Other writers used the war as a yardstick of injustice and suffering. In Brierly's *Means Test Man* Jack Cook reflects, 'the Means Test man in the morning. Tonight and tomorrow would be something like the soldiers used to say the hour or two before going over the top was.' (Brierly, 1983, p. 231) Meanwhile in Heslop's *Last Cage Down* the hero, James Cameron laments the failure of his trade union activities bewailing that he 'proved to be as hopeless as one of those generals in the Great War.' (1984, p. 309)

Much of the slum literature utilizes the language of trench literature in order to communicate the suffering of the working classes. This technique creates a sense of continuity, whether conscious or not, between the war narrative and the interwar narrative. While in Lancashire Priestley describes the working class as being on active service. (*English Journey*, 2012, p. 212) Later he notes that an impoverished housemaid forces him to confront the fact 'that there was a war on.' (Priestley, 2012, p. 222) Walter Greenwood's novel uses the same technique. His story of life in a depressed town includes ironic images of men marching, ex-soldiers and former conscientious objectors meeting very different fates. The growing attractions of pacifism are represented in the heroic fomer conscientiuous objector. The war hero Ned Narkey is positioned as the rapacious villain while the heroic Labour activist and martyr Larry Meath is equated with a conscientious objector. (Greenwood, 1993, p. 135) Even the descriptive language of the war is pointedly applied to the town.[108] All serve to keep the war narrative in the mind of reader and conflate it with the sufferings of the distressed areas. By borrowing the language and imagery of trench literature the slum writers were able to keep the war narrative in the minds of their readers. They were able to create an implicit dialectic of wilful incompetence and heartless exploitation.

[108] For instance Hankey Park is described as being 'like a beleaguered city from which plundering incendiaries have recently withdrawn, a vast curtain of smoke rises as from smouldering ruins.' Later Ned Narkey thinks about attacking Sam Grundy, one of the exploitative characters in the novel, 'his impulse was to snatch at Grundy's throat, fling him the floor and kick his brains out as he had done to those German boys, who, scared stiff, he had captured in a pill-box, a feat of heroism which had earned him the medal and the commander's commendatory remarks.' (Greenwood, 1993, pp. 79, 188)

The idea of an incompetent government, unable to deal with the people who needed them most, had become so clichéd that Orwell could ask, 'Who is there who has not jeered at the House of Lords, the military caste, the Royal Family, the public schools, the huntin' and shootin' people, the old ladies in Cheltenham boarding-houses, the horrors of 'county' society, and the social hierarchy generally?' (Orwell, 2001, p. 146) As early as 1933 it was a comic staple. In A.G. Macdonnell's *England Their England*,[109] the narrator remarks of the ruling classes,

> They're the kindliest souls in the world, but if they see anything beautiful flying in the air or running along the ground, they rush for a gun and kill it. If an earthquake devastates North Borneo, they dash off to the Mansion House and block up all the traffic for miles round trying to hand over money for earthquake relief, but do you think they'll lift a finger to abolish their own slums? Not they. (Macdonell, 1984, p. 14)[110]

Even governmental attempts actually to clear the slums are often shrouded in working class irony that seems to echo that of the troops. Greenwood writes, 'large families are no longer permitted to live in cellars; instead, by force of circumstance and in the simplicity of their natures, they pay much more than their grandparents did for the convenience of living in a single room over a cellar.' (Greenwood, 1993, p. 12) The impotence of the government is a constant theme in the novel.

In the labour exchange the walls are covered with posters suggesting that the unemployed should migrate to Canada. (Greenwood, 1993, p. 156) These posters are interspersed with pictures of local men jailed for being less than honest with the means test. The irony of this comes when later it is revealed that the only people who can be sure of finding work are those being released from jail. 'Allus y've got to do is t' get y'self pinched and sent to quot [jail], do y' time, an' when y' come out Probation officer or Court Missionary does rest. It's th' on'y way t' get a job

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[109] A comic equivalent to J.B. Priestley's *English Journey*

[110] In a subsequent portrait of Adelaide Carraway, popularly supposed to be Nancy Astor, MacDonnell develops this portrait of the heartless and essentially incompetent ruling classes. '…she soon found that there was more scope for originality in championing, from time to time, the working classes, and she startled many of those who had though that they knew 'dear old Addy' inside and out, by declaring publically that she was against the shooting of all those who had led the coal strike of 1926… ' (MacDonnell, 1984, p. 51) Later we get more ironic lines such as, 'Sir Ludovic drove, or rather Sir Ludovic's chauffeur drove, Donald [AG Macdonnell] back to the corner of King's road and Royal Avenue. On the way back, Sir Ludovic talked mainly about the dole.' (p. 100) Added to Sir Ludovic is the portrait of Sir Henry Wootton who 'liked the Socialists because they got so angry and that made him laugh.' (pp. 103-4)

nowadays.'(Greenwood, 1993, p. 232)[111] For Orwell the issue of housing acts as a consistent reflection of the government's foibles. 'It is common enough for a man to be turned out of a condemned house where he is paying six or seven shillings a week and given a Corporation house where he has to pay ten.' (Greenwood, 1993, p. 63) Priestley almost echoes Macdonnell when he satirizes the niggardly pensions given to the working classes after a life time of physically destructive work. Writing about an old woman who had retired after fifty years' service as a weaver and was looking after an invalided sister he mocks the company who reward her loyalty with a pension of five shillings a week to which 'is added the ten shillings that the rashly generous state is flinging her way.' But he notes that 'she does not complain much, perhaps because she realizes, like all the protesting gentlemen who lounge before large club fireplaces, that if, during and after her fifty years of toil, she had been treated with any more consideration it would have meant the ruin of a great country.' (Priestley, 2012, pp. 163-164)[112]

So widespread was the perceived injustice and incompetence afflicting the working man that the definition of the ruling classes was generally broadened to include anyone in authority. The failure of the Labour Party rankled heavily with the working class writers and communicated itself in the assumption that workers who became leaders soon became failures.[113] As Mrs. Nattle puts it in *Love on the* Dole, 'They're all the same once they get i' the parleyment. All on 'em, red, white or blue.'(Greenwood, 1993, p. 165) Jack Cook sneers at the 'Railwaymen's conference at some seaside place. If those delegates…were anything like the trade union officials he knew, they were a rotten lot…' (Brierly, 1983, p. 149) James Cameron is even more direct in his criticism of trade union officialdom, 'Since 1926 they've sat back on their seats watching this country sink down to a level that recalls the days of the tsar in Russia. Dole reductions, Means Tests, every dirty repression the capitalists wish to impose. And they've never said no.' (Heslop, 1984, p. 52)

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[111] Writing in the accent of the locals is a common touch of realism that appears in many of the working class novels and plays. Lewis Grassic Gibbon's trilogy *A Scots Quair* and Joe Corrie's play In *Time o' Strife* are both written in a Scottish voice that goes a long way to communicating their author's credibility.

[112] Priestley also condemns the policies of the government and big businesses, who allow horrific working conditions for the sake of the national economy, by focussing on the Wills Family business in Bristol and the Cadbury Company's Bournville estate outside Birmingham. (Priestley, *English Journey*, 2012, pp. 56-7 & 94-96 See also his discussion of Seaham Harbour, pp. 259, 261)

[113] Heslop goes so far as to blame the failures of Labour on the rise of Fascism in Britain. '...there were a lot of young men who had been promised a terrible lot by the Labour Party, who had grown so weary waiting for the good things that a Labour Government might bring that they had joined the Fascists in despair.' (1984, p. 322)

Not content with absurd instances of legislative incompetence, Communists like Grassic Gibbon and former Communists like Ellen Wilkinson[114] link modern failures to a broader historical narrative of exploitation of the poor by the rich. Willkinson's fairly objective study of Jarrow includes a clear demarcation between a rogues' gallery of villains on the one hand and a matryology on the other. She begins in the 8th century with pirates attacking the humble monks of Jarrow. Following in the pirates' footsteps come William the Conqueror, the coal barons, several marquises of Londonderry, a few Lord Bishops of Durham,[115] William Temple, Charles Palmer, several local magistrates and judges, hordes of bankers and financiers (the modern pirates) and finally Sir James Lithgow who 'murdered' Jarrow out of rank incompetence and self interest and Viscount Runicman who declared that 'Jarrow must work out its own salvation.' (Wilkinson, 1939, p. 198) The victims of these piratical capitalists were the holy martyrs of Jarrow. These, among others, were the 19th century cholera victims, the miners who died in the disasters of 1826 and 1830, Tommy Hepburn, the Seven Lads of Jarrow, William Jobling, the strikers of 1844, 1845, 1849, 1865, Cannon Liddle and finally the eighty per cent of the town who were unemployed and the two hundred marchers who represented them. Wilkinson extends the interwar narrative so that it is merely the most recent chapter of a broader historical narrative. It is a narrative that neatly aligns with a materially Marxist view of history.[116] Grassic Gibbon, himself a Communist, presents the same, essentially Marxist view of history although he utilizes significantly more artistic license, as befitting a novelist. In the first book of the trilogy Chris visits Dunnottar Castle with Ewan Tavendale and meditates on the dungeons,

> there the Covenanting folk[117] had screamed and died while the gentry dined and danced in their warm lithe halls, Chris stared at the places, sick and angry and sad for those folk

[114] Wilkinson was one of the founding members of the Communist Party of Great Britain in 1920 and left in 1924.
[115] Heslop even takes the time to chastise one beleaguered Bishop for his role in the strike of 1892. (1984, p. 81)
[116] The belief that contemporary historical events were bearing out a Marxist view of history will be more explicitly dealt with in chapters five and six.
[117] The attempt to equate what was essentially 'a crisis in Reformation politics [with nationalist overtones] – over the nature of the true religion, how to decide what was, and of the proper relationship between church and state' (Braddick, 2008, p.xxiii) with the latter-day struggles of the working classes can only be described as clumsy. It is particularly important to remember that the Covenanters were originally mobilised and animated by the Scottish ruling classes, with the Bishops being the only traditional ruling group excluded from the process. (pp. 33-4)

> she could never help now, that hatred of rulers and gentry a flame in her heart, John Guthrie's[118] hate.' (Gibbons, 1966, p. 101)

In the final book Chris's son Ewan, a reputed Communist, finds himself in a similar chamber; the No. 3 cell at the police station, being bashed by 'the bobbies'. But in his torment Ewan feels 'a kind of stinging bliss' as he joins 'that army of pain and blood and torment that was yet but the raggedest van of the hordes of the Last of the Classes... [their] banners red in the blood from prisons, torn entrails of tortured workers... the enslavement and oppression of six thousand years a cry and a singing that echoes to the stars.' (Gibbons, 1966, p. 452)

Yet for all Grassic Gibbon's talk of hordes, Ewan did not really represent the common experience of the working classes. Far from being emboldened by their sufferings, most workers either striking or unemployed, like the men along the Western Front, experienced a significant loss of faith. It was a loss of faith in general life, usually manifested in a debilitating apathy and an envy of the dead and dying. The constant sense of injustice often produces a powerful loss of faith and an ensuing sense of apathy.

There was some loss of faith in society in Joe Corrie's play about a failed strike, *In Time o' Strife* (1927). One of the young miners, Tam Anderson, is given three years jail for his part in the demonstrations. The injustice of the sentence forces even the fairly apolitical Jock Smith to remark, 'Three years and we live in a civilized country. If this is civilisation put me in among the savages.' (Corrie, 2001, pp. 104-5) However, as Orwell noted, apathy was a more common response. '[T]here is no doubt about the deadening, debilitating effect of unemployment upon everybody…' (Orwell, 2001, p. 75) Jack Cook admits that you could always tell the long-term unemployed. 'It seemed to be a lack of moral and spiritual energy.' (Brierly, 1983, p. 171) Harry Hardcastle loses faith in life even before he has lost his job. Contemplating his low earnings and sensing his impending redundancy he mutters, 'Ah'm fed up, Ah am.' (Greenwood, 1993, p. 78) Later on when he is unemployed and loses his benefits at the precise moment that he finds he needs to marry Helen, apathy grips him; 'the manager informed him that there was no appeal. He didn't argue; went outside, dazed.' (Greenwood, 1993, p. 196)

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[118] John Guthrie being Chris's father, who is pointedly named after one of the clergymen that inspired the march of the covenanters, and, in his own time, fought a long battle with the landed gentry as they slowly crushed him and his farming way of life.

The sense of hopelessness must have been suffocating. Both Brierly and George Gatting discuss the problem of suicide among the long-term unemployed. (See Brierly, 1983, pp. 130-131 and 'Pond.' In G. Garrett, 1999, pp. 138-151) Priestley suggests that the popularity of picture theatres and pubs in industrial towns is because 'they are bolt holes and safety valves', and that their prevalence is a product of working class apathy. (Priestley, 2012, p. 93) He suggests that if the working classes got the 'brotherhood spirit' as the religious put it, 'there would first be such a burning down and blowing up and wholesale destruction.' It is Hanley who perhaps gets closest to the cause of the apathy. In one of the few passage in which he allows himself to ediatorialise he explains the conflicting ideologies that compete for the job of saving the worker.

> [T]he social services say the Communists are ruining the best type of working-man; the Churches rail against the Communists; they in turn see no salvation except through Stalin himself, the only living apostle of human hope; the Labour Party is torn between outright conservatism and a luke warm allegiance to the principles of its founder; the I.L.P. is a scattered band; the Salvation Army band plays every Sunday in the streets, still calls in its theatrical way for you to come to be saved, and whilst all this goes on the real tragedy is being played out behind four walls.(1937, p. 104)

The problem for many of the workers was that the offers of salvation seemed completely unable to respond to their needs. The perceived failures of Church, State and the opponents of both created a sense of hostility, or at least apathy, among many of the worst-affected. It was this apathy that would inspire the intellectual converts to take up the challenge and work so hard to mobilize the victims of the incompetent and exploitative ruling classes.[119]

Generally working class writers wrote for a middle class audience[120] and were therefore loathe to present the conversion to extremist politics. Consequently, the only acceptable way to present a Communist character was to present his politics as a kind of madness. In Winifred Holtby's *South Riding* the equivalent to the Communist character is Astell, a Socialist. Holtby presents him as a mad prophet figure whose convictions 'had driven him through desperate poverty to a

[119] Although, as Ellen Wilkinson pointed out, it wasn't just that they were apathetic. Many, not unpredictably, just resented the interference of young university students. 'Often a young university graduate arrives and commences to 'organise' men old enough to be his father. These men have a hatred of being organised in this way.' (1939, p. 233)
[120] The trail of footnotes that translate the working class patois and the long explanations of industries like mining suggest a totally foreign audience.

hardly-earned schoolmastership, out of school into a conscientious [objector's] prison, from prison to a semi amateur printing press on the Clyde, from Scotland to Dublin, Dublin to South Africa, and from South Africa back, a physical wreck, to England…' (Holtby, 1966, pp. 116-117)[121] The madness that animated Astell was liable to overtake even the most respectable figures in slum literature.[122] In Brierley's novel, Jane Cook sees a picture of a Cabinet minister in the beach at Brighton, after she had been reading about the unemployment bill[123] going through parliament and 'a suggestion of wildness overtook had swept her and behind her hate and anger was a strong activity reaching out towards something definite.' (1983, p. 102) Brierley was criticized by Ernie Wooley in the *Daily Herald* for writing a book that was too timid, and yet it is clear that he believes that continued injustice can only result in political extremism based on 'something definite.'

More overt conversions to Communism come in the novels of Heslop and Grassic Gibbons. In *Last Cage Down* Jim Cameron passionately rejects the trade union movement and announces, 'the likes of Joe Frost, his party, the Marxists, the Communists, are right. Do you hear, mother?'[124] (Heslop, 1984, p. 309) Cameron's exclamation comes after he has spent nine months in jail for threatening the company agent, John Tate, losing his job, his house and his brother in an accident he predicted, caused by Tate's ignorance and greed. Grassic Gibbon's trilogy can be described as one long movement from neutrality and isolation to intense political activism. Thus we can see in the timid socialism of Holtby and the explicit Communism of Grassic Gibbon the same logic. Where the government has failed in its duty, change will necessarily, even

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[121] At the end of the Novel Sarah Burton gives an impassioned address to the students in her care on the occasion of the 1935 Silver Jubilee, telling them to question everyone in authority. While speaking, 'she was thinking of Joe Astell, killing himself by overwork in the Clydeside, dying for his country more surely than thousands of those who to-day waved flags and cheered for royalty.' (Holtby, 1966, p. 506)

[122] Greenwood is perhaps even more shameless by having his socialist agitator, Larry Meath merely work for the Labour party under whose more acceptable auspices he very calmly promotes arguments like, '…there's only one class of people who provide all these commodities… and those people are us.'(1993, p. 183) Greenwood's was the most popular of the working class novels between the wars. Perhaps this was in part due to the acceptability of Larry Meath as a socialist. Larry Meath, like Joe Frost in Heslop's novel, speaks without a working class accent. One wonders if this was to make him, and his unashamedly socialist message, more palatable to a middle class audience.

[123] The bill would have been the Unemployment Act 1934, which became law on the 28th of June that year. However the probable cause of her anger would have been the nutrition debates that surrounded the bill. These debates were played out in national newspapers and revealed that 'the majority of the unemployed and their families must... be suffering from chronic under-nutrition.'(Cited in Smith, 2003, p. 500) A conclusion that did little to make the bill more amenable to the working classes it sought to assist.

[124] Admittedly the reference to mother somewhat undermines this Damascene moment but then Heslop's talent did not lie in sentimental prose. Arguably, the high point of the novel comes when, after several narratorial defences of free love (natural feelings, the Church girls do it etc.), Jim Cameron finally has his way with the bar girl in a hedge.

inevitably, be wrought by exterior forces, generally those who have most directly experienced the failure of government.

Religion

Just like trench literature before it, slum literature features a fast disappearing religious presence. And it is disappearing for the same reason that it disappeared along the Western Front, it is viewed as being irrelevant. At the heart of this view is the image of the cleric whose life is seen as cut off from the problems of his flock. In James Hanley's short story, 'People are Curious', first published in 1938, a young couple and their child walk for miles in search of work. Early in the story they encounter a priest who plays on the young woman's mind. 'She thought of the priest walking up the drive that was clean. Walking on to serenity, the debris of living behind him.' (Hanley, 1953, p. 33)[125] In Greenwood's novel Mrs. Bull advises Sally, whose fiancé has just died of pneumonia, not to bother about paying the funeral expenses. 'Ah've had no eddication but Ah do know that there ne'er was parson breathed wot preached sermon abut resurrection on empty belly, an mine's been empty many a time... There's nowt for the likes of us t' live for Sal. Nowt. Religion eh? Pah Ah've no patience wi' it.' (Greenwood, 1993, pp. 215-216) In his study of the working classes in South Wales, Hanley includes the comments of the wife of an unemployed man who links governmental and ecclesiastical failures. Both being too far away, both 'haven't any feelings at all.' Consequently she goes on to add 'I don't think my husband or myself has [sic.] been inside a church since the day we got married. Very few people down here go either.' (1937, pp. 136-7) In *Means Test Man*, Jack Cook used to be a teacher at the Methodist chapel but he abandons his religion, believing it incapable of doing him any good. (Brierly, 1983, pp. 71-73) But later he feels 'a faint sadness, a faint anger' and laments, 'if it only had been true that heaven was above that stretch of sky.' (Brierly, 1983, p. 176)

In more dispassionate tones, Priestly notes that this attitude is growing in working class communities. In Birmingham he attends a non-conformist chapel for the first time in thirty years. His first impression is that little has changed, except that 'there were fewer young people in it, and especially young men.' Soon the 'oriental' language of the sermon convinces him that this

[125] In his work, *Grey Children: A study in Humbug and Misery* religion is almost entirely absent and is generally only mentioned in the negative. Old Mrs, Vaughn explains that she reads the Bible but immediately adds, 'nobody believes in that today of course... but never mind, I like it.' (1937, p. 52)

religion, at any rate, has little to do with the lives of the poorer Brummies. (Priestley, 2012, pp. 105-7) In Bradford he finds that young people 'obviously... did not like places of worship', while in Lincolnshire he muses on the vagrancy laws and concludes that 'the whole twelve apostles would have been liable to summary arrest in this Christian community, simply as vagrants, and quite part from their subversive doctrines.' (Priestley, 2012, pp. 154, 302) But Corrie's play seems to offer as an explanation the idea that faith becomes impossible in poverty. After Agnes Pettigrew dies of starvation during the strike, Jean Smith is left asking, 'What can God be thinkin' aboot when he lets the like o' this happen?' (Corrie, 2001, p. 97) The play provides no answer to the question. Grassic Gibbons goes furthest when he has the minister Colquohoun[126] very publically repudiate his faith in Christ and die in the pulpit calling for a 'stark sure creed that will cut like a surgeon's knife through the doubt and disease.' (Gibbons, 1966, pp. 349-350) The sermon begins as a sermon on the Passion of Christ wherein he contrasts contemporary sufferings with those endured by Christ. He concludes that 'there is no hope for the world at all.' As he dies Chris, his wife, says, 'It is finished' thereby symbolically replacing Christ with the social activist as the immanentist source of mankind's hope. (Gibbons, 1966, p. 350)

Interestingly enough Priestley notes the attractions of Catholicism while dismissing the 'good and sober Church and Chapel folk.' He concludes that 'If I could persuade myself to believe in the Christian account of this life... I should either join the Catholic Church or fall in with the Salvation Army. Both of them have the right religious attitude; that is, they are not afraid of being thought noisy and vulgar; they take the thing out into the street.' He goes on to note that there is no point being 'gentlemanly' about heaven and hell 'like the Church of England or drab and respectable like the Nonconformists. He also suggests that the early Christians would have more in common with 'the incense swinging Catholics or the drumming roaring Salvationists.' (Priestley, 2012, p. 152) What is most striking about Priestley's point is the idea that the national Church had lost its relevance and that the logical conclusion was that one must either become a Catholic, Salvationist or an Atheist. Later he would note that while he was 'no Catholic, no mediaevalist, no Merrie Englander – [he had] seen things on this journey that have come nearer to converting me than all their books.' (Priestley, 2012, p. 282) When confronted with the Gothic grandeur of Beverley Minster he wonders 'why our own age, which boasts of its conquest of

[126] Pronounced Ca-Hoon

material things, never seems to offer us here any of these superb aesthetic surprises.' And he concludes that 'if it has to be a choice between Beverley and Jarrow, write me down a mediaevalist.' (Priestley, 2012, p,282) Here Priestley, echoes Herbert Read by suggesting that conversion is the natural, though surprising, response to widespread injustice and social disintegration.

A similar though more subtly expressed idea is found in Orwell's writing. When discussing his own conversion, Orwell uses religiously charged language. He was 'conscious of an immense weight of guilt that I had got to expiate.' He wanted to 'get right down among the oppressed', to escape from security and success which seemed 'spiritually ugly'. Finally, after much 'mediation' on 'how one could sell everything, give everything away, change one's name and start out with no money and nothing but the clothes one stood up in', he decided to become a tramp. (Orwell, 2001, pp. 138-140) This last quote seems written without any sense of irony and yet it conflates Christ's advice to the rich young man and his advice to the twelve after giving them the power to drive out all demons and to cure diseases.[127] Orwell's account of his own conversion to socialism and his vocation as an activist carries strong biblical overtones from two Gospel passages that are frequently cited in relation to the clerical vocation.

And yet why should we be surprised? The obvious narrative that emerged out of the First World War and continued to develop through the interwar period was a narrative of destruction, injustice and decay. It was a narrative of lost faith in religion, both civic and religious. It was a narrative that seemed capable of both destroying hope for some while irresistibly demanding a response from others. It was a generalised narrative that suggested the radical decline of a once great nation. It was a narrative that demanded a radical renewal. In the next chapter we look at the radical religious renewal that was in fact taking place throughout the period.

[127] For example see Matthew 19: 16-22 and Matthew 10: 5-10.

Chapter Three: Religious Renewal

The war has left throughout Europe a mood of disillusionment and despair which calls aloud for a new religion, as the only force capable of giving men the energy to live vigorously. Bolshevism has supplied the new religion.

Bertrand Russell, *The Practice and Theory of Bolshevism* (1920)

A World behind us the west is in flames,
Devastated areas, works at a standstill;
No seed awakes, wary is no hunter.
The tame are ruined and the wild have fled.

Where then the saviour, the stop of illness?
Hidden the mountain was to steel our hearts.
Is healing here? An untrodden territory
Promises no coolness, invites but the brave

Cecil Day Lewis, *The Magnetic Mountain* (1933)

'Royal interruptions of the routine of the Ministry were becoming distressingly frequent in the last few days as the Emperor assimilated the various books that had arrived for him by the last mail. Worst of all the pageant of birth control was proving altogether more trouble than it was worth; in spite of repeated remonstrances, however, it continued to occupy the mind of the Emperor in precedence of all other interests. He had already renamed the site of the Anglican Cathedral, Place Marie Stopes. "Heaven knows what will happen if he ever discovers psycho-analysis," remarked Basil, gloomily foreseeing a Boulevard Kraft-Ebbing, an Avenue Oedipus and a pageant of coprophagists…But next day [the emperor] was absorbed in ectogenesis. "I have read here," he said, tapping a volume of speculative biology, "that there is to be no more birth. The ovum is fertilised in the laboratory and then the foetus is matured in bottles. It is a splendid idea.'

Evelyn Waugh, *Black Mischief* (1932)

In these three quotes we can discern a steam of logic that underpins this entire chapter. Russell's quote reveals the popularly understood need or a religion capable of renewing the disillusioned post-war world. Day Lewis's poem from the thirties, which will be discussed in detail in chapter seven, reveals that in the midst of the interwar crises, discussed in the previous chapter, there was this same search for a religion capable of providing healing. The quote from Waugh's satire *Black Mischief* hints at the variety of religions that claimed to provide such a healing. The effect of this chapter will be to show that the conversions to Catholicism and Communism took place amidst a much broader conversion movement and that Catholicism and Communism were simply two conversion destinations among many.

Introduction

Christopher Dawson, the Catholic historian and convert, wrote of the interwar period that, 'never before in the history of the world has a civilisation been so completely secularized, so confident in its own powers and so sufficient to itself as is our own.'[128] (1936, p. 105) It is this sense of confidence which makes the interwar era so intriguing for the intellectual historian. Richard Overy recently published a history of the era entitled *The Morbid Age* in which he argued that the era could be defined by the widespread belief that 'civilisation was in crisis.' (Overy, 2009, p. 3) This is absolutely correct, as shown by the previous chapter, yet he might just as easily have called his book *The Optimistic Age*. For every problem, real or imagined, there were groups of earnest intellectuals ready to propose a solution. The eugenicists proposed that the deficient members of the public could be convinced to self-sterilize, while Ernest Jones and the disciples of Freud felt that psychoanalysis could be used to eliminate the guilt of the post-war generation and 'unchain the unconscious primitive impulses.' (Overy, 2009, pp. 98, 138) Overy notes the similar concerns that link the interwar movements but he fails to see their extraordinarily optimistic fervor. In 1932 War Resistors International presented the British Prime Minister with a petition signed by 1,450 organisations calling for Britain to disarm immediately as an example to other nations. (Overy, 2009, p. 239) Such a hopeful stunt can only be explained by the

[128] Dawson grew up in an Anglo-Catholic household in Craven (North Yorkshire), later describing it as a community that had resisted the religious revolution in the 16th century and the industrial revolution in the 19th century. Like so many of the interwar converts he lost his faith at school, before gaining a 'half-hearted Christianity' by the time he attended Oxford. His reading in history and theology had inclined him towards the Catholic faith but it was a tour to the eternal city in 1909 which caused him to decide to become a Catholic.

optimistic energy of the convert. From the earnest endeavors of the Left Book Club to the more radical Socialist and Catholic-Distributist communities, this was an age of converts.

> Britain pullulated with conflicting creeds. The Evangelist Frank Buchman preached Moral Rearmament. Major Douglas and his green shirted supporters espoused Social Credit, the last word in something-for-nothing credit. Functionalism, especially in architecture was all the rage… Freudianism was in fashion. Surrealism had its moment of glory when Salvador Dali gave a London lecture… dressed in a diving suit and nearly suffocated. Wyndham Lewis rejected Fascism when it became, as a mass movement, too democratic for his taste. Hewlett Johnson, the "Red" Dean of Canterbury, found that atheistic Marxism was "profoundly Christian." Bishop Headlam of Gloucester said that Nazism "represented a strong spiritual influence." And bourgeois Communists were described by Beatrice Webb as "mild mannered desperados." (Brendon, 2000, p. 416)

A classic example of a particularly interwar movement came in the form of the Promethean Movement. This movement claimed to have come 'spontaneously to life' without planning organization or any stimulation by a person or a party with a particular axe to grind. (Symons, 2001, p. 3) Soon the organization which eschewed all organization had two hundred members and had divided into sectional groups.

> The Active Peace Group called for 'Disarmament by Example' and for 'the creation of a peace-mind and the utilization of pugnacious instincts for the destruction of social and other evils'. The Sexology Group pronounced its ideal as 'the complete yet reasoned and reasoning liberty of the individual'. The Arts group wanted 'a nucleus of volunteer writers and research workers who will make it their business to study such problems as, for example, the relations between art and politics, between literature and life, between morality and aesthetics'. (Symons, 2001, p. 3)

The movement wanted both to destroy existing institutions and create a contemporary Weltanschauung, emerging from a World Commonwealth that they were also advocating. For Symons the 'revolutionary optimism' of the small group represented a 'much larger and less coherent mass of people under thirty who believed that to change the world was not only necessary but comparatively easy.' (Symons, 2001, p. 4) The interwar years were a period in

which most agreed about the need for renewal but were fiercely divided as to the means. It was the only sort of age that could produce the Promethean Movement with its mystical genesis, its unlimited purview and its unyielding confidence. The crises of the period produced a superabundance of conversions to a superabundance of movements advocating radical change in either the individual or society in general. It was in such a broad context of crises and conversion that the interwar writers made their 'somersaults'.

Perhaps the most startling example of this connection between crisis and conversion comes in the life of the interwar poet,Valentine Ackland, whose continuing crises of life, both personal and national, resulted in a continuing cycle of conversion. Born in 1906, Ackland was, for much of her life, a victim of personal crises. Abused as a child, a life-long alcoholic, she was also a lesbian who, for a time, was disastrously married. Added to this Ackland was a woman of deep-seated political convictions which were aroused by the national crises of the day. Responding to this heady conglomeration of personal and national crises, Ackland abandoned the Anglo-Catholicism of her childhood for Roman Catholicism in the mid twenties. This, in turn, was abandoned for Communism in the mid thirties. By the mid fifties the brutalities of Soviet Russia had precipitated her return to the Catholic Church. However the upheaval that followed the Second Vatican Council in the mid sixties caused her to abandon her Catholicism, this time for Quakerism.[129] The consistent conversion response in Ackland's life illustrates, in microcosm, the clear connection between crises and conversion.

Charles Taylor has described the period between 1800 and 1960 as the age of mobilization; others have called it the second confessional age. (Taylor, 2007, p. 471) This was the age when the enchanted cosmos fell away for many people:

> Thus there has been created a kind of secular 'void' in which a sense of lost meaningfulness prevails. Such a void has had much to do with the development of quasi-religions; the concern for an ultimate object of devotion, a ground and a standpoint for understanding and appraising all that we think and do, belongs essentially to being human

[129] See: Frances Bingham, 'Saturday Review: Lives and letters: Labours of love: Valentine Ackland was a lesbian, a communist, and at one time a Catholic, but above all she was a poet, whose work was overshadowed by controversy,' *The Guardian*, 20 May 2006, 21.

> and is not confined to those who have already committed themselves to an historic religious tradition. (J. E. Smith, 1994, pp. 8-9)

While Taylor's discussion seems to centre on the reactions of organised religions more than the emergence of secular religions, it is clear that his description of the period can include the range of new, more secular, conversion destinations. He writes, 'in an "age of mobilization" people realized that whatever political, social ecclesial structures we aspire to have to be mobilized into existence.' (Taylor, 2007, p. 445) This phenomenon of mobilization (or *konfessionalisierung*[130]) is the reason why a period that sees such a marked decline in religious belief is also a period marked by a widespread pattern of conversion to an ever-growing number of destinations.

It could also be argued that the interwar period was a crucial stage on the road to 'the secular age' in the sense that it witnessed a movement from the nova effect, which was defined by elite pluralism, towards the supernoava effect of mass pluralisation. 'The process whereby people [were] persuaded, pushed, dragooned, or bullied into new forms of society, church, [or] associations' (Taylor, 2007, p. 445) was the same process whereby long-held theories developed, held and expostulated by the elite were now being espoused by the masses. It was the period in which Marx's voluminous output was being savagely defended by the working classes in East London or primly pondered by left-wing book clubs in East Finchley. The interwar period was a crucial moment in the shift towards the radical fragmentation that defines the Secular Age.

And yet, for all its pluralism, Britain's interwar converts were linked by a common promise of renewal, either temporal or eternal; either immanentist or supernatural; either universal or personal. Many were valued for their ability to 'fit the age' while others were valued for being able to transcend the age. All possessed an important mission which gave rise to a missionary spirit that, even in its most secular forms, was surely an echo of the spirit that inspired the Neo-Gothic Cathedrals of Lahore, Singapore and Zanzibar.

[130] See chapter one, ft. 44, p. 30

Christianity in England

In 1860 Frederick Temple wrote 'The Education of the world' which was published in the extremely controversial, *Essays and Reviews*. Temple's argument was essentially progressivist, based on the idea that 'the men of the earliest ages were, in many respects, still children as compared with ourselves, with all the blessings and with all the disadvantages that belong to childhood.' (1860, p. 4) The essay divided biblical and church history into the stages of development, concluding that the modern age was the age of manhood in which 'the full-grown man learns by reflection. He looks inwards and not outwards only.' (Temple, 1860, pp. 32-33) Explicitly rejecting any form of infallibility, Temple promoted a humanist vision of practical immanentism that would lead the individual to a life of holiness through personal efforts. Reviewing the book in *The Westminster Review,* Positivist historian, Frederic Harrison wrote:

> When axioms of science and results of criticism, principles and theories for which we have long contended, are preached in the citadels of orthodoxy we may welcome and proclaim the fact, while insisting that they be frankly adopted and pushed to their legitimate conclusion. (1860, p. 294)

By 1897 Temple, having survived both the theological and concomitant legal struggles, was enthroned as the ninety fifth Archbishop of Canterbury. In many ways, Temple's elevation to the primacy repositioned the Broad Church Movement as the central voice of the Anglican Church with its Anglo-Catholic and Evangelical alternatives above and below. However the reign of Temple and his latitudinarian successors, while preserving the Church of England, also witnessed a growing exodus of adherents who were pushing Temple's axioms to their 'legitimate conclusion'.

In his essay, Temple identified toleration as the great fruit of the Reformation. 'At the Reformation it might have seemed at first as if the study of theology were about to return. But in reality an entirely new lesson commenced – the lesson of toleration.' (1860, p. 43) While acknowledging the rise of rationalism in the clerical ranks, Temple enthused, 'there are occasions when the spiritual anarchy which has necessarily followed the Reformation threatens for a moment to bring back some temporary bondage, like the Roman Catholic system. But on the whole the steady progress of toleration is unmistakable.' (Temple, 1860, p. 43)

By the 1920s Temple's son, William, was the bishop of Manchester and would later follow his father into Lambeth Palace. On every level William was the inheritor of the world that his father had celebrated in his essay nearly sixty years earlier. Naturally he did much to promote the same forces of toleration. Temple was a child of his age. Educated at Balliol, Temple studied philosophy under Edward Caird, the noted Scottish Hegelian. He soon became a keen student of Hegel and, to a lesser extent, Spinoza, and was quickly gaining an interest in Socialist activism. (Dorrien, 2012, p. 416) In keeping with Hegel's emphasis of spirit and understanding over historical fact, Temple quickly gained a reputation as a liberal theologian. In 1912 he followed his father's essay with his own, contributing to the equally controversial *Foundations: A Statement of Christian Belief in Terms of Modern Thought: by Seven Oxford Men*. In an essay on the 'Divinity of Christ' Temple contrasted the historical figure of Christ with the demands of the incarnation: 'The word "*Divine*" suggests Omniscience; then where is the evidence that Jesus of Nazareth was omniscient? He suffered surprise and disappointment and openly stated that He did not know the hour of the Judgment.' (1912, p. 213) Temple engages with this problem through the lens of Hegelian logic and concludes: 'The wise question is not, "Is Christ Divine?" but, "What is God like?" and the answer to that is "Christ." So, too, we must not form a conception of Humanity and either ask if Christ is Human or insist on reducing Him to the limits of our conception; we must ask, "What is Humanity?" and look at Christ to find the answer.' (Temple, 1912, p. 259***)*** In an ensuing correspondence with Ronald Knox Temple explained that his beliefs were very close to Knox's but that 'his critical thrusts poked into areas where improved understanding might be necessary.' (Dorrien, 2012, p. 423)[131] From Knox's perspective the problem was that the 'critical thrusts' were seeking something far more practical than understanding, they were seeking to make religion more palatable.

> That is why modern theology is all at heart apologetic; that is why it shows, at times, such a cynical indifference to abstract truth. For we are not concerned, now, to find how

[131] He did not disbelieve every miracle story in the bible; he believed that Christ walked on water; he accepted the Virgin Birth, although he did not find 'any real theological significance' in it; and he believed in Christ's bodily resurrection, though the bodily part was not essential to his faith.' (Dorrien, 2012, p. 423)

> we can represent truth most adequately, but how we can represent it most palatably. '[132] (R. Knox, 1914, pp. 9-10)

Knox published a Drydenesque satire of *Foundations* in the *Oxford Magazine* in October 1913, seeking to 'To puff your Sales, and to confound your Views.' (R. Knox, 1915, p. 8) In this satirical poem Knox gives some indication of the discontent that would see him become a Catholic. There was clearly no authority that might order the liberalising movement within the Anglican Church.

It could be argued that the spirit of 'practical religion' was in essence the spirit of the Anglican Church during the interwar period. It was a spirit that for some bore remarkable fruit and for others, did irreparable damage. The fruit was the achievement of latitudinarian unity. The instinctive gentleman's agreement at the heart of the Anglican Church meant that it served as an accurate gauge of the nation's religiosity during any particular period. Modernists, Evangelicals, Anglo-Catholics and broad-churchmen have all found a home within its stately walls and their oscillating crusades and conquests reveal, in microcosm, broader national concerns. However, as Ronald Knox found, this same unity often came at the cost of definitude. A perfect example comes in the Commission on Christian Doctrine which, after the untimely death of Bishop Burge in 1925, was chaired by William Temple. The commission was formed in 1922 and finally reported in 1938. The report was couched in the careful language of the latitudinarian spirit, with high modernists like Cannon Streeter rubbing shoulders with high churchmen like A. E. J. Rawlinson[133] (later Bishop of Derby). In the introduction to the report Temple said that the 'measure of agreement that we have reached' was based on the fact that we became 'a company of personal friends.' (1938, p. 1)

And yet that gentlemanly spirit, so conducive to unity, was incapable of definitude. When it came to controversial questions like the Virgin Birth there was an obvious effort simply to include all views using statements of fact without actually committing to a position:

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[132] Cited in Dorrien, 2012, p. 422.

[133] Rawlinson began his essay in the Anglo-Catholic *Essays Catholic and Critical* (first published in 1926) with a complete snub to the historical critics, arguing that knowledge of the faith comes to the individual from the spiritual authority of the church and that faith centres on historically definite events: '... the gospel is in such wise "a positive religion," that it came originally into the world in a particular context, and as the result of a particular historical process, it has ever claimed to be the divinely intended culmination and fulfilment of an even earlier historical and positive religion, that of the Jews.' (1954, p. 85)

> ...belief in it as an historical fact cannot be independent of the historical evidence, although in this case the subject is one on which the historical evidence by itself cannot be other than inconclusive… many of us hold accordingly… there are however, some among us who hold…. We are agreed in recognizing that belief in Our Lord's birth from a Virgin has been in the history of the Church intimately associated with its faith in the Incarnation of the Son of God.[134] (1938, p. 82)

Temple's biographer, Frederic Iremonger, wrote that the general opinions of readers were as divided as the commission: 'while it was "felt by many" that the report displayed the irritating inconclusiveness of Anglican compromise, "on the other hand, many felt" that it was a triumph for toleration and for the comprehensiveness of the National Church.' (1948, pp. 465-466)[135]

The irony of latitudinarianism is that it staves off the indignity of national apostasy by internalizing the secularizing process. Indeed the Anglican Church became increasingly pluralistic and, as in the world outside, became a home to both the Communist and Catholic conversion impulse in the form of Christian Socialism and the sacramentalising (re-enchanting) Anglo-Catholic movement. Alongside these movements were the many nominal members who were experiencing increasing disenchantment: 'if one thinks of Asquith, Haldane, Balfour, Lloyd George, Churchill, H. A. L. Fisher, one cannot well speak in terms of Christian Orthodoxy, but only of degrees of skepticism.' (Hastings, 1987, p. 54) Anthony Howard described the period, as 'an age in which broadly the Churches managed to keep up appearances whilst faith foundered.' ('The Churches'. In J. Raymond (Ed.) 1960, p. 144)

The reason seemed to be that the plurality of the Anglican Church made it somewhat incomprehensible as a unified system claiming the exclusive authority to 'relate man to the

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[134] Even on something as fundamental as the bodily resurrection of Christ, similarly conciliatory language is evident: 'If a general principle is to be laid down, we may say that the Christian faith is compatible with all such critical reconstructions of the events underlying the narratives as would not have the effect of invalidating, if accepted, the apostolic testimony to Jesus as the Lord who rose from the dead. ...we are of the opinion that it ought to be affirmed.... More than one explanation of this has been suggested; but the majority of the Commission are agreed in holding the traditional explanation.' (p. 84)

[135] Ironmonger goes on to show the particularly Anglican character of the commission. He quotes the Dean of Winchester who wrote that 'Temple's patience, conciliatoriness, and humour in the chair were only matched by his regularity on the tennis court. Eternally hopeful, he nearly always brought a tennis racket.' Professor Clement Webb suggested that the most surprising thing about the commission was that it was 'presided over by a Bishop dressed in flannels.' (Both cited in Iremonger, 1948, p. 467)

ultimate conditions of his existence.' (Bellah, 1964, p. 359) The principle accelerant of Anglicanism's fragmentation was the modernist movement which, by the 1920s, had become a significant voice within the Anglican Church. Known by Anglo-Catholics as the Anti-Christ of Oxford, H. D. A. Major, the principal of Ripon, quoted Bernard Shaw in his treatise on English Modernism, 'we desire to extricate the eternal spirit of religion from the sludgy residue of temporalities and legends that make belief impossible.' (Cited in Moorman, 1954, p. 422) The problem with this aim was that, whilst belief became possible, it generally became irrelevant. The long-serving Dean of Jesus College, Cambridge, Foakes Jackson, pilloried the modernist movement for this very reason:

> We have been most severely rebuked by the liberals of our own Church, who have my sincere sympathy. They are fighting a hard fight. On the one hand they see they are losing the support of the public because there is little demand for a reasonable presentation of Christianity. There is a growing conviction not the less dangerous because it now rarely finds a voice that Christianity can be ignored. (Cited in Lloyd, 1950, p. 40)[136]

Yet not everyone felt that Christianity could be ignored. The response to the growing fragmentation of the Church of England was extremely complex. Some lost their faith, as Jackson suggests; others sought to revivify the Anglican Church through sacramentalism, as part of the Anglo-Catholic movement, while others, rejecting diversity for dogma, moved all the way into the Catholic Church. These fairly typical responses can all be seen at work in the extremely atypical Knox family who, somewhat ironically, provide a microcosm of the English religious landscape in the middle years of Taylor's Age of Mobilisation.

The Different Responses of the Knox Family

In 1903 Edmund Arbuthnott Knox, the father of the family, was appointed as the Bishop of Manchester. He was descended from the aristocratic Knoxes of Ulster who claimed descent from Bishop Andrew Knox, 'the cousin of the great reformer.' (E. A. Knox, 1934, p. 19) From the beginning the family was, like the Anglican Church that they served, full of devotion and faith

[136] The controversial and doggedly Erastian Bishop Hensley Henson summed up the situation in his diary. Responding to the Cambridge Biblical commentaries in 1934, he wrote, 'From the standpoint of the Humanitarians what special and perpetual significance can the Crucifixion of Jesus be said to possess?' (Cited in Lloyd, 1950, p. 37)

and yet somehow as deeply divided and prone to every passing controversy. Bishop Knox's father, George Knox,[137] was a puritanical clergyman of the Low Church variety while his mother, Frances Reynolds, was a Quaker.[138] Edmund had a difficult childhood: 'prominent among the duties of daily life was obedience, unquestioning obedience to parents, and above all to my father.' (E. A. Knox, 1934, p. 28) The relatively harsh paternal regime gave him an isolated education, in which Knox showed a precocious talent. At Corpus Christi he earned three firsts and was able to be ordained and take up an appointment at Merton. Soon he married Ellen French, daughter of the Bishop of Lahore, Thomas Valpy French.[139] Waugh describes Bishop French as 'a Protestant Charles de Foucauld' ('The Life of the Right Reverand Ronald Knox: Fellow of Trinity College, Oxford and Pronotary Apostolic to his Holiness Pope Pius XII.'[140] In E. Waugh, 2001, p. 26) but de Foucauld died twenty five years after French, so perhaps the analogy should be reversed. In any case, French adds another dimension to the rich and controversial tapestry of the Knox family. Raised as an evangelical, Bishop French's life's work was simply to 'proclaim his Saviour and to tell the story of the Redemption to whoever would listen in places where it had never before been heard.' (E. A. Knox, 1934, p. 21) However when travelling in North Africa, Persia or central Asia he would describe himself as '"Katulik la Papaviya," (Catholic, not Papal)'. (Stock, 1914, p. 98) When he died, he was acknowledged as a saint by the local Muslims and his body was prepared for burial by some Goanese Catholics living in Muscat who had also revered him as such.[141]

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[137] Himself a convert, he had defied his Presbyterian family by adopting the Anglicanism of his mother. (Fitzgerald, 1978, p. 16)

[138] Her sister, Mary Anne married the Hon. David Arbuthnott whose surname lived on in Edmund and Ronald. However the two sisters ceased communication when Mrs. Arbuthnott became a Catholic along with her entire family. As Edmund Knox put it, 'unfortunately my aunt never shook off the Tractarian influence which she had originally shared with my mother. Returning home without her husband… she attached herself to the congregation of a High Churchman in London, whose brother, a pervert, had a chapel close at hand. She passed from one brother to the other with most of her children, and intercourse between our families ceased.' (E. A. Knox, 1934, p. 32)

[139] French was Bishop of a diocese that 'stretched from Karachi to Peshawar and Delhi,' and included the entire North-West Frontier. ('Ronald Knox.' In E. Waugh, 2000, p. 140) He travelled extensively throughout Persia and the Cashmere and in retirement he went, of his own volition, to preach in the Sultanate of Muscat in present day Oman. Here he was ignored by much of the local population and, living in absolute poverty, he eventually died in 1891.

[140] From now on referred to as 'Ronald Knox'.

[141] It seems that the entire Catholic community attended his funeral. (Stock, 1914, p. 118) News of his death in England sparked similar canonising elegies. Archdeacon A. E. Moule (a former Anglican missionary in China) 'published a poem in the *Church Missionary Intelligencer*, lamenting that, 'a saintly soul has fallen asleep… ' (Cited in pp. 126-127)

Into this peculiar, yet somehow typically Anglican mix of religious scandal and sanctity, were born the Knox brothers. Edmund, later the editor of *Punch*, was born in 1881. Dillwyn, later involved in code-breaking at Bletchley Park, was born in 1883. Wilfred, later a popular theologian and Biblical scholar, was born in 1886 and finally Ronald, later a famous controversialist who singlehandedly translated the Vulgate, was born in 1888.

In this extraordinary family we can see the religious patterns of the English interwar period. The father became the face of the declining Evangelical party in the Anglican Church. Dillwyn lost his faith while at school and died an atheist.[142] Wilfred became an Anglo-Catholic monk and was a significant voice in the movement to re-sacramentalise the Anglican Church. Ronald went further and eventually converted to Catholicism in 1917. And all the while, 'Eddie was a layman of conventional observances and open mind.' ('Ronald Knox.' In E. Waugh, 2001, p. 166). There were also two sisters, Ethel, born in 1879 and Winifred, born in 1882. Ethel would remain at home for her entire life. The firstborn of this outstandingly intellectual family was slightly disabled and spent most of her life under the care of her ageing father and beloved stepmother. Her younger sister Winifred became Lady Peck when her husband, James Peck was knighted in 1938. She, in her turn, had attended Oxford and gone on to become a prolific novelist, publishing over twenty five books in forty years.

Atheism

From a military point of view Dillwyn was easily the most significant member of the Knox family. In World War One he went to work in what was known as Room 40.[143] In early 1917 he worked out the all-important, 'way in' to the German Flag Code. This began the deciphering process which would ultimately save numerous convoys from U-Boat attacks. Continuing his secret work for the remainder of his life, Dilly would provide another 'way in' to the 'Spy Variations' during World War Two. This contribution would shorten the search for a solution by six months and would, in turn, prove decisive in the Battle of Matapan, the search for the

[142] Fitzgerald uses the term agnostic but there is such a clear absence of doubt in her account of his disbelief that atheist would seem to be the correct term.

[143] In keeping with its top level secrecy Room 40 bore the notice, 'NO ADMITTANCE. RING BELL' but there was no bell. Ronald briefly went to work with Dillwyn in 1916 but was soon transferred because Dillwyn, after clearing some space at the huge desk wedged into the room along with an old bath, failed to explain what his brother was actually supposed to be doing. (Fitzgerald, 1978, pp. 137, 139)

Bismarck and the security of the Malta Convoy. (Fitzgerald, 1978, pp. 253-254)[144] Yet, for our purposes Dillwyn's significance lies with his atheism. While at school he became an aggressive unbeliever, reproving God for his non-existence. (Fitzgerald, 1978, pp. 67, 72)[145] This skepticism was maintained throughout his life and in 1943, with Ronald praying outside his room 'Dilly had gone, unwavering in his disbelief, into what he believed was endless darkness.'(Fitzgerald, 1978, p. 257) Dilly's loss of faith dated from the first years of the 20th century and it flourished by his contact with other noted skeptics such as Maynard Keynes and later, Lytton Strachey, E.M. Forster and Leonard Woolf. He can be placed among the educated elite, so typified by the Bloomsbury group, whose loss of faith was a well-publicized feature of inter-war religion in England.

Dilly's loss of faith was merely a single instance of what was fast becoming a national experience. Citing the studies of Rowntree in York (1901, 1935 & 1948), Geoffrey Gorer in 1955 and News Chronicle (1957) François Bédarida clearly demonstrates the rapid decline in religious observance, particularly among adult males, over the first half of the twentieth century. But it was a *Mass Observation* study published in 1948 that best captures the reality of the situation, revealing that for most people religion was now an intensely personalized but vaguely Christian form of agnosticism. (Bédarida, 1991, pp. 242-243) Institutional religion had been largely reduced to a site for coming of age ceremonies such as baptism, weddings and funerals. As Sarah Williams demonstrates in *Religious Belief and Popular Culture in Southwark c.1880-1939* 'The 'orthodox' theological interpretation of these rites was not shared fully by those seeking them out, but aspects of this ('orthodox') understanding formed an authentic part of a complex blend with folk and pagan elements in a highly undenominational popular religious culture.' (Cited in Burns, 2006, p. 187)

Adrian Hastings argued that in the 1920s 'probably around 15 per cent of the population were quite emphatically nothing, but in practice this rose to a good 50 per cent.' (1987, p. 40) Whilst these figures are slightly at odds with the official figures of the Church of England they do give a

[144] Dillwyn was so consumed by his work that while driving home and reciting Milton's anti-clerical *Lycidas* out loud, he would allow his mind to wander and with it the car he was driving. He once remarked to his wife, 'It's amazing how people smile and apologise to you, when you knock them over.' (Fitzgerald, 1978, p. 236)
[145] Dilly always maintained that his father came to terms more easily with his son's rejection of religion in general than with Ronald's Catholicism, a fact borne out by Dilly's remaining in his father's will while Ronald was cut out. (Batey, 2010, p. 8)

good indication of the noticeable decline in practice. Annual baptisms, falling for much of the war, rose sharply in 1920 to 603,947. However, despite minor pauses in the late twenties, baptisms fell steadily throughout the interwar period hitting a record low in 1940 of only 365,075 baptisms.[146] This fall of around 240,000 baptisms is much larger than the declining birthrates of the period would seem to warrant. (Currie, Gilbert, & Horsley, 1977, p. 167) Confirmations followed a less obvious pattern of decline because they tended to reflect the baptismal trend of twelve to fourteen years earlier. Consequently their decline began later; in 1929 they fell below 200,000 for the first time since 1902 and by 1940 they had fallen below 150,000.[147] Easter Communions are harder to tabulate because the statistics gathered in the *Church of England Yearbook* simply counted the communions over the entire Easter Week which means that the devout were counted more than once. What is interesting is that, even in this period of sacramental growth in the Anglican Church, the percentage of church members who received their Easter Communion never increased.[148] Meanwhile the decline in practice was both exacerbated by and reflected in the declining population of ordinands which fell 'by some hundred a year' from 1920 onwards. (Hastings, 1987, p. 193)[149] What must have made these statistics sobering for Anglican Church leaders was the fact that they reflected the religious intensity of those who still saw themselves as members of the Established Church.

Not only was the Anglican population less active but, it was also shrinking. Both Catholic and Protestant churches experienced a major decline in membership in 1916 and while the Catholic Church had well and truly recovered their losses by 1917, the major Protestant churches had only eclipsed their 1915 membership totals by 1918. (Currie, Gilbert, & Horsley, 1977 p. 31). For the

[146] This remained a record low until 1970.
[147] This was the first time the confirmation candidature had been that low since 1878. In the early 1960s the figure was back up towards 200,000 but by 1970 it had fallen to 113,005.
[148] Admittedly the percentages were fairly stable but fell from sixty six per cent in 1925 to just under sixty two percent in 1930, only to grow again in the late thirties, reaching the 1925 level once more in 1939 before falling sharply in 1940. (Based on the statistics provided by Currie, Gilbert, & Horsley, 1977, pp. 128-130)
[149] Roger Lloyd describes the clergy shortage as 'the most widely discussed' problem facing the church during the interwar period. (1950, p. 141) In 1932 the Church Assembly's Commission on the Staffing of Parishes declared that they were short 1,583 clergymen and 630 deacons, while the editor of *Crockford's Clerical Dictionary* suggested that the dearth of clergymen was closer to 1,830. All up, in the period from 1905-1930 the population grew by 3 million, while the clerical population declined by 2,308. (pp. 142-144) As the nation lost faith, it also began to lose the men who might work for its reconversion.

major Protestant denominations the twenties were a period of consistent growth.[150] However, membership peaked in 1927 and, apart from minor revivals in 1931 and 1933, it continued to decline until 1947, by which time there were 991,000 fewer members. (Currie, Gilbert, & Horsley, 1977, pp. 31-2). It should be pointed out that much of the decline in Protestant membership was from the non-conformist ranks. The Church of England actually enjoyed significant growth, peaking in 1927, before beginning a decline that became particularly obvious between 1938 and 1947. In twenty years, while Catholicism had dramatically expanded, the Anglican population had lost 718,000 members. Whereas attendance at services might mask an absence of faith and for a Bible-Christian non-attendance might mask genuine faith, a fall in the number of people willing to describe themselves as Christians is unmistakable. Throughout the interwar period many men and women followed Dilly Knox in abandoning the faith of their childhood and becoming completely secular.

Anglo-Catholicism

Like Dilly before him, Wilfred Knox lost his faith while at school. As he was leaving school, Wilfred found that 'he didn't particularly believe in anything.' (Fitzgerald, 1978, p. 74) However, unlike Dilly who went to Eton, Wilfred attended Rugby and was there deeply influenced by a young William Temple who was already something of a Christian Socialist. Temple's influence led Knox to the writings of Ruskin and F. D. Maurice and a typically 19th century mixture of Broad Church theology and socialist utopianism. Just as his religion was faltering, he was developing his 'own brand of socialism.' (Fitzgerald, 1978, p. 62) Wilfred's socialism[151] never left him but his agnosticism soon did. Never having formally left the Anglican Church, he came under the influence of the many Anglo-Catholics who were concerned with the Christian Socialist movement. Indeed his re-discovered faith eventually prompted him to leave his post at the Board of Education to work full-time at the Anglo-Catholic Trinity Mission.[152]

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[150]Apart from 1922 which saw a minor drop in membership of 27,000. However this was more than covered by a growth of 153,000 in 1923. (Currie, Gilbert, & Horsley, 1977, p. 31)

[151] Ronald Knox was also briefly attracted to economic-socialism under the influence of his brother, Wilfred and school friend, Charles Lister. ('Ronald Knox.' In E. Waugh. 2000, pp. 200-201) While at Balliol, Lister convinced him to join the Fabian Society. (R. Knox, 1918, p. 55) Later he would cite the Catholic Church's ability to attract the poor as evidence of its divine foundation. (p. 92)

[152] Opened in 1888 in Stratford, East London near the Great Eastern Railway Works. The prime aim was to provide Anglo-Catholic liturgy as well as social and educational activities which might 'bridge over the gulf that separates

Later, while preparing for ordination, he voluntarily took a vow of poverty and celibacy.[153] Ordained in 1915, he was soon a respected Anglo-Catholic apologist promoting disestablishment for the church and poverty for the clergy as a means of revivifying the religious life of England. In 1920 he was introduced to the Oratory of the Good Shepherd, a religious community of celibate Anglo-Catholic priests. Fitzgerald wrote of the community, 'The vagueness of its definition, and the absolute certainty of its members as to what they are, makes it one of the many unseen and unknown currents that quietly deepen the life surrounding it.'(Fitzgerald, 1978, p. 159) In 1921 Wilfred completed his novitiate and came to join the community in Oratory House, Cambridge.

Wilfred Knox's sacramental and monastic Anglicanism is a good example of that broader trend whereby, as many left the church, many others were moved to pursue a more complete religious experience within the High Church wing. One of the most controversial converts to the Anglo-Catholic faith during the period was R. J. Campbell, an internationally renowned non-conformist preacher. Explaining his return to the Anglo-Catholicism of his youth he argued that Protestantism 'was too subjective' while Catholicism was more inured to the ravages of secularism because its religion was directly related to daily life. 'More and more I felt the need of a spiritual environment wherein that idea was authoritatively recognised and expressed.' (Campbell, 1917, p. 271) For Campbell as for so many others in the Anglican Church at that time, such a spiritual environment had to be founded on the sacraments.[154] Hastings observes that 'the heart of the change in terms of religion was a different approach to the celebration of the sacraments.'[155] (1987, p. 77) The Anglo-Catholic surge in the Established Church was surely a

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class from class.' (Scotland, 2007, p. 76) Here, among the slums, the Anglo-Catholics competed with the Salvation Army and the Secularists to alleviate working class suffering.

[153] 'By poverty he meant something specific. Whatever he earned he could never keep more than a hundred pounds a year (this was in 1912 he later increased the amount), except for a small sum to guard against being a burden to others in his old age.' (Fitzgerald, 1978, p. 122)

[154] 'It is a fact beyond dispute that the results in life and character of a belief in the Real Presence in the Blessed Sacrament have been and are so abundantly good and beautiful as to constitute in themselves a demonstration of its truth and a justification of Catholic observance in regard to it.' (Campbell, 1917, p. 317)

[155] It should be pointed out that there was also a clear sacramentalising movement in the non-conformist churches as well, albeit a relatively muted one. Beginning in the 19th century there was a movement to recover 'some Catholic elements, notably a higher evaluation of liturgical forms and of the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper.' (Davies, 1965, p. 348) This movement was responsible for deepening the connections between non-conformity and the earliest forms of Christianity. To take the Methodists as an example, their 'Love Feast' was increasingly replaced by a celebration of Holy Communion. (Thompson, With Briggs, & Turner, 2007, p. 139) The liturgical shift gained such ground that in 1920 a Book of Congregational Worship was introduced, drawing 'freely on forms

response to secularism that parallelled the growth of the Catholic Church in England. Horton Davies argued that the Eucharistic revival was a product of the patristic tradition and the incarnational theology of Anglo-Catholic leaders like Charles Gore. (Davies, 1965, p. 309) The relevance of the Fathers and the question of the Incarnation were two of the major battlegrounds on which the modernists were met by the Anglo-Catholics and the secularization of the Established church arrested.

Hastings goes on to say that, '…roughly speaking by the turn of the century, a weekly communion, the eastwards position and candles on the altar had triumphed while vestments had been adopted in over two thousand churches where twelve years before they were not accepted in six hundred.' (Hastings, 1987, pp. 78-79) The course of secularization is never a clear trajectory of lost faith and while many Anglicans were leaving the church, others were discovering a renewed faith in more historical forms of Christianity, centered upon the sacraments.

One of the major controversies of the Anglo-Catholic Movement came when the Bishop of Zanzibar, Frank Weston, addressing the 1923 conference, sent a message to the Pope on behalf of the movement. '16,000 Anglo-Catholics, in congress assembled, offer respectful greetings to the Holy Father, humbly praying that day of peace may quickly break.' (Cited in H. M. Smith, 1926, p. 304) This telegram, along with his demand that fellow ritualists 'fight for their tabernacles', created a huge backlash that foreshadowed the prayer book debates at the end of the decade. However the message was greeted with applause by the Anglo-Catholic delegates at the conference who obviously saw themselves as estranged from the Catholic Church. Wilfred Knox actually rejected the term Anglo-Catholic in favour of English Catholicism because he did not wish to draw attention to the scandalous division that existed between people loyal to 'the specifically Catholic conception of the Christian Revelation.' (W. Knox, 1923, p. v) For Knox,

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consecrated by centuries of usage.' (p. 144) At this same time the Society of Free Catholics was founded by a handful of Unitarian ministers who were seeking, 'the use of Catholic symbolism, historic liturgies, private devotion and personal discipline.... [without the] creeds as theological tests.' (Kaye, 2007, p. 257) The movement failed because it couldn't solve the problem of 'how, within the atmosphere of an adoring worship, to combine undogmatic theology with a religion that yet speaks with authority … ' (p. 262) However in its time the movement attracted the support of a number of modernist Catholics, Old Catholics, Anglicans, Methodists, Congregationalists, Baptists and a Quaker. (p. 264). Under the influence of the movement, John Stone Burgess, minister of Flowery Field, had introduced into the nonconformist church the liturgical calendar, vestments, incense, kneeling for communion and the presence of a crucifix. (p. 265)

the Established Church was capable of providing the Catholic life and so conversion to Roman Catholicism was unnecessary. (W. Knox, 1923, pp. 198-199)[156] Consequently, he remained in that church as part of the great Catholicising movement that sought to re-enchant the national religion, in the face of secularism's growing tide.

> In the main the past twenty years have witnessed the decisive victory of those who see that the task of converting the English people to the Catholic religion cannot be accomplished without a complete revision of the English liturgy in a Catholic sense, and the general introduction of the full system of Catholic devotion as it had been developed by Western Catholicism since the Reformation. (W. Knox, 1923, p. 234)

Thus, while they might not technically fit within the parameters of this study, there was a growing movement of converts to Anglo-Catholicism who considered themselves Catholic and would have seen themselves as part of the same conversion trend as Ronald Knox,[157] Evelyn Waugh and Graham Greene. The Anglo-Catholic converts included many of the leading intellectuals of the period such as T. S. Eliot, C. S. Lewis, and W. H. Auden.[158] These were followed by one of the leading materialist philosophers of the interwar period, C. E. M. Joad[159] and Rose Macaulay, one of the most popular novelists of the era. It is important to briefly note

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[156] The division remained distasteful to many Anglicans. One response was the Malines conversations (1921-1926) in which delegates, officially sanctioned by their respective churches, met several times to discuss the differences that perpetuated disunity. The result of the meetings and the web of letters which they precipitated was a formal agreement between Rome and Canterbury that future meetings would take place with their official approval. (Lahey, 1974, p. 384) Relations between the churches improved throughout the interwar period. One interesting gesture came when Archbishop Lang helped to arrange Cardinal Hinsley's membership of the Athenaeum Club. (Hastings, 1987, p. 274) However the most concrete achievement was Cardinal Hinsley's decision to found the Sword of the Spirit movement in August 1940. The meetings at the Stoll theatres on the 10th and 11th May, 1940 featured luminaries such as Dorothy L. Sayers, Cardinal Hinsley, Fr. Martindale and Archbishop Lang. (Walsh, 1982, p. 245)

[157] Wilfred would have argued that the only difference between he and Ronald was that Ronald had (wrongly) despaired 'of the English Church being able to produce the Catholic Life.' (1923, p. 199) And yet, the central assumption of such a diagnosis is that that Catholic Church is guaranteed to provide the Catholic Life. This indicates the closeness of the two religions in Wilfred Knox's view.

[158] Technically a revert because he was born into an Anglo-Catholic family however his reversion was certainly a radical change given his dalliance with political religion during the thirties. He once told Ursula Niebuhr,"re my theological position, it is I think the same as your husband's, i.e. Augustinian not Thomist... Liturgically, I am Anglo-Catholic, though not *too* spiky, I hope. As to forms of church organisation, I don't know what to think. I'm inclined to agree with de Rougemont that it will be back to the catacombs for all of us." (Cited in Kirsch, 2005, p. xvi) In 1966 Auden further clarified his beliefs in a talk given during Matins in Westminster Abbey in which he insisted that the Christian should believe absolutely in 'the Incarnation, "the heroism of the cross", Original Sin and the forgiveness of sins.' (p.xx)

[159] Joad was a popular British philosopher and Fabian Socialist, mostly known for his role on the BBC Brains Trust. In 1930 he was advising religions that the only way they could survive was to abandon teaching, as absolutely true, any unverifiable dogma that pertained to the non-physical universe. (*The Present and Future of Religion*, p. 211)

some of the contributions of these converts to the intellectual life of the Anglo-Catholic movement and the religious life of England in general.

T. S. Eliot was received into the Anglican Church on the 29th of June, 1927. He waited a year to publicise the conversion which was reasonable, when one considers Virginia Woolf's reaction;

> I have had a most shameful and distressing interview with poor dear Tom Eliot, who may be called dead to us all from this day forward. He has become an Anglo-Catholic, believes in God and immortality, and goes to church. I was really shocked. A corpse would seem to me more credible than he is. I mean, there's something obscene in a living person sitting by the fire and believing in God. (Virginia Woolf to Vanessa Bell, 11 Feb. 1928)

Despite the misgivings of his friends, Eliot's new Anglo-Catholicism [160] gave his poetry a fresh liturgical language and the doctrinal foundations that hitherto had only been hinted at. (Spurr, 2010, p. x) But more than that, it provided the antidote to the disorder that he had diagnosed in so much of his earlier poetry.

> The World is trying the experiment of attempting to form a civilized but non-Christian mentality. The experiment will fail; but we must be very patient in awaiting its collapse; meanwhile redeeming the time: so that the Faith may be preserved alive through the dark ages before us; to renew and rebuild civilisation, and save the World from suicide. (Eliot, 'Thoughts after Lambeth.'1999, p. 387)

In *Thoughts after Lambeth*, written in 1931, Eliot went further saying, 'I believe... that the Church of England is strengthening its position as a branch of the Catholic Church, the Catholic Church in England.' (1999, p. 384)

Eliot was joined in the task of preserving the faith of his 'remote English ancestors' (Gordon, 1985, p. 83) by fellow convert C. S. Lewis[161] and lifetime adherents Charles Williams and

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[160] He definitely saw his religion as Anglo-Catholic. Spurr describes it as being *'Just* within Anglicanism' [the italics are his]. (Spurr, 2010, p. xi)

[161] Lewis, like Auden, was technically a revert rather than a convert but the intensity of his conversion has all the markings of the somersault and, not unnaturally, he uses the term conversion to describe the experience. "You must picture me alone in that room at Magdalen, night after night, feeling, whenever my mind lifted even for a second

Dorothy L. Sayers. Together these four provided the nucleus of a Golden Age of Anglo-Catholic literature, peaking in the 1940s but remaining influential for a long time afterwards. (Hastings, 1987, p. 388) T. S. Eliot, despite his much maligned conservatism, used his position in the clerisy to mobilise the middle classes, believing them to be the future. (Gordon, 1985, p. 90) This was the same logic animated much of the literature of the Anglo-Catholic revival, making it a Christian version of Gollancz's Left Book Club. All four utilised a variety of means to pursue their work of preservation and mobilsation. For instance fellow members of the literary circle, the Inklings, Lewis and Williams wrote allegorical novels, while Eliot, Williams and Sayers wrote the plays that made the Canterbury festivals between 1935 and 1937 so successful. And all four wrote widely on the topic of religious life in general and theology in particular.

In order to give a clear overview of the work of preservation to which all four contributed,[162] it is worth limiting ourselves to their work in that iconic interwar medium, the radio. T. S. Eliot was broadcasting on a range of topics for the BBC as early as 1929.[163] Under the direction of F. A. Iremonger (from 1933 onwards) the religious broadcasts moved from simply broadcasting services to genuine theological talks. During the war C. S. Lewis gave four series of broadcasts on natural and Christian apologetics that would become his popular theological work, *Mere*

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from my work, the steady, unrelenting approach of Him whom I so earnestly desired not to meet. That which I greatly feared had at last come upon me. In the Trinity Term of 1929 I gave in, and admitted that God was God, and knelt and prayed: perhaps, that night, the most dejected and reluctant convert in all England.' (Lewis, 2002, p. 266) Raised in the Church of Ireland, he entered the Church of England in 1931, after becoming a theist in 1929. Like Eliot, his was a sacramental faith that rejected the disenchantment of the secular age. He believed that Christ was truly present in Communion, 'here a hand from a hidden country touches, not only my soul, but my body… Here is big medicine and strong magic. … Now the value, for me, of the magical element in Christianity is this. It is a permanent witness that the heavenly realm, certainly no less than the natural universe and perhaps very much more, is a realm of objective facts ─ hard, determinate facts, not to be constructed a priori, and not to be dissolved into maxims, ideals, values, and the like…(Lewis, 1974, pp. 104-106)

[162] All four were part of a complex network of clerist groups that sprang up during the period. Eliot was one of the first members of Joseph Oldham's Chandos group sometimes known as the Moot, while Lewis and Williams were fellow members of The Inklings and all three were mutual friends of Dorothy L. Sayers. Eliot was also a big supporter of William's work, facilitating its publication at Faber and Faber and even writing a forward for Williams' final novel, *All Hallows Eve*. Not only were the four linked by status but, perhaps more tellingly, all four were linked by a shared reverence for the work of Dante and its relevance for the modern age. Eliot and Williams published critical works on Dante, Sayers published her own criticism as well as a much-admired translation and Lewis simply allowed himself to be influenced by Dante, as shown in works such as *The Great Divorce* and *The Screwtape Letters.*

[163] The advantage of the radio was that it was a forum in which one could give a talk rather than a lecture. It was also a medium that allowed the speaker to reach a much more diverse audience than print. Eliot's contributions to the 1932 *Listener Series*, The Modern Dilemma and his later contributions to Dorothy L. Sayers' *The Church Looks Ahead* both defended Christianity against both the competing creeds of Communism and the more general, Humanism.

Christianity and make him 'the second most well-known radio voice in England after Winston Churchill.' (Heck, 2007, p. 54) Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral* was broadcast in 1936, and was followed in 1939 by Dorothy L. Sayers' *He That Should Come*.[164] Specifically written for radio her nativity play was soon eclipsed by her wartime play cycle *The Man Born to be King* which was broadcast between 1941 and 1942. This powerful dramatisation of the gospels, like so much that the Anglo-Catholic intellectuals produced, reached huge audiences causing both controversy and edification.[165]

Another key-facet of the Anglo-Catholic revival was its connection with socialism. 'Almost all Christian Socialism from the late-nineteenth century onwards was Anglo-Catholic in inspiration.' (Hastings A. , 1987, p. 174)[166] Hastings goes on to reason that the connection came from the corporate nature of Catholicism, as opposed to the more Calvinist idea of individual salvation. Whilst this goes some way to explaining the connection, it fails to appreciate the Anglo-Catholic belief in the transformative power of the sacraments. For A. G. Herbert, writing in *Liturgy and Society*, the liturgical movement was essentially Catholic, taking it's inspiration from Catholic principles: 'in the public and solemn prayer of the Church is the primary and indispensable source of a true Christian spirit.' (Herbert, 1935, pp. 95-96) That Christian spirit, it was believed, could overwhelm the economic inequalities that seemed to plague the nation. Dom

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[164] The play is specifically about the Nativity. It may be argued that the modernists' skepticism regarding the Incarnation provoked a particular focus on the nativity among the Christian intellectuals of the period. Eliot's essay on Lancelot Andrewes centres on an analysis of Andrewes' Christmas sermon, and his play, *Murder in the Cathedral* is structured around Thomas à Becket's sermon during Christmas Mass. Both of these feature a clear expression of the traditional teaching on the incarnation. (Eliot, 1934, *Murder in the Cathedral*, p. 35) Charles Williams also produced his own nativity play, *The Seed of Adam*. (Williams, 1961) To these can be added Auden's long poem, 'For the Time Being: A Christmas Oratorio' which also promotes a completely orthodox understanding of the incarnation. In fact he contrasts the ultra-rationalist King Herod with the three wise men who tell him that 'God has been born… we have seen him ourselves. The World is saved. Nothing else matters.' Herod fears what might happen should revelation replace reason and that 'God would expect every man, whatever his fortune, to lead a sinless life in the flesh and on earth. Then indeed would the human race be plunged into madness and despair.' And so, in order to 'save civilization' he orders the massacre of the Innocents remarking, 'how dreary.' (Auden W. H., 1968, pp. 188-190)

[165] C. S. Lewis claimed to have read the plays every Holy Week since they first appeared in print. (Lewis, 2002, p. 93)

[166] Wilfred Knox had argued forcefully in his 1918 polemic, *At a Great Price obtained I this Freedom*, that 'the poor object to the church because it is rich.' (Cited in Fitzgerald, 1978, p. 158) In response he proposed the disestablishment of the church and the abandonment of the middle class lifestyle of the clergy. During the General Strike of 1926 he publically supported the miners and was intensely disappointed that one of the other fathers got to drive a train in their service. (Fitzgerald, 1978, p. 186)

Gregory Dix[167] echoed the logic of Pope Pius X, when he wrote, 'In the liturgy of the Eucharist we have at last the real figure of the true man's life in spiritual association. Eucharistic Man, and in him alone Artist Man and Business Man and Managerial Man may find their true relationships.' (Cited in Lloyd, 1950, p. 110)[168]

Christian Socialism was by no means limited to the Anglo-Catholics,[169] but there is no doubting that it was a major feature of their revival. It was reflected in the re-emergence of communal religious life within the Anglican Community. The Society of Divine Compassion,[170] founded by the Reverend James G. Adderley, combined the life of the early Franciscans with the tenets of Christian Socialism. Adderly and his order attracted the interest of George Lansbury, Edward Snowden and G. K. Chesterton, and inspired other orders like the Society of St Francis, the Brotherhood of the Holy Cross and the Society of the Incarnation of the Eternal Son, an order of nuns founded by Mother Gertrude Bromby. (Anson, 1964) These orders combined an overtly Catholic form of religious life with working for the betterment of the working classes. However their work often went unnoticed. For most people, it was figures like Arthur Stanton of St. Alban's Holborn, Basil Jellicoe labouring in the slums of North London and Conrad Noel, the 'Red Vicar' of Thaxtad, embroiled in the flag war of 1921, who came to define the Christian Socialist movement.

The high-point for Anglo-Catholic-socialists came at the Malvern Conference in 1940. Archbishop Temple asked the Christendom Group (Anglicanism's version of the Distributist movement) to organize the conference. Both T. S. Eliot and Dorothy L. Sayers represented the

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[167] Dix was a member of the Anglo-Catholic Benedictine community of Nashdom Abbey whose work and prayer was offered up for corporate reunion with Rome.

[168] The Society of Free Catholics was also very interested in Christian Socialism as part of their reforms, attracting the support of Fr Vincent McNabb, the Distributist Dominican from Ireland and Conrad Noel, the 'Red Vicar' of Thaxted. (Kaye, 2007, p. 268)

[169] The most controversial Christian-Socialist was the openly Communist, Hewlett Johnson, Dean of Canterbury from 1931 to 1963. While he didn't actually join the Party, it was only because he and the party felt that his independence increased his usefulness to the cause. (Hauser, 1950, p. 20) Johnson believed that it was Soviet Russia that was most perfectly following Jesus.

[170] Mgr. Vernon Johnson, a convert to Catholicism, was a member of the order before leaving in the late twenties. His conversion was similar to that of Edith Stein; he was given a copy of *Story of a Soul*, the autobiography of St Therese of Lisieux and read it through in a single sitting. Within a year he had an interview with Therese's elder sister, Pauline, who was now Mère Agnes at the Carmelite convent who told him to 'abjure' his false beliefs. At the end of his three day visit to Lisieux and its churches 'I knew I had been in the presence of the supernatural as never before.' (Johnson, 2008, p. 22) And within a few years he found his 'barriers broken down' and was received into the Catholic Church.

Anglo-Catholic intelligentsia and delivered talks. However, despite the best and brightest of the Anglican revival being in attendance, the efficacy of the conference was undermined by Anglican compromise.[171] As Iremonger put it, 'this was not the first conference at which an effective salve has been applied to tender consciences by substituting 'may be' for 'is….' And consequently private ownership was placed 'in the same category of potential social dangers as beer, tobacco and six penny bridge…' (1948, p. 431) For many of the interwar generation this spirit of compromise tainted the Anglican revival. In keeping with Tillich's idea that religion was 'ultimate concern' they opted for the more radical and complete conversion destinations of Communism and Catholicism.

Catholicism

This search for a more complete form of religion was certainly what animated the conversion of the youngest member of the Knox family. Long considered Eton's brightest-ever student, Ronald Knox was one of the early intellectual stars of the Anglo-Catholic revival until his search for genuine Church authority, drove him to Catholicism. This search for authority was initially what informed his conversion to Anglo-Catholicism from the evangelicalism of his childhood. 'The Anglicanism of today, except where it is expounded by people definitely under the influence of the Oxford movement, simply does not possess enough of fixed background to allow of its being intelligently yet authoritatively taught.' (R. Knox, 1918, p. 25) For Knox the search for authority was really a search for an antidote to the fragmentation that seemed to blight the religion of his childhood.

This upward tendency invariably involved an engagement with the past. It precipitated in Ronald Knox a love of neo-gothic architecture and pre-Raphaelitism and, of course, G. K. Chesterton's particular brand of mediaeval romanticism. (R. Knox 1918, pp. 40, 120) It made him treasure the 'vision of a revived pre-Reformation church' (R. Knox 1918, p. 81) that he found at (the Anglo-Catholic) Caldey Abbey.[172] It may even have been found in his particular attraction to the poetry of Richard Crashaw and John Dryden, both of whom were 17th century Catholic Converts. (R. Knox 1918, pp. 112, 244) For Knox, this upward trend enriched the life of the church with its

[171] This same spirit of compromise had been the downfall of the Church's attempt to intervene in the 1926 general strike. 'What the Churches did was to incite the miners to further resistance (and therefore suffering) and then to discover that they were quite unable to assist them.' (Howard, 'The Churches' In J. Raymond (Ed.)1960, p. 157)
[172] The community converted to Catholicism on the 5th March 1913.

sacraments and culture while giving it greater legitimacy by anchoring the modern church on a firmer historical foundation. Yet all the while, 'a real enemy was creeping into the Church, which I described vaguely as Modernism' and Knox, as shown earlier in this chapter, began to fear 'the absence of a living authority' that might arrest its fragmenting influence in a latitudinarian church, so determined to accommodate a number of conflicting movements. (R. Knox 1918, pp. 143-144). Soon the complex teleological arguments that Knox had constructed to justify the necessity of the Anglican Communion began to fall apart. It seemed obvious, as early as 1914, which movement was gaining the most ground. 'The Church of England did as a matter of history make every reasonable concession in order to include within her borders the Puritans, who had too little belief in supernatural religion; it made no effort whatever to include the Roman Catholics, who believed too much.' (R. Knox 1918,p. 177) Slowly his faith in the Anglican Communion and her sacraments began to unravel. After two torturous years[173] of 'spiritual exile', during which the deaths of close friends along the Western Front coincided with a fading belief in the healing power of Anglican sacramental life, Knox converted to Catholicism in 1917.

Obviously conversion to Rome was by no means a purely Anglo-Catholic experience. Many of the most notable converts came to the Church from a position of agnosticism and even atheism. There were also many converts from the non-conformist churches, the most famous of these being William Orchard. Like Ronald Knox, he had expressed a cultural attraction for Rome before developing a theological attraction. He learnt Italian so that he could read Dante in the original, and developed a love of Baroque art, from which sprang an admiration for Catholic liturgy. He was initially influenced by R. J. Campbell and the modernist New Theology movement but, over time, began to regard the Catholic sacramental system as something necessary. For instance, he received thousands of letters from around the world asking for his advice and later claimed that 'the experience of three thousand cases converted me to the Catholic faith, as absolute to any knowledge, guidance or authority, and led me to abandon the correspondence method as inferior to the Catholic practice [of Confession].' (Kaye & Mackenzie, 1990, p. 41) His reading of Dante also proved influential and showed him the 'Divine character of the Catholic Church and the veridical nature of Catholic Faith.' (Kaye &

[173] Part of which were spent working with Dilly in room 40.

Mackenzie, 1990, p. 44) He was also heavily influenced by the Socialist movement, claiming that 'your true mystic, when faced by modern conditions, must become a flaming revolutionary.' (Kaye & Mackenzie, 1990, p. 39) He was involved in the Society of Free Catholics and introduced into his non-conformist worship an essentially Catholic form of the sacraments. He initially sought union for his non-conformist church with the Anglican Communion but, after ten years of negotiations was rebuffed, partly because the worship that went on in King's Weigh House was far too Catholic for his Anglican counterparts. When these talks fell apart he realised that he had 'no choice' and converted to Rome, being followed by a number of his parishioners. (Kaye & Mackenzie, 1990, p. 98) Two years before his conversion he had written an article entitled 'Why I should find it difficult to become a Roman Catholic', in which he claimed that 'an unnatural divorce has taken place inside the Christian Religion, and although it has been pushed to extremes by controversy, both sides are standing for something true and vital but complementary rather than contradictory.' (Orchard, 1930, p. 379) Archbishop Lang's regretful refusal a year later convinced him that this was not the case. His spiritual autobiography, *From Faith to Faith* (1933) was a huge success and two years after its publication he was ordained a Catholic Priest.

For nearly thirty years a torrent of converts would join Knox and Orchard. As the Protestant denominations dwindled, the Catholic Church in Britain increased; moving from two million members in 1914 to five million in 1955, helped along by 12,000 converts per year from 1920-1955.[174] The Church also experienced a growth in vocations, moving from 3,800 priests in 1913 to 5,900 priests in 1940.[175] (Statistics from the *Catholic Directory*, cited by Bédarida, 1991, p. 244)[176] However the feature of the conversion phenomenon which is of particular interest to the intellectual historian is the extraordinarily disproportionate number of intellectuals who featured among those 12,000 annual converts. Poets such as David Jones (received into the church in1921), Wilfrid Scawen Blunt (1922), Theodore Maynard (1922), Alfred Noyes (1927), Roy

[174] But only 7,500 before 1914.
[175] There were only 840 priests in 1850 operating in 600 churches. By 1955 7,000 priests were working in 3,000 churches and chapels. (Statistics from the *Catholic Directory*, cited by Bédarida, 1991, p. 244)
[176] However the statistics provided by that directory were usually based on estimates made by local clergy. The effect of introducing standard parish returns in 1955 led to 'a substantial increase in [the] estimated Catholic population.' (Currie, Gilbert, & Horsley, 1977, ft. 2, p. 154) Consequently the statistics from the interwar period regarding Catholic conversions should generally be viewed as being very conservative estimates.

Campbell and his wife Mary(1935), Edith Sitwell (1955) and Siegfried Sassoon (1957);[177] essayists such as the two Beachcombers, D. B. Wyndham-Lewis (1921) and J. B. Morton (1922), G. K. Chesterton (1922) and Arnold Lunn (1933); academics like Christopher Hollis (1925), Frederick Charles Copleston (1925), E. T. Whittaker (the mathematician - 1930) and E. E. Evans-Pritchard (the social anthropologist - 1944); novelists such as Bruce Marshall (1917), Graham Greene (1926), Sheila Kaye-Smith and her husband (1929), Elinor Brent-Dyer (1930), Evelyn Waugh (1930), Eddie Sackville-West[178] (1949) and Muriel Spark (1954); playwrights like George Scott-Moncrieff and his wife (1940), and Hugh Ross Williamson (1955)[179] and the artist Graham Sutherland (1926) all found their place in the Catholic Church during this period of intense growth.

Whilst this thesis will refer to a broad range of Catholic converts the major focus will be on David Jones, Roy Campbell, G. K. Chesterton, Evelyn Waugh, and Graham Greene. The reason for these five taking so much of our focus is that their conversions cover the entire period, they were hugely influential during the period, particularly Chesterton, Waugh and Greene, and they wrote extensively on their experiences. Added to this is the perennial need to ensure the work is of a readable length. To focus extensively on more than five converts would be to either engage in a very superficial study, more concerned with similiarities and conincidences than tracing a genuine pattern of intellectual history. However, the thesis is enriched to briefer references to the conversions of disparite intellectuals such as Christopher Dawson, Frederick Copleston, Valentine Ackland, Alfred Noyes and Arnold Lunn. Overall we will meet a broad range of Catholic converts but only a handful will be able to exemplify the basic trends that animated their conversions and the work produced in the wake of such a momentous decision.

Futhermore what makes these conversions even more remarkable is the fact that the Catholic Church seemed, at that time, so completely countercultural. From the Anglican perspective it seemed absurdly ultramontanist while the anti-modernist oath demanded of its clergy was surely regarded as a sin against toleration. Yet, as Hastings points out, these were the very things that

[177] Although technically outside the period Sassoon and Sitwell were very much interwar figures and so they are listed among the converts.
[178] Sackville West was first moved to conversion as early as 1920 but was only received in 1949, this reveals the limitation of only judging a conversion by the date of formal reception.
[179] Originally a non-conformist but became an Anglican in 1943 and a Catholic in 1955.

many of the brightest converts would particularly celebrate over the next forty years. (1987, p. 150) Martin Pugh's social history of the interwar period discusses the Catholic Church only in terms of its ineffectual and seemingly capricious opposition to contraceptives and abortifacients.[180] 'Although the Catholic Church made people feel guilty about birth control, it often failed to change their behaviour…' (2008, p. 169) Such a narrow view is too often characteristic of the treatment of the Catholic Church in modern English history and merely serves to obfuscate the great attraction Catholicism held for the culture of the day. In his autobiography, British statesman and internationally renowned philanderer Duff Cooper[181] casually remarks upon the pilgrimage that his wife Diana and Katherine Asquith made to the shrine of Lourdes in 1923; 'Diana that she might bear a child, Katharine that she might be converted to the Roman Catholic faith. In the fullness of time both prayers were granted.' (1954, p. 119) Such an obvious acceptance of a completely Catholic devotional practice is only comprehensible in the context of a broader Catholic re-enchantment of English religious culture in the face of secularism's creeping tide, of which the actual converts to Catholicism were but a single strand.

Other Religious Destinations - Spiritualism and Buchmanism

The rejection of disenchanted religion was also evident in the rapid growth of spiritualism which reached its 'high watermark' around the nation in the 1930s. In 1914 there had been 145 societies affiliated to the Spiritualists' National Union. In 1919 there were 309 and by 1930 there were 500 societies. By 1932 it was being reported in *Psychic News* that an estimated 100,000 home séance circles were operating in Britain. (Hazelgrove, 2000, pp. 14-15) Hazelgrove goes on to link the growth in spiritualism with the Catholicising trends in English religion: '''modernity' and 'progress' may have figured strongly in Spiritualism's urban and plebian culture but its relation to the dead closely resembled the mutual bonds and obligations characteristic of an earlier Catholic culture.' (Hazelgrove, 2000,p. 53) E. R. McNeile who converted from Theosophy to Anglo-Catholicism explained in her book that 'increasing numbers of persons in the present day are becoming conscious of the mystical element in their nature' and

[180] The Anglicans and non-conformist churches tended to have a diverse range of opinions while the Catholics maintained a firm opposition.

[181] Cooper was by no means religious but he claimed in the same book that 'For the majority of English people there are only two religions, Roman Catholic, which is wrong, and the rest, which don't matter.' (Cooper, 1954, p. 128)

finding it unfulfilled in their own religions are turning to Theosophy and its disciplined mystical way. (1919, p. 99) Like the attraction to Catholicism or Anglo-Catholicism, the attraction to Theosophy and Spiritualism was clearly a response to disenchantment.

Another religious movement that responded to the disenchantment of the period was Frank Buchman's Oxford Group.[182] In July 1908, while travelling in England before the First World War, Buchman had a spiritual experience. Listening to a sermon given by Jessie Penn-Lewis in the village of Keswick, Buchman had a vision of the crucified Christ and felt an overwhelming need to confess his sins. (Sack, 2004, pp. 261-262) This would become the cornerstone of the movement he was to found.

Buchman was an evangelical preacher; he was raised in the Schwenkfelder Church but ordained a minister in the Lutheran Church. However, after his experience, he developed a somewhat idiosyncratic version of non-denominational Christian.[183] This became a revivalist movement, first established among America's Ivy League colleges before he visited Cambridge in 1915 and Oxford in May 1921, launching the movement in England. Originally known as the First Century Christian Fellowship, the movement was soon known simply as the 'Oxford Group'. Members usually stayed in their original denomination but the Oxford Group provided them with brand of religion that was presented as more 'real'.

> In place of this conventional religion, Buchman offered these young men a vital Christian experience. To attract them he repackaged traditional evangelicalism. From the YMCA style he took the concentration on religious experience, the focus on individual sin, the approach to individuals, the appeal to "key men," and the practice of the morning watch. He combined the last with his native Lutheran pietism to encourage the practice of what he called Guidance, in which Christians listened each morning to hear God's purposes for their lives, in matters large and small. (Sack, 2004, p. 265)

However the most controversial aspect of the Oxford Group was Buchman's appropriation of the Catholic tradition of confession. At meetings, often house parties given by wealthy families and

[182] The group inspired a number of groups, including Alcoholics Anonymous, who borrowed some or many of Buchman's techniques. (Boobbyer, 2013, p. 3)
[183] It combined Lutheran pietism, the perfectionism of the Holiness movement that he encountered at the Keswick camps and a YMCA revivalist style. (Sack, 2004, p. 262)

attended by young men, particularly athletes, from the universities. Members would confess their sins to the group in a sharing session, they would listen for the Holy Spirit during quiet time and they would resolve to give their life to God.[184] B. K. Cunningham of Westcott House, an Anglican theological college at Cambridge wrote of the movement's success in 1931: 'This has proved to be quite the most wonderful term in my experience of thirty years, six of our best men went through a deep spiritual experience in and through the University group house party which was held at Selwyn…' (V. H. Green, 1964, p. 350)[185]

The entire movement centred around a receptivity to the Holy Spirit and very real experiences of conversion through a group confession of sins. Buchman wrote to the English Jesuit Francis Woodlock claiming that he always sent his Catholic members back to their priests for confession. (Boobbyer, 2013, p. 96) Of the Catholic Church itself, he said in a talk in 1948 that the Church had a unique power: 'The Catholic has the teachings of Christ in their fullest conception – the Body and Blood of Christ.' (p.96) In the same talk he said the Church lacked the Holy Spirit. This kind of confusion points to the heart of Buchman's enchanted religiosity. He detested religion that was too rational or theoretical, prizing always an experiential religion. He frequently advocated the Divine over the 'too clever bovine' or 'the Holy Spirit first and the intellect second.'(p. 102)

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[184] Austin Farrer of Keable college wrote to his mother about a meeting that he unwillingly attended. 'At a meeting of theirs that I attended, by grace I was enabled to say nothing. The more I admire their zeal and their success, the more I am convinced that the end aimed at is not good, when one has got it. I can't approve 'enthusiasm'.....I do not feel happy in their gatherings, and I cannot persuade myself that is only because I am a sinner, but also because when I walk out I seem to walk back into a different and better world.' (Curtis, 2014, p. 90)

[185] Westcott famously went 'groupy' and Cuddesdon College, Oxford, was not far behind. Not everyone was so impressed. Bishop Hensley Henson was furious when 'an alarming number of ordinands were in danger of being sucked into the movement, including a number of bright intellectuals and prospects for Durham.' (Peart-Binns, 2013, p. 167) Henson was irritated enouhg to publish a book *The Oxford Groups* in 1933. A 1955 report from the Church of England's Social and Industrial Council offered official validation for Henson's views, reporting that the movement lacked a serious engagement with theological questions, that it created a psychological dependency among its members and that its social vision was utopian. (Boobbyer, 2013, p. 95) Malcolm Muggeridge was far more damning in his critique, describing the whole movement as a confidence trick. 'House parties are organised, at which sins, usually of an economic, but sometimes sexual character, are publically confessed; and occasionally there are large gatherings in the Albert Hall. The platform is decorated with flags; …speeches are delivered by speakers representing as wide a social range as possible. Each, whether country gentlemen acknowledging that he has been in the habit of using bad language to his stable boys, or the mill worker acknowledging that he has sometimes neglected to work when the foreman's eye was not on him…have the same message – life was dull and unprofitable until the Group came along, and then was happy and prosperpous. These successive testimonies, so eager, so spontanous, and yet never faltering, create a growing excitement. Each member of the audience recognises himself in one or other of the testifiers ; wonders – might I not also smile become self-confident and prosperous, testify even?' (Muggeridge, 1989, pp. 21-21)

The Oxford Group was convinced that 'the age of Christ's miracles had not passed' and they saw themselves as the modern instruments of those same miracles. Revivified by their 'house parties', thousands of converts sought to create 'A New World Order for Christ the King.' (Anon., 1933, pp. 1,5) However the movement began to fracture as Buchman grew more confident, asserting the infallibility of his 'guidance'. By 1938 it had been re-branded as Moral Rearmament and its highly militarized liturgies, the cult of personality and the Fascist appropriations, all suggested that it had moved closer to the realm of the interwar Secular Religions. Despite the oddity of the movement, it reflected the optimistic spirit of the period, confidently offering a 'sane Christianity to put right the spiritual and material problems which confront us.' (Anon., 1933, p. 129) As we shall see this was just one of countless ambitious plans for renewal with which England was awash during the period.

The Secular Religions

The religiosity of the secular creeds that captivated so many of the interwar generation was fairly obvious to Auden, because he had been so captivated. He saw them as Christian heresies:

> The various "kerygmas," of Blake, of Lawrence, of Freud, of Marx, to which, along with most middle-class intellectuals of my generation, I paid attention between twenty and thirty, had one thing in common. They were all Christian heresies; that is to say, one cannot imagine their coming into existence except in a civilisation which claimed to be based, religiously, on belief that the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, and that, in consequence, matter, the natural order, is real and redeemable, not a shadowy appearance or the cause of evil, and historical time is real and significant, not meaningless or an endless series of cycles. (Auden, 1956, p. 38)

Preempting Voegelin's theories by only a few years, Auden has clearly identified the common feature of the interwar secular religions.[186] This parousiastic Gnosticism was summed up by George Lansbury, the Christian Socialist and Pacifist, as 'the eternal truth that man-made evils

[186] I use the term, secular religions, consciously. Because while all political religions are essentially secular religions, not all secular religions are political; the psychoanalytic movement was hardly political but was still fundamentally religious. Fromm provided an insightful view of the religiosity of psychoanalysis. Freud, using 'the truth shall make you free' as his guiding spirit transformed psychology into 'the study of the soul of man' and made it 'the theoretical basis for the art of living, for achieving human happiness.' (1950, pp. 6-7) Indeed Fromm describes the model of the adjusted person in biblical terms; it is someone whose treasure is safe from the ravages of moths, rust and thieves. (p. 75)

can by man be remedied' (cited by Brittain, 1941, p. 42) These movements were generally a response to the interwar narrative and reflected many of its key tenets: a religious skepticism, an internationalist outlook and an abiding cynicism regarding the government's ability to redeem the times. They were religious in the sense that they elucidated a redemptive creed which, for the wealthier members of the movement, often became a source of vocation and purpose.

Even the world of art was gripped by this confidence and sought to renew a fallen people. Purist artists were animated by a 'rapturous utopianism',[187] the modernists sought to 'engineer a tidier world', Russian Supremacists painted with white on white, and Le Corbusier sought to craft an inner cleanness, while the minimalists sought to exculpate the guilt induced by the decadence of the war-generation. (Harris, 2010, pp. 15-16, 41-42) At the heart of these belief systems was a belief in planning.[188] The principle that, given time, human logic could engineer society in such a way as to eliminate its ills enlivened the faithful in a vast array of creeds. As Overy put it, '...there developed a search for...utopian politics of right or left, of moral and religious revival, a planned economy, world government, eugenic engineering.' (2009, p. 4) Some believed that a carefully orchestrated panoply of legislation would restore an edenesque purity. Others, gripped by the interwar narrative, believed that such a transformation would only arise when the Church and Parliament fell.

Despite their polyvalent promises, the political religions of the day often had relatively few official members. However, central to their membership were the educated elite who comprised what Samuel Taylor Coleridge called the Clerisy. These were the intellectuals who operated between Church and state. Coleridge coined the term to describe the non-religious, highly educated men who were emerging as the authority of the clergy was diminishing in the 19th century. These predominantly middle class intellectuals became the new voices of authority on issues once dominated by clerical voices. (Knights, 1978) Where Taylor might call them mobilisers, some historians use the word 'popularisers' to describe the clerisy who dominated the

[187] Myfanwy Evans, the editor of *Axis*, reviewed the 1936 Oxford exhibition of their abstract work, 'There is in their whole attitude to painting and sculpture a passionate belief in the power for good of pure abstract work. Pure colours, brilliant contrasts or the delicate clarity of one pale line against another, the absence of human and earthly associations, all mean to them a positive step to perfection.' (Cited in Harris, 2010, p. 15)

[188] The irony was that most of the secular religions were reacting to the war which was itself a monstrous triumph of official planning. Chesterton described it as a latent admiration for Prussianism: 'It has gradually grown apparent, to my astounded gaze, that the ruling classes in England are still proceeding on the assumption that Prussia is a pattern for the whole world.' (Chesterton, 1922, p. 1)

secular religions during the interwar period. This is a useful term because it aptly reflects their role in transforming the nova into a supernova through their tireless missionary activity, producing a blizzard of apologetics.

Temple described the first half of the twentieth century as the 'Age of Conferences.' (Cited in Iremonger, 1948, p. 428) For Temple this fashion for 'convening conferences on almost all topics of human interest' was a product of the new means of transport. But in reality it was the product of something much deeper. It was part of a broader pattern of renewed political activism, indicative of genuine optimism. Party membership grew significantly, but was dwarfed by the growth of non-party mass membership associations, a sure sign of the supernova effect. Countless organizations, drives, associations, covenants and movements sprang up. Each with their own headquarters, and subsidiary branches, each producing its own journals and reviewing and recommending the countless books, tracts and pamphlets defending their movement, each sending their clerisy to international conferences and then employing them to preach at their own conferences, summer schools, festivals and talks. This was an Age of Confidence in Ideas, in which countless organizations assumed that they could redeem and renew the times, if only they would be given a fair hearing.

Just as England's established Church was latitudinarian, its secular creeds were also a loose collection of religious ideas united by their own immanentist evangelium. Consequently the Pacifist movement was dominated by Socialists and Feminists while the Eugenics movement included, besides these, many ultra-conservatives, worried that the nation's sub-standard breeding stocks made them vulnerable to attack. Alongside the clerists were the many clerics who contributed to and sometimes led the various political religions, imbuing them with a vague and often idiosyncratic Christianity.

A leading mobiliser of the period, Bertrand Russell, offers a useful example of the Protestant-like diversity that was to be found in many of the movements. Russell described his activist vocation as a product of the war, writing that 'the war of 1914-18 changed everything for me, I ceased to be academic and took to writing a new kind of book.' (Russell, 2010, p. 247) This new vocation replaced the tentative political activity of the pre-war years (he had played a minor role during

the tariff crisis of 1903 and had stood for parliament twice).[189] The war gave him a focus and a national pulpit. In early 1915 he had delivered a series of lectures on 'Principles of Social Reconstruction'.[190] It might be argued that this was the beginning of his new prophetic role. Before they were over he wrote to a friend, 'As a matter of fact my lectures are a great success – they are a rallying ground for the intellectuals, who are coming daily more to my way of thinking not only as regards war but also as regards general politics.' (Cited in Ironside, 1996, p. 122) This was the evangelising role of the Clerisy in microcosm. Beginning in the Union for Democratic Control, he soon moved to the No-Conscription Fellowship and ended up spending much of 1918 in prison.[191]

His daughter[192] would later describe him as being like 'a prophet, hoping yet to save the children of Israel from the destruction their folly and wickedness deserved.' (Tait, 1975, p. 177) Like many other of the interwar prophets there were few areas of life that escaped Russell's attention. He had already been supporting eugenics since the early years of the century. In *Marriage and Morals,* published in 1929, he now advocated many of its aims such as the sterilization of the feeble minded.[193] His pacifism continued through the interwar period, and he advocated a consistent policy of appeasement for most of the 1930s. However, his pacifism also convinced him that capitalism was the cause of modern wars; arguing that this was the 'strongest argument for socialism'. (Russell, 2004, p. 98) Following a disastrous visit to the Soviet Union in 1920, he

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[189] As a suffragette candidate in 1902 and a liberal candidate in 1910.

[190] Later published under the title, *Principles of Social Reconstruction* in November of 1916.

[191] Alan Ryan wrote, in his political biography of Russell: 'It was prison, but it was more comfortable than the environment in which Russell's predecessors worked in medieval Cambridge. He read 200 books and wrote two.' (1988, p. 63)

[192] Russell's daughter, Katharine, underwent a conversion to Christianity in the mid-fifties. 'I read *Sceptical Essays,* and *Unpopular Essays, In Praise of Idleness* and *Marriage and Morals* but they all offered the same solutions: reason , progress, unselfishness, a wide historical perspective, expansive generosity, enlightened self-interest. I had heard it all before and it filled me with despair.' (Tait, 1975, p. 182) She soon found solace in the 'Enlightened Episcopalians'. She and her husband converted and he entered the ministry. They later spent two years in Uganda as missionaries. However, the biography of her father, written soon after the collapse of her marriage, ends not with the glow of the convert but with the anguish of a weakened faith and the difficulties of having a much loved, atheist father with the demands of Christian salvation.

[193] He would later take eugenics and many other progressive causes to their logical ends in the final chapters of *The Scientific Outlook,* (1931) wherein he outlined the blueprint for the dystopic society that was later manifested to varying degrees in Huxley's *Brave New World,* Burnham's *Managerial Revolution* and Orwell's *1984*. Its most startling claim was that 'If the simultaneous regulation of quantity and quality is taken seriously in the future, we may expect that in each generation some 25 per cent. of women and some 5 per cent. of men will be selected to be the parents of the next generation, while the remainder of the population will be sterilized, which will in no way interfere with their sexual pleasures, but will merely render these pleasures destitute of social importance.' (Cited in Ironside, 1996, p. 191)

became an advocate of G. D. H. Cole's Guild Socialism, arguing that true Socialism was 'calculated to increase the happiness, not only of proletarians, but of all except a tiny minority of the human race.' (Russell, 2004, p. 82) Added to these causes was the work he did in progressive education through the school at Beacon Hill. This was an educational and social experiment that he ran with his second wife from 1927 until 1932. Russell produced countless popular and yet fairly inconsistent books, and most of his causes, so passionately expostulated, were unmitigated failures. But he was the archetypal mobiliser.

> If he was politically inept and absurdly optimistic about changing the entire political climate by mere argument… if he did not reorganize the educational system, introduce industrial democracy, abolish armies and destroy the authority of the Church, he woke up the middle aged and encouraged the rebellious young. (Ryan, 1988, p. 163)

Pacifism

Even before the war was over the reputation of pacifists was improving. A clear example comes in the case of the forty one conscientious objectors who were sent to France, where the punishment for disobedience was death by a firing squad. They were moved to the Somme and subjected to field punishment – namely being trussed up between two objects in the crucifix position. But here they must have been surprised by their treatment by other soldiers. 'One gave his dinner to objector, Alfred Evans, and when his superiors were gone for the evening, a sergeant of the Irish Guards spent his own money buying cake, fruit, and chocolate for the whole group at the post canteen.' (Hochschild, 2011)[194] These small gestures preempted a changing attitude that would reverberate through the interwar years. After the war six conscientious objectors left prison and went on to become members of parliament.[195] Another, Arthur Creech Jones, went even further becoming a cabinet minister. Bertrand Russell, who served six months in prison, went on to win the Nobel Prize in literature, while Ramsay Macdonald emerged from

[194] The leaders of the conscientious objectors were tried and sentenced to death. However due to the personal intervention of Asquith their sentences were commuted to ten years penal servitude. Pointedly, less than two weeks after the conscientious objectors were shipped back to England to be punished, 19,240 men lay dead on the Somme while another 2,152 were missing and 35,493 wounded. (Sheffield, 2003, p. 68) By mid-September Prime Minister Asquith's own son, Raymond, was dead.

[195] One of them was Herbert Morrison who became the Home Secretary for most of the Second World War. In that role he was in charge of implementing Defence Regulation 18B. It was he who controversially released Oswald Mosley in 1943, claiming that 'whilst considerations of national security must come first, I am not prepared, subject to this overriding consideration, to let anyone die in detention unnecessarily.' (Cited in Williams, 2009, p. 60)

his self-imposed pacifist-exile to become Prime Minister.[196] The high-point in the rehabilitation of pacifist thought cited by most historians came in February 1933, when the Oxford Union adopted the motion, 'that this House will in no circumstances fight for its King and Country' by a vote of 275 to 173. The pacifist movement was considered the most credible of the interwar secular religions, for most people were convinced that another mechanised war had the potential to destroy civilisation. (Overy, 2009, pp. 176-177) However this gloomy outlook was accompanied by the common belief that rational ordering and dialogue would usher in the New Jerusalem. It was this belief that linked the complex web of Pacifist movements and animated their innumerable conferences and campaigns.

In his book, *Pacifism in Britain*, Martin Ceadel distinguishes between pacifism and pacificism. The difference being that pacifism rejects war in total while the latter sees that war might sometimes be necessary but that 'its prevention should always be an over-riding political priority.' (1980, p. 3) Pacifism was to pacificism what Catholicism was to Anglicanism, i.e. it brooked no compromise on key points of dogma while the pacificists worked for the same ends but saw themselves as being more worldly and practical. These two arms of the peace movement included at least fifteen major organisations in Britain alone, to say nothing of the hundreds of independent local groups and associations. Under the heading of Pacificism came the movements associated with the League of Nations and other internationalist solutions while under the heading of Pacifism came the absolutists such as the Peace Pledge Union and the explicitly Christian pacifists such who comprised the various organisations uniting in movements like the Fellowship of Reconciliation.

Admittedly many saw the Peace Movement as a form of charity but there is no doubt that for a large proportion it fulfilled a religious function. Indeed this was often considered the movement's great weakness. Even the tolerant Cannon Sheppard complained of 'the fanatics and freaks who rush into every progressive cause, getting badly in the way of its triumph.'(Cited in Ceadel, p. 85) In the 1920s the movement's focus was, of course, the League of Nations. Lord

[196] Just as the conscientious objectors soon entered the mainstream, their opponents soon left it. Lloyd George delivered a stunning attack on the absolutists [opposed to conscription as well as war] in July of 1916, 'I do not think they deserve the slightest consideration… ' (Cited in Marwick, 2000, p. 51) Lloyd George's treatment of the absolutists drove the first nail into the coffin of his radical reputation (Taylor A. J. P, 1992, p. 55) and from 1922 he was consigned to the political wilderness.

Robert Cecil had argued that to eliminate war 'a compelling will for peace' needed to be embodied in 'a continuing organisation for building peace and preventing war, and some generally accepted code of international peace and justice.'(1933, p. 256) For Cecil, and for many others, the League of Nations represented such a solution. As Vera Brittain was to write in the midst of World War Two, 'the League of Nations Union [was] a real influence for peace during those early years in which we who were young believed ourselves to be building a new heaven and a new earth…' (1941, p. 100) Despite its reputation for bureaucratic impotence the League of Nations began its life with a series of very small triumphs.[197] The League's serene and effective diplomacy seem to mock the glut of political memoirs describing the previous war as inevitable and supported Ramsey Macdonald's claim that all conflicts could be dispelled by 'the strenuous action of goodwill.' (Cited in Taylor, 1975, p. 273) This belief ensured that the LNU had over a million members by 1933, giving an impression of 'massive unity and relentless progress.' (Thompson, 1977, p. 951)

The belief in the power of goodwill found its greatest expression in the disarmament movement. Whilst on the one hand this was a diplomatic movement and underpinned what may be called 'the Locarno Era'[198] it also produced advocates of exemplary disarmament such as Lord Ponsonby. Believing that 'Wars have never been caused by an isolated act of aggression on the part of a nation', Ponsonby advocated that Britain should simply give up her weapons and gradually disarm. (1928, p. 230) Ponsonby believed that no nation would bomb an undefended nation and thereby incur the disapproval of other nations, 'Low as my opinion of international morality may be I do not for a moment believe such a thing possible. I am convinced that disarmament really constitutes the only absolute security.' (Cited in Ceadel, 1980, p. 90)

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[197] Hostilities between Lithuania and Poland were suspended and the dispute over Vilna resolved via referendum while neutral troops kept the peace. Eupen and Malmédy were peaceably returned to Belgium on the recommendations of a special league committee following a detailed investigation into the question. When Yugoslav troops entered the Carinthian region in direct contradiction of a local plebiscite that voted overwhelmingly to incorporate the area into Austria, they were convinced to retreat under threat of an allied expedition to the region. Sweden and Finland were at odds over the Aaland Islands and the tension was resolved by the League council in 1921. This was perhaps the most interesting decision because it contravened the wishes of the 97% of the people who actually voted to remain with their motherland – Sweden. The Swedish Prime Minister accepted the decision and declared his refusal to use violence to pursue his nation's claims, irrespective of their justice. Finland wisely gave the Aaland Islands autonomy and gradually their identity became more overtly Finnish, particularly after the Soviet invasion.

[198] The Locarno treaties (1925) were often seen as the high point of the disarmament dream, their optimism can be seen as the spirit of the movement.

Following the war Ponsonby claimed, 'I myself became religious when I left off going to Church.' (1922, p. 12) This new religiosity was most clearly evident in his clerist vocation. Despite his political career with the Labour party Ponsonby exhausted himself preaching to anyone who would listen about the the means of ending all war by setting the right example and disarming.

This was clearly a faith-based optimism and, as such, was quickly undermined by the Japanese invasion of Manchuria in 1931, the Italian invasion of Abyssinia in 1935 and ultimately the invasion of Poland in 1939. Yet somehow, despite Germany's infamous withdrawal from the Conference for the Reduction and Limitation of Armaments in late 1933, the beliefs of the pacificist movement were still very strongly held, as was revealed in its Peace Ballot conducted in 1934-1935 by the League of Nations Union.[199] Eleven and a half million respondents answered the questionnaire and their responses demonstrated an overwhelming support for disarmament and the preservation of Peace.[200] However the final question, 'if a nation insists on attacking another, should the other nations combine to compel it to stop, if necessary, [by] military measures?' returned an answer of 6,784,368 in favour and 2,351,981 against. Clearly the pacificists vastly outnumbered the pacifists.

Yet this latter group would come to dominate the movement during the second half of the decade. The most powerful example was the 800 people who applied to join Maude Royden's Peace Army; volunteering to stand, unarmed, between the combatants in Manchuria in an effort to silence the guns. Royden herself reflected the mysticism of their religion when she explained to a critic, 'I quite see that your reasoning is sound, but then I have really abandoned the attempt to be rigidly logical in my pacifism.' (Ceadel, 1980, p. 94) Royden was a former suffragette and

[199] The Peace Ballot was announced by Lord Cecil on the same day that Anthony Eden returned to England after the negotiations with Mussolini regarding Abyssinia had fallen through. When Mussolini first invaded, Anthony Eden offered Mussolini the lowlands while the British would give part of Somaliland to the Abyssinians. The entire country would just shift a fraction to the right and all would be well. Mussolini knocked the offer back wanting to control the region in much the same way that the British controlled Egypt. Thus as the nation was showing their overwhelming support of pacifist cooperation and international good-will, its impotence was being demonstrated by an expanding Fascist government. Soon the failure of the Hoare Laval plan added to the demise. For Taylor the League died with the plan; it clearly wasn't capable of providing security and its members knew it. (Taylor, 1992, p. 385) Mussolini quickly finished of the campaign and Haile Selassie was soon ensconced in Fairfield House, Bath. Unsurprisingly, Hitler chose this moment to invade the Rhineland.

[200] While there have been huge questions over the ballot's methodology and opponents were quick to dismiss its findings, the ballot clearly reveals the relevance of the peace-question. While the questions were simplistic to the point of being disingenuous, the results reveal a vast number of people who saw the issue as a simple one.

an assistant preacher at the City Temple before forming her own chapel known as The Guildhouse, in Eccleston Square. She was a non-denominational Christian Socialist and Pacifist. Royden is the sort of complex religious figure that only the interwar period could produce. Her life was one of decreasingly mystical and increasingly politicised religion.

As it became increasingly obvious that war was not only impossible to eradicate but was, at times, actually necessary, the pacificists became more pragmatic. By 1939 E. H. Carr had published his well-publicised admonishment of the Pacifist movement contained in his book, *The Twenty Years Crisis*. Carr was particularly critical of the idealism (he rightly uses the word 'utopianism') that had dominated international relations during most of the interwar years and urged for a return to its antithesis, realism, as the predominant mode of discourse in the field of international relations. He defined the difference as being 'between those who regard politics as a function of ethics and those who regard ethics as a function of politics.' (Carr, 2001, p. 40) The former view is clearly one that is religious in spirit; it is faith-based and it centres on a belief in a transformative power operating through free-will, whereas the latter is inherently materialist; in the words of Carr, 'the complete realist, unconditionally accepting the causal sequence, deprives himself of the possibility of changing reality.' (Carr, 2001, p. 12) Carr was obviously not advocating a completely realist/determinist position but rather a balance between the two. What he was doing was criticising the religious utopianism that had dominated international relations during the interwar period.

The rise of Fascism in the late thirties eviscerated the logic of disarmament and, as the socialists left the peace movement, the Pacifists were now in the ascendant. For a while the movement was dominated by members of Dick Sheppard's Peace Pledge Union which was concerned more with personal conversions than diplomatic conversations. On the 16th October, 1934, the Dean of Canterbury placed editorials in three major newspapers asking people to sign a pledge saying 'I renounce war and never again, directly or indirectly, will I support or sanction another.' (Cited in Overy, 2009, p. 235)[201] Within twelve months he had received 80,000 pledges and they were still

[201] This pledge has its roots in the membership affirmation (popularly known as the Slacker Oath) used by the Women's Peace Union of the Western Hemisphere, adopted by a number of organizations such as the "No More War" movement. It was somewhat more developed than the Peace Pledge but made essentially the same claims on the individual: ''I affirm it is my intention never to aid in or sanction war, offensive or defensive, international, or civil, in any way, whether by making or handling munitions, subscribing to war loans, using my labor for the

coming in at a rate of 400 per day. By the start of World War Two there were 130,000 members who had pledged to work for the elimination of war. (Lukowitz, 1974, pp. 116-117) Its members were the hardened pacifists like Bertrand Russell, Aldous Huxley, Rose Macaulay, Storm Jameson, Vera Brittain, Cyril Joad, George Bernard Shaw and Virginia Woolf, who rejected the 'whitened sepulchre' that was the League of Nations and its euphemistic notion of Collective Security. (Lukowitz, 1974, p. 119)

As the war came closer more and more members left the union, renouncing their pacifism in the face of the Fascist threat. The pacifist movement was reduced to that devoted core of religious believers like the politician George Lansbury. Lansbury offered to 'pray with Hitler for peace,' a move which the British ambassador to Germany described as 'worse than useless.' (Shepherd, 2004, p. 338) An undaunted Lansbury, accompanied by a pair of Quakers, met with Hitler for two and a half hours in April 1937. In an article which he wrote for the *Tribune*, Lansbury explained the purpose of his visit to Germany. He began his meeting with the Fuhrer by saying, 'millions of people are daily working, longing and praying for peace, peace based upon the great saying of Jesus Christ, "Do to others as you would they should do to you." I come to you with the same message.' (Shepherd, 2004, p. 338) Clearly he was seeking the personal conversion that was at the heart of the Peace Pledge Union. By the time France fell, Rose Macaulay, Storm Jameson, Bertrand Russell and Cyril Joad had all renounced their Pacifism, while Aldous Huxley withdrew to America. As Jameson expressed it, the movement was '"choked" by "the smell from the concentration camps."' (Cited in Rempel, 1978, p. D1215)

It was Vera Brittain, an intensely religious figure, most famous for her postwar memoir, *Testament of Youth*, who grimly retained her pacifistic convictions in the face of the Blitzkrieg. Brittain is a wonderful example of the interwar apostate searching for a religion. In early adolescence Brittain had gradually emptied her strict Anglicanism of any miraculous elements. (Berry & Bostridge, 1995, p. 45) As her Christian faith declined her secular faith blossomed.

> Letters and articles written at the time show that my mind groped in a dark, foggy confusion, uncertain of what had happened to it or what was going to happen. … I had

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purpose of setting others free for war service, helping by money or work any relief organization which supports or condones war.' (Cited in 'The War over the "No More War Movement,' 1922, p. 313)

> already started on the road that was ultimately to lead me to association with the group that accepted internationalism as a creed. (Brittain, 2005, pp. 470-473)

She had rejected all belief in God by the mid-twenties, but in later life she decided that 'Christianity was 'the only common sense left and the only condition of survival.'' (Berry & Bostridge, 1995, p. 356)[202] Vera Brittain retained her Pacifism throughout the war and, in doing so, forfeited her reputation. However this merely deepened the religiosity of what had become explicitly Christian Pacifism and she began to see her very public humiliation as a part of the redemptive price needed to restore order.

> I am convinced, in the painful cultivation of personal humility and charity in every difficult relationship of human life, that our endeavors to found our City of God must now begin... The foundations of our New Jerusalem depend not upon material programmes, but upon the acceptance of the ideal of love as the guiding principle of personal and national life. (Brittain, 1941, pp. 299-300)

Eugenics

In his forward to Marie Stopes' 1928 book, *Contraception: (Birth Control) Its Theory, History and Practice*, Sir James Barr wrote: 'while the virility of the nation was carrying on the war the derelicts were carrying on the race. Our sentimentalists and would-be philanthropists at other people's expense are crying upon those derelicts to produce more babies to replace the real nobility of manhood who perished in the war.'[203] (Stopes, 1924, pp.xv-xvi) For Barr[204] as for many others the eugenics movement was a direct response to the interwar narrative of decay. The

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[202] Conversion was a recurring feature of life in the Brittain household. Her husband, George Catlin, was the son of a former Anglican Clergyman who had converted to Catholicism after encountering Newman and, through him, the Church Fathers. His son formally abandoned the practice of his now-dwindling Catholicism in response to the Spanish Civil War and the support the Church gave to General Franco. However two nights in an open life boat after being torpedoed convinced him to return to the practice of his faith. He and Vera decided to allow their children to choose their own religion. Consequently as their daughter, Shirley Brittain-Catlin (later known as Shirley Williams MP) was developing her political faith following the war, she was also developing her Catholic faith, being baptized in 1948 around the same time that she was admitted into the Labour Club at Oxford. (Williams, 2003)

[203] Even during the war Leonard Darwin (Eugenics Education Society president) was advocating conscription, so that the casualties would be a more random cross-section of society and thereby limit the damage to the nation's breeding stocks. Similarly, the National Birth Rate Commission had actively promoted marriage prior to embarkation so that the replacement rate was at least maintained. (Hasian, 1996, p. 47)

[204] Sir James's own son, Lieutenant S. Tudor Barr, was killed in action. For Sir James this dysgenic outcome was somewhat compensated for by the influenza epidemic that followed the war and was particularly destructive among the lower classes. (Owens, 2002)

Eugenics Society and a vast web of supporting associations promoted positive eugenics, which sought to 'raise the fertility of those who are not definitely subnormal until at least they replace themselves.' (Carr-Saunders, 2004, p. 147) This effort was supported by a program of negative eugenics which sought to limit the growth of what Lloyd George had labelled the 'C3 population.' (Greenhalgh, 2007, p. 410) In this struggle three basic strategies were employed. First it built up the eugenic conscience, spreading 'a feeling of responsibility concerning the bringing into the world of those who are inadequately endowed.' Secondly, it sought the legalisation of sterilisation. Thirdly it vigorously promoted 'the spread of birth control.' (Carr-Saunders, 2004, p. 153)

On the surface the movement was informed by the nascent science of genetics and a number of studies, of varying legitimacy, that predicted the doom of the race. Soon eugenicists developed their own jargon to mobilize the population and usher in their new society. Prospective adherents were terrified by the ever growing 'Social Problem Group', 'the lower fourth' or 'the submerged tenth of the population' who were gaining control of the nation's 'germplasm' at the expense of the prudent, 'wellborn' who ought to be breeding but were being taxed into sterility by a sentimental government determined to help the super-fertile 'feebleminded' while committing the rest of the population to 'race suicide.' They even had their own code of chivalry; one leading member turned down a request for his semen made by a fellow member, pleading that his 'five degrees of myopia' made it impossible. (Bland & Hall, 2010, pp. 215-216)[205]

As suggested earlier, what made the eugenicists so interesting was their belief that not only could all social problems be arrested but that they could be reversed. Marie Stopes wrote: 'it is within the lands in which they now dwell that the people must be transformed and led into greater perfection of physical, mental and spiritual beauty... As a race [utopia] appears to me to be not only possible but within our reach.' How? By studying the conditions under which the current generations of degenerates came into being, discover their sources of defect and 'eliminate those sources of defect from the coming generations so as to remove from those who are still to be born the needless burdens the race has carried.' (Stopes, 'Imperial and Racial Aspects II.' In J. Marchant (Ed.), 1920, p. 208-209)

[205] Alas, the woman concerned had her eugenic heart broken when she discovered that he had already fathered three children with another woman by the traditional method! (Bland & Hall, 2010, pp. 215-216)

The popularity of the eugenics movement came from its ability to present itself as a source of renewal for interwar England. It was essentially the Malthusian equivalent of Communism. In fact they frequently promoted themselves as the via media 'between Cobden and Lenin.' (Macnicol, 1992, p. 426) The eugenicists spent much time deriding the misplaced sentimentality of the Marxists but, although both movements approached the interwar crises and the working classes from opposing angles, they had much in common. Both were essentially totalitarian in nature. Both delighted in a number of studies that exposed 'the harsh realities... of the unfit'. (Hasian, 1996, p. 77) Both waged war on what they perceived as the wrongheaded opposition of religious groups.[206] Both proposed to end the problems of the interwar period that seemed to ceaselessly ensnare the working classes. In fact, eugenic thought was so pervasive that it was adopted by a number of Socialists and even Communists who developed their own form of 'Bolshevik Eugenics.[207] (Paul, 1984, p. 569) This latter version was less critical of the working classes, but founded on the assumption that 'unless the socialist is a eugenicist as well, the socialist state will speedily perish from racial degradation.' (Paul, 1984, p. 568)

A popular supporter of the Eugenics movement, Dean Inge, the much read Dean of St. Paul's, wrote of the 'general discontent in the populations of the large towns, whom [the industrial revolution] has gathered together under unnatural conditions.' (Inge, 'Economic Aspects I.' In J. Marchant (Ed.), 1920, pp. 63-64) However, unlike the socialists, the Dean saw the poverty of the lower classes as a product 'of low mental endowment' and therefore 'social inequalities were natural inequalities.'[208] (Jones G., 1982, p. 722) For the eugenicists, the concern was that the two

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[206] The strongest opposition to the eugenics movement came from the intractable Catholic Church. Not only was it providing intellectual opposition, most notably in Pius XI's encyclical, *Casti Connubii*, but it provided a large proportion of the 'undeserving' parents in the lower classes. As early as 1906 Sidney Webb was worried that the nation might fall to the Catholics or Jews. 'In Great Britain at this moment, when half, or perhaps two-thirds, of all the married people are regulating their families, children are being freely born to the Irish Roman Catholics and the Polish, Russian and German Jews, on the one hand, and to the thriftless and irresponsible … This can hardly result in anything but national deterioration; or, as an alternative, in this country gradually falling to the Irish and the Jews. Finally, there are signs that even these races are becoming influenced. The ultimate future of these islands may be to the Chinese!' (Webb, 1907, pp. 16-17)

[207] Paul lists some of the Marxists and Fabians who promoted varying forms of eugenics as part of their Socialist beliefs: 'Beatrice and Sidney Webb, George Bernard Shaw, Havelock Ellis, Eden and Cedar Paul, H. J. Laski, Graham Wallas, Emma Goldman, H. G. Wells, Edward Aveling, Julian Huxley, Joseph Needham, C. P. Snow, H. G. Muller and Paul Kammerer - to note just some of the more prominent figures.' (Paul, 1984, p. 567)

[208] Inge, though formerly a Tractarian, moved towards Modernism as a young man. His theology was such that the physiologist and orthodox Christian, John Scott Haldane (father of the biologist J. B. S. Haldane and the author Naomi Mitchison) once announced to his family that he was depressed after having spent two hours trying to explain Christianity to Dean Inge. (Clark, 1968, p. 23)

sections of society where little or no restraint was being practised were 'the reckless and largely parasitic people of the slums, who having no pride, ambition, or self-restraint, produce very large families' and the miners, 'much given to gambling, drinking, and other amusements...'(Inge, Economic Aspects I.' In J. Marchant (Ed.), 1920, pp. 65-66) Given the scope of what they regarded as the problem, the eugenicists were, in a sense, more concerned with converting the masses than were the Communists, who believed that the potential for revolution was already fermenting among the working classes and simply required direction and organization. In that sense the eugenicists were more radically evangelical in their outlook.

The Eugenic society promoted its sterilisation campaign through parliamentary[209] and bureaucratic committees[210] but with minimal success. Promising a seemingly supernatural transformation of society and its members, eugenicists took on all the fervour of adherents of a religion. [211] To quote Hasian: 'what was known as the "Eugenic Creed"[212] was not just applied genetics; it was also a form of discourse that influenced the way ordinary citizens gave meaning to their lives.' (1996, p. 14)

It was with a sense of missionary zeal that eugenicists would appear in market towns and in factories, preaching either positive or negative eugenics, depending on their audience. (Hasian,

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[209] The parliamentary Mental Deficiency (Wood) Committee, founded in 1924 published a three volume report in 1929, suggesting that 'mental deficiency, much physical inefficiency, chronic pauperism, recidivism are all parts of a single problem...' (Cited in King & Hansen, 1999, p. 84)

[210] After sterilization legislation failed in parliament in 1931, a Departmental Committee on Sterilisation was set up by the Ministry of Health and the Board of Control, under the chairmanship of Lawrence Brock. The Brock Committee was fully in favour of the eugenicist cause. The chairman met with the secretary of the National Eugenics Society, C. P. Blacker and advised him on how to word draft legislation. (Macnicol, 1992, p. 430)

[211] The American society went so far as to publish a Eugenics catechism and held eugenic sermon contests. (Hasian, 1996, p. 38)

[212] This was no metaphor, Charles Davenport, founder of the Eugenics Record Office, developed an actual creed:

> 1. I believe in striving to raise the human race to the highest plane of social organization, of cooperative work and of effective endeavour.
> 2. I believe that I am the trustee of the germ plasm that I carry, that this has been passed on to me through thousands of generations before me; and that I betray the trust if (that germ plasm being good) I so act as to jeopardize it, with its excellent possibilities, or, from motives of personal convenience, to unduly limit offspring.
> 3. I believe that, having made our choice in marriage carefully, we, the married pair, should seek to have 4 to 6 children in order that our carefully selected germ plasm shall be reproduced in adequate degree and that this preferred stock shall not be swamped by that less carefully selected.
> 4. I believe in such a selection of immigrants as shall not tend to adulterate our national germ plasm with socially unfit traits.
> 5. I believe in repressing my instincts when to follow them would injure the next generation. (Riddle, 1949, pp. 84-85)

1996, p. 45) Added to this was the constant stream of articles, pamphlets, journals and books dedicated to spreading the message and advising on 'how to deal with race poisons.' (Hasian, 1996, p. 31) The spread of what we might term eugenic logic was unmistakable: 'Eugenics permeated the thinking of generations of English men and women worried about the biological capacity of their countrymen to cope with the myriad changes they saw confronting their old nation in a new century.' (Richard Soloway, cited in Macnicol, 1992, p. 423) Evidence for that permeation can be found in the Boy Scout movement and its determination to eliminate 'race-poisons', while the thousands of 'bonny-baby' contests that became part of the interwar experience were often organised to encourage the continued breeding of the 'wellborn.' (Hasian, 1996, pp. 38-39, 43)[213] Helping to promote national efficiency were the British Eugenics Education Society, the Institute of Hygiene, the Infants Health Society, the National League for Physical Education and Improvement, the National League for Health, Maternity and Child Welfare. Even the World League for Sexual Reform sought to promote Nietzsche's dictum, 'you shall not merely continue the race, but move it upwards.' (Dose, 2003, p. 7)

Perhaps the most well known convert to the movement was Marie Stopes[214] who wrote the highly influential *Married Love* (1918). Whilst she is primarily known for her work with birth control, Stopes was convinced of the eugenic benefits of contraceptives:

> It is much to be desired in the interests of the race that inexpensive methods of temporary sterility should be devised, improved, and rendered available in practice for those in

[213] It could be added to this that the Eighteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, which produced the prohibition era, was a product of eugenic logic. See: Jones, B. C. (1963). Prohibition and Eugenics 1920–1933. *The History of Medicine and Allied Sciences*, 18 (1), 158-173.

[214] Stopes was easily one of the most extraordinary figures of the interwar period. According to the unabashed explanation she dictated to her first biographer, Aylmer Maude, Stopes was converted to activism through her own experiences. She enjoyed an elite scientific education, she married Reginald Ruggles Gates (a botanist who published *Heredity and Eugenics* in 1923). Somehow, after several years she noticed that she hadn't yet had any children; 'She approached the problem as a true scholar and spent six months in the British Museum reading almost every book on sex in English, French, and German. Her reading led her to conclude that her marriage had never been consummated.' (Geppert, 1998, p. 399) Despite the insult of having a eugenicist husband refusing to procreate with her, Stopes was a passionate convert to the movement. Indeed she later disinherited her own son (from a subsequent marriage) when he married a girl who wore glasses because she considered it a dysgenic match. (Overy, 2009, pp. 98-99)

> whom disease or a degenerate or undeveloped mental capacity render likely to produce detrimentals if they breed without restriction. (1924, p. 200)[215]

Stopes was one of those religious people that Ponsonby had claimed were 'freed from the churches.'[216] The greatest expression of Stopes' religiosity came in her the message that she believed God gave her to pass on to the 1920 Lambeth Conference. Impressively entitled *A New Gospel to all People,* Stopes revealed that 'While penetrated by that calm beauty [she was in the woods] there came, suddenly and quite explicitly, exact instructions in the words which follow. I was told: "Say to my Bishops"…' (Stopes, 2007, p. 90) Calling herself a prophet, she enlightened the Bishops about sexual intercourse, explaining that 'Each receives from each substances materially presented as chemical and ultra-chemical molecules.' But that the couple needed to 'remain thereafter in a long brooding embrace without severance' in order to gain the ultra-chemical molecules. (Stopes, 2007, pp. 95,97) Then she explained that 'God through science' had shown how to 'separate the results of the act of union and obtain the vitalising mutual exchanges in every union...' Stopes concluded by claiming that it was message that God had sent 'to raise the race.' (Stopes, 2007, pp. 102-103)

Post-war revelations of Nazi atrocities,[217] combined with an increased understanding of nutrition, served to undermine many of the claims regarding hereditary problems among the working classes but Stopes maintained her particularly popular brand of 'eugenic mysticism' to the very end in the form of her 'Society for Constructive Birth Control and Racial Progress.' 'Marie…had convinced herself that she alone should head the battle to save the race.' (Rose, 1992, p. 162) Like Russell and Brittain, Stopes spent her life attempting to mobilise the lost souls of a nation beset by crises.

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[215] She actually called her own contraceptive device, 'the race cap.' (Rose, 1992, p. 145)

[216] She was also a clear member of the Clerisy. During the 1921 strike she had offered herself to Lloyd George as a mediator between the government and the miners, 'if they are shut in, and made to listen to me, it would only be a question of hours before they yielded.' (Rose, 1992, p. 146)

[217] In 1945 the president of the Eugenics society, C. P. Blacker, presented a memorandum to the Royal Commission on Population. In his submission he attempted to restore the reputation of the Eugenics Movement by reminding the Commission of Francis Galton's liberal approach to racial distinctions. 'While he believed that the different branches of the human race were unequally equipped with the inborn characters that produce and sustain highly organized civilizations, it was no part of his outlook that biologically inferior races should be persecuted or suppressed.' (Blacker, 1945, p. 94) The report is untitled but many historians attribute it directly to Blacker. See, for instance, Soloway, R. A. (1990). *Demography and Degeneration Eugenics and the Declining Birthrate in Twentieth-Century Britain.* Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press. p. 339)

Communism

In his essay on Rudyard Kipling, George Orwell pointed out that Kipling had a particular 'grip on reality' because he associated himself with the ruling power. This premised his conclusion that 'the ruling power is always faced with the question, 'in such and such circumstances, what would you DO?', whereas the opposition is not obliged to take responsibility or make any real decisions.' (Orwell, 'Rudyard Kipling' In Sonia Orwell & Ian Angus, Eds., 2000a, p. 215) This was an advantage that goes some way to explaining the attractions of Socialism and, more specifically, Communism during the interwar years. It was a period of radical politics among the clerisy partly because it was a period of such staid conservative governance, despite including two Labour governments.

As many Catholic converts came from the Anglican Church, so, many Communist converts came from the Labour party. Both groups were essentially responding to the problem of toleration in their respective churches. The political philosopher, A. D. Lindsay argued that the widespread political skepticism of the period was 'merely a reiteration of the negative, Lockean view that the essence of toleration…was 'indifference or compromise.'' (Cited in Stapleton, 2001, p. 67) Yet the problem for the converts was that toleration invariably facilitated the unopposed influence of antithetical ideologies. In the Anglican Church it facilitated the influence of Modernism with all its attacks on Christian dogma, while for many in the Labour party it facilitated the influence of Toryism and all its attacks on Socialist dogma.

Just as the Catholic Church grew as the Protestant religions declined, so too did socialist politics grow as the Labour party seemed to decline into a mixture of impotent Socialism and Conservatism with a conscience. As Robert Skidelsky has pointed out, the failure of the Labour Party was really produced by the contradictions inherent within Democratic Socialism. This contradiction allowed a Socialist party to take part in the ordinary political process but that same political process prevented the Socialist party from implementing anything remotely Socialist. (1967, pp. 241-242) As early as 1907 Ramsey Macdonald had declared that there was only one solution to the unemployment problem and that was 'the beginning of the Socialist State.' (Skidelsky, 1967, p. 36) However, by 1929 Macdonald was Prime Minister and was writing in his journal, 'Unemployment is baffling us, the simple fact is that our population is too great for our trade… I sit in my room in Downing Street alone & in silence.' (Cited in Brendon, 2000, p.

178) The optimism that was expressed in Macdonald's earliest political activism[218] was mocked by his eventual decline into a somewhat impotent figurehead for the National government. Following the 1931 election he wrote, 'I am pulled up by the roots & even what I believe in, in these new conditions, seems dead.' (Marquand, 1977, p. 672) By 1933 he was admitting,

> 'Unemployment work terribly slow and yet cannot be rushed, & I cannot be personally in charge of everything at home & abroad. Treasury not helpful & Health worse. No vision of general situation & only concern to keep Govt. out of practically everything. Deserted by Labour & Liberal parties, National Govt. inevitably tends to fundamental Toryism.' (Marquand, 1977, p. 733)

MacDonald's move from political optimism to stultifying indecision was a sobering lesson for many activists, prompting the search for a more dogmatic creed that would not dally with heretics for the sake of compromised goals. In her autobiography, former ILP Socialist Jennie Lee[219] wrote that 'the negativing propensity of the Labour government …drove everyone under forty to the verge of madness.' (1963, p. 115)[220] Those most affected were the grassroots ILP members: the true believers. 'The Labour party had become in their eyes a kind of political anti-Christ. It besmirched, it betrayed, the True Faith.' (Lee, 1963, p. 131) Just as many Anglicans

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[218] MacDonald was a 19th century radical of the first order. Marquand's biography of Macdonald reveals a steady progression from radical causes to Conservative power. In an almost 'sacramental ceremony' he joined the British Social Democrats in Bristol, later explaining that 'by the adoption of Socialist principles the misery [that surrounded his audience] could be stamped out.' (Marquand, 1977, pp. 16-17) He was briefly the secretary of the radical London General Committee of the Scottish Home Rule Association. He worshipped at the South Place Ethical Society which was something of an Ethical Church. Later his humanist religion and socialist politics found a synthesis in the Fellowship of New Life, a movement founded by the mendicant Socialist prophet Thomas Davidson. The movement was committed to a purer form of Socialism by subordinating 'materials things to spiritual' and thereby cultivating 'a perfect character in each and all...' (pp. 24-25). Macdonald's involvement in the movement culminated in his participation in an experimental communal living-arrangement in Bloomsbury. Somewhat akin to the nebulous organisation of the Oratory of the Good Shepherd, the purpose of the commune and the criteria for membership were exceptionally vague, but MacDonald, along with Edith Lees (later the openly lesbian wife of Havelock Ellis), was obviously a key organizer. However the demands of religious life proved too much for these radicals. Lees wrote to Macdonald in 1891, 'for heaven's sake come home when you can – can it be that I have turned man or what but I'm *choked* with women… women everywhere & not a breath of peace.' (p. 26) It seems that Macdonald then chided her on her criticisms because she subsequently thanked him for his 'sermonette.' (p. 27)

[219] Lee follows a similar pattern to many of the converts covered in this chapter and elsewhere in the thesis. Her socialist faith developed alongside her ailing religious faith. 'Besides politics I was greatly concerned at this time about religion. My grandfather was a devoutly religious man of simple, unquestioning faith. My father held that religion was an exploded myth. I loved and respected both men so had to turn and wrestle with the question myself.' She soon researched and argued her way to a pantheistic agnosticism. (Lee, 1963, pp. 54-56)

[220] Skidelsky cites Lee but adds that even young conservatives were sickened by Baldwin's 'lethargy and lack of drive' and themselves began to clamour for his resignation in the summer of 1930 and 1931. (1967, p. 270)

had sought a church that refused to tolerate modernism, so many on the left sought a creed that would never tolerate conservatism and the preservation of capitalism.

Another similarity between the Catholic and Communist Churches was the ability to attract the non-believers. Just as many atheists were attracted to the Church, so many of the apolitical were attracted to the Communists. For both groups the attraction seemed to be based on the sense that their respective conversion destinations offered an antidote to the problems of the time. As one middle class housewife put it, 'I happened to read a friend's *Daily Worker* which reported Mussolini's invasion of Abyssinia. That converted me to Communism. The world needed to be put right and I felt that the Communists were the only ones with an answer.' (Cited in Newton, 1969, p. 68) The Damascene conversion provoked by the discovery of an evil and its remedy, is a surprisingly common interwar story, as we shall see in chapter six when we examine the conversion processes undertaken by the interwar clerists.

While the popular narrative of the interwar period may have demanded radicalism, the prevailing tone of government was, as Sir Humphrey Appleby would have said, that of 'masterly inactivity'. And yet, despite such favourable conditions, the interwar period only ever saw relatively modest gains in Communist Party membership. The oft-quoted highpoint of 18,000 came in December, 1938, in the wake of the Munich agreement.[221] Membership fluctuated significantly throughout the period and most spikes followed political events. For instance, as unemployment rose in 1922 so too did membership, attaining 5,116 in June of that year. These gains were quickly lost but the strike in 1926 saw membership increase once more, reaching 6,000 in April and 12,000 in October. A Labour Government elected in 1929 saw membership decrease to perhaps its lowest point[222] since the party was founded, but the Invergordan Mutiny and the formation of a National government in 1931 soon inspired a membership recovery, with the party reaching 9,000 in January of 1932. (Figures from Thorpe, 2000, p. 781)[223]

[221]This was prior to the boom in membership during the war. Membership increased to 20,000 by March of 1940, despite the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact of August 1939 and then, after a period of stability, shot up again as Germany invaded the Soviet Union.

[222] Prior to the low of 2,350 members in August 1930, the previous low point came in January of 1921, where party records claim 2000-2500 members. (Thorpe, 2000, p. 781)

[223] While Newton provides us with a fairly detailed summary of membership, Thorpe is able to utilize a more detailed empirical base, provided by the opening of Communist archives, both in Britain and in Moscow.

It should be pointed out that, despite the plethora of notable conversions from among middle class intellectuals, the Communist Party of Great Britain was primarily a working class party. There was actually a tradition of distrusting 'these unscrupulous semi-intellectuals who pose as left revolutionaries, who put the r's [sic] in barricades, instead of putting their arse on the barricades.' (Thorpe, 2000, p. 786)[224] In spite of this fact, the movement leftwards had become so common that Malcolm Muggeridge described it as a rite of passage,

> 'Young men with beards sold the *Daily Worker* in the streets; novelists led their heroes by devious ways to solidarity with the toiling masses, and poets sang in *vers libres* the praises of the Soviet Union… Fathers in clubs complained that their sons had become Communists at Oxford; and well brought up daughters suddenly announced, sometimes in the presence of servants, that they proposed henceforth to devote themselves to the Class War.' (Muggeridge, 1989, p. 211)

Orwell went further, claiming in his essay, 'Inside the Whale', that, 'between 1935 and 1939 the Communist Party had an almost irresistible fascination for any writer under forty…For about three years, in fact, the central stream of English literature was more or less directly under Communist control.' (Orwell, In Sonia Orwell, & Ian Angus (Eds.), 2000a, p. 119)

The anomaly between overwhelming proletarian dominance of the Communist Party of Great Britain and the well documented conversion movement among intellectuals can be explained when one considers the fact that membership 'was just one of a number of possible relationships between the individual and the [party].' (Morgan, Cohen, & Andrew, 2007, p. 13) Indeed many converts were actually dissuaded from joining the party, while others resisted the limitations of 'party unity' and simply declared themselves Communist. Added to this was the fact that many conversions were extremely short lived. In fact, throughout the period it is estimated that as many as ten per cent of members left each year. (Morgan, Cohen, & Andrew, 2007, p. 8) Neal Wood summed it up when he wrote that 'Marxism was indeed an Old Curiosity Shop in which many persons rummaged.' (Wood, 1959, p. 69)

[224] The party was dominated by the overlapping groups, miners and the unemployed. In 1927 more than half of the membership came from coal mining. Unsurprisingly therefore, by 1932, as much as sixty per cent of the party was unemployed. (Thorpe, 2000, pp. 787, 789)

Perhaps the greatest historian of British Communism, Raphael Samuel, remembered the Communism of his childhood as being essentially religious in nature.

> ‘The Communism in which I was brought up… had affinities to a crusading order, a union of novices and initiates under vow…to be true to a cause, soldiers *in partibus infidelium* waging temporal warfare for the sake of a spiritual end… Communism was the way, the truth, and the life. Like earlier belief systems, it put forward a complete scheme of social salvation. In place of fear and doubt – ‘the defeatist philosophies of our time’ – it offered glowing certainty’. (Samuel, 2006, p. 45)

One of the respondents to Kenneth Newton’s study of British Communism made the point that where working class members might be seeking something as simple as better conditions, middle class members, who already enjoy a relatively comfortable existence, would be motivated by much deeper and more altruistic motives such as, ‘justice, freedom and education.’ (1969, p. 71) That is why Samuel’s word ‘crusader’ is so apposite: it communicates the chivalric nature of middle-class Communism. It is why Orwell found a different, less dogmatic form of Communism in the working class regions of England. He remarked that, ‘In the Roman Catholic homes of Lancashire you see the crucifix on the wall and the *Daily Worker* on the table.’ (Orwell, 2001, p. 165)

For the middle-class convert, Communist activism often meant giving something up, rather than gaining something. An oft-cited example of this phenomenon is Ralph Fox who joined the party soon after its foundation in Britain. Fox lost his job as a teacher because of his membership and later turned down a Professorship because it would separate him from the party. Even when he was accused of ‘Trotskyism’ by members of Comintern, Fox stayed the course. ‘Communism, to quote the title of one of his novels, meant ‘storming heaven’ itself and for this Fox seemed prepared to sacrifice all the conventional advantages of his class.’ (Morgan, Cohen, & Flinn, 2007, p. 79) When Fox died in Spain in 1936, Harry Pollit, the leader of the British Communist Party, used the archetypal ‘leaving everything, he got up and followed the party’ narrative to describe the heroism of Fox’s conversion.

> There was no personal economic reason why Fox should have joined the Communist Party. He did so from a deep sense of intellectual conviction, and from the moment he

> took out his Party card, his life was dedicated to the cause of Communism.... The choice of a life of letters, of aloof culture, for which Ralph had all the intellectual capacity, seemed to open before him. Instead, in 1920, he went to the most hard-hit famine area of the Soviet Union. Instead he joined the Communist Party. Instead of mellowing gradually into a Literary Editor he died at 36 fighting the forces of Fascism in Spain. (Pollitt, 2006)

While Fox was perhaps the most self-effacing of the middle-class converts, he was certainly not alone. The tug of the conversion impulse was felt by many during the period, including high-profile converts like the Cambridge spies, Anthony Blunt, Guy Burgess, John Cairncross, Donald Maclean and Kim Philby) and the very public flirtations and conversions of the Auden group (W. H. Auden, Cecil Day Lewis, Stephen Spender and Edward Upward).[225] Other converts included academics like Robert Conquest, Christopher Hill, D. S. Mirsky, A. L. Morton, John Middleton Murray, Harold Laski, A. J. P Taylor and Tom Wintringham; artists and writers like Clare Sheridan,[226] Michael Roberts, James Boswell, Lelia Berg, Ewan MacColl, Sylvia Townsend Warner, Hugh McDiarmid and Claude Cockburn; and an assortment of young radicals, whose entire lives were quickly filled with political work, converts like Douglas Hyde, Esmond and Giles Romilly, David Haden Guest, Ralph Fox, Philip Toynbee, John Cornford and Julian Bell.

In many ways the Communist converts are a more closely interconnected group; coming from much similar backgrounds than that of the Catholic converts. In this thesis the sections dealing with Communist converts will largely be concerned with the Auden Group, the Cambridge spies and the Romilly brothers. Whilst this constitutes a bigger core group than that used by the Catholics, the effect is very much the same. This these multiple biographical stands, much like those of the Catholics, serve to establish a common pattern of conversion movement. Added to these will be much briefer references to the converts who fought in Spain or who, like Philip Toynbee, seem to lurk in the background of numerous memoirs. And here too we should be able

[225] Only Spender, Upward and Day Lewis were officially received into the party and issued with membership cards. Auden very publically flirted with the Party; enough for him to be placed under surveillance by MI5 and be labeled as a Communist, though of a 'highly idealistic and literary brand.' (James, 2013, p. 32)

[226] Interestingly both Clare Sheridan and Douglas Hyde ended up abandoning Communism for Catholicism. Sheridan in 1947 and Hyde in 1948. Another strange connection in this eclectic group is the fact that Sheridan and the Romilly brothers were closely related to Winston Churchill. Churchill was caused significant embarrassment by his Red-relations; Sheridan was long suspected as being a Bolshevik spy.

to develop a broad pattern of conversion and life as a convert without being overwhelmed with information.

Arthur Koestler described the mass-conversions of young intellectuals to Communism as 'a sincere and spontaneous expression of optimism born of despair, an abortive revolution of the spirit, a misfired renaissance, a false dawn of history'. (Cited in Wood, 1959, p. 96) This sense of optimism was so powerful that it was ultimately a secular correlative of the Christian cardinal virtue of hope. One of the most commonly cited examples of the hopeful convert is Evelyn John St Loe Strachey, better known as John Strachey. Strachey was an archetypal member of the Clerisy. Initially he served in the Labour government of 1929-1931, but the great betrayal[227] prompted his conversion to the more dogmatic creed of Communism. In an article explaining his conversion he wrote, 'The collapse of the second British Labor Government… was for me the decisive event. It was necessary for me to see with my own eyes and at close range the mingled impotence and treachery of social democracy in action…' (Strachey, 1934, p. 126)[228] He applied to join the Party in 1932 but was refused on the grounds that he could better serve the cause 'as a 'disinterested' outsider. (Stapleton, 2001, p. 81) Despite this rejection he was able to discover a clear sense of vocation as a non-party Communist. In 1934 he wrote to Cyril Joad on the importance of this vocation, 'I happen to be the only person who is putting over this particular information [that is, Marxism] which people desperately need today, in a form which they can comprehend.' (Cited in Stapleton, 2001, p. 85)

For Strachey Communism served a function that had previously been served by religion. In his widely-read book, *The Coming Struggle for Power*, he explained that religion helped man feel like he had control of his environment and created a moral system that helped him control himself. The growth in knowledge has meant that the 'possibility of religious belief [had] left

[227] On 23 August the cabinet voted 11-9 in favour of a 10 percent cut in the unemployment benefit. MacDonald insisted on a unanimous vote. The government resigned when none was forthcoming. Within two days MacDonald and four other members of the cabinet formed a National Government with the Conservatives and Liberals. In the ensuing elections the National Government won 550 seats the non-MacDonald Labour Party won just 46. For four more years Ramsay MacDonald remained, as the prime minister of a coalition government that was seen by his former supporters as conservative in everything but the name.

[228] His search for a more authoritarian political religion has obvious links with Ronald Knox's search for an authoritarian religion. Both saw the dangers of subjectivist whims diluting the essential tenets of their faith. Strachey would later write, ''It is undoubtedly true that the cause of individualistic freedom is to-day the cause of everything that is reactionary, stupid, barbaric and repressive in the world, and that it can only triumph by destroying civilization and pulling us back into an age of darkness. (1932, p. 156)

man' but that man and his environment are still in need of control. He argued that man had won control of the environment by 'that very growth of knowledge which [had] robbed man of his protective cloak of religious illusion', namely science, but that the only way man would be able to once more control himself was through the dictatorship of the proletariat. (1932, p. 164)

It is important to note that Strachey is very resistant to creating the portrait of 'another facile utopia'. (Strachey, 1932, p. 354) And yet his faith, so firmly anchored in a powerful sense of hope, ensures that there is a constant tension between the demands of empiricism and his overwhelming optimism. He begins by arguing that 'Communism offers no one of this generation a ticket to Utopia', but on the same page argues that 'the coming of Communism can alone render our problems soluble.' (p. 357)

For Strachey, and for so many of his generation, Communism marked out 'the road of their salvation.'(Strachey, 1932, p. 372) And not unnaturally, reading the writing on the wall, (or in Marx's terms, mastering 'the historical movement as a whole') these young men and women took up Marx's challenge and threw in their lot with the workers. (p. 377) They were clearly reacting to the interwar narrative that demanded the renewal of the nation and the world. It was a clear choice, and to remain with 'the tiny pleasures and comforts' of the capitalist world was to shrink from 'the agony of birth' by choosing 'the agony of death.' (p. 359).

Conclusion

The phenomenon of mobilization (or *konfessionalisierung*) that played such a defining role in the period was not without its critics. In 1935, John Beevers, a twenty three year old Cambridge graduate, published *World Without Faith*. His central thesis was that secularism had destroyed the old gods and that many people were foolishly scrabbling to find consolation in a number of new faiths. [229]

> [Man] has lost his place in the universe and now hasn't the faintest idea how he stands in relation to his neighbor. Most of the institutions in which he believed so firmly have been toppled over and he is left, naked and defenceless, without a single stay or support, to

[229] His understanding of secularism is quite interesting. He notes the fragmenting effects of the Reformation as well as the rise of moral and spiritual relativism through the work of anthropology and literature. (Beevers, 1935, pp. 13-14, 17-18, 33-36)

> face this brave new world… But instead of thanking God that they could now see things as they were, not as they wished them to be, they took to writing of their disillusion as if it were a thing causing them great unhappiness. (Beevers, 1935, pp. 38-39)

Despite being incapable of understanding why people couldn't just quietly enjoy their disillusion, Beevers recognises that, for many people, the interwar narrative in particular has accelerated their search for answers in new root-realities. 'Reality is London, Paris, New York, Berlin – it is the Great War, unemployment, Soviet Russia – it is wireless, poison gas and the armament racket... [and] for the first time in history there are no eternal truths to fall back on... ' (p. 75) Beevers' book is repetitive and confused. At times it is needlessly argumentative and at other times it reads like a fatherly chat beside the fire. After explaining the growth of secularism in a chapter entitled, 'Beginnings', he divides the book into 'Literature', 'Art', 'The Machine',[230] 'Fascism', 'Communism' and 'Personal', a description of his own faith. In literature, art and the machine, he focuses on the creative and artistic members of the clerisy who dominated England's intellectual landscape. He runs through a number of new conversion destinations in an attempt to explain the attractions for the converts and the common elements of each. Beevers argues that most conversion destinations are returns to the past in an attempt to escape a disenchanted and discombobulated present. He lambasts Eliot for going 'off to seek comfort in the arms of Church and State.' (Beevers, 1935, p. 56) Other targets are James Joyce[231] for his refuge in ingenious writing and D. H. Lawrence for his pantheistic mysticism. (pp. 71-80, 113-20) 'All three fighting hard to insulate themselves from contact with the contemporary world. All three seeking for some kind of a faith to replace those now destroyed forever.' (p. 121)

Interestingly he is particularly critical of the clerist role that many of the converts played; a role through which they attracted others to their faith. Of the converts that Beevers studies, Eliot was perhaps the most active clerist and, for that reason comes in for the most criticism. Reacting to Eliot's *After Strange Gods*, he writes,

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[230] In 'The Machine' he discusses the *cogophobists* his term for people who are afraid of technology, whether it be the armaments that could destroy cities or the labour-saving devices that created unemployment and poverty for the lower-classes. He argues that in each case there is a refusal to face reality and a desire to retreat to the past.

[231] He links Joyce's esoteric prose to the surrealists who produce incomprehensible art, 'Civilisation...is standing at a crossroads. It is passing through a time of crisis – what is [the artist] doing to help? Nothing. He's gone off to a corner with a few pals, there to settle down making things *completely without value*.' (Beevers, 1935, p. 150)

> Tradition, Society, the Church – all well established, all heavily charged with an emotional appeal. Is there any wonder that spineless creatures – wobbling lumps of jelly without a bone in their bodies – is there any wonder that they should hang on to these things like grim death? Perhaps feeling half ashamed at first and so thanking God for Eliot who comes along and produces justification for their weakness. (Beevers, 1935, p. 62)

By 1935 Fascism and Communism seemed like the most attractive conversion destinations. They were certainly the most actively mobilized of the political creeds. Beevers is critical of both. He studies the work of the theoretical founders of both and teases out what he sees as the religious elements in their thinking. For Fascism his targets are Nietzsche and Spengler, while for Communism it is Marx. He attacks Fascism for its romanticism and its intolerance, its fear of the machine, its cult of the Führer and its retrograde paganism. He is less critical of what he calls '*economic* Communism' because it was 'rational and anti-romantic.' (Beevers, 1935, p. 231) However Communism, particularly Soviet Communism is attacked for its faith in dialectical materialism and in the salvific promise of a classless society. Preferring 'acceptance rather than simplification and explanation' Beevers argues that 'the only hope is to pull the plug on all belief….' (pp. 237, 287)

In the final chapter Beevers documents his own unbelief which, ironically, he presents as a somewhat supercilious conversion story. He explains that the only reason he was able to take on Eliot, Lawrence, Joyce, Nietzsche, Spengler and Marx was that he was superior. 'I should not consider that I had any right to criticize the people and the ideas I have criticized unless I felt quite sure that I was a better person than most of them and one with a much better set of ideas.'(Beevers, 1935, p. 291) However his rise was the product of much searching; he was involved in a gang, he wrote for a Mohammedan paper and 'almost took up Islam' before 'dabbling in Magic.' Eventually he was converted to unbelief by a sort of Ignatian retreat in which he closely analysed his motives for conversion and discovered that they were self-seeking, even dishonest. (pp. 298-299) Still later, with his wife he discovered a powerful happiness that convinced him that belief was totally unnecessary for the good life. It was a happiness that he described as being, 'that feeling of intensely conscious happiness which never leaves one, which

never, for a moment allows one to doubt oneself or that to be living fully in the immediate now is the most satisfactory and exciting thing in the world.' (p. 294)

Naturally enough, Beevers' seeks to convert the reader to unconversion, to apostasy. 'I ask for a world without faith, for a world where men regard politics as a necessary business and not as a religion, for a world where there is no longer any slavery to an idea, where men and women live full and free private lives uncramped by the pressure of any belief in anything outside themselves as human beings.' (Beevers, 1935, p. 311) And yet, like so many intellectuals in the period Beevers soon lost his faith – in his religion of disbelief. Only a few years after publishing *World Without Faith*, he converted to revolutionary Communism and, by the mid-1940s, he had converted to Roman Catholicism. Today, the young intellectual who once criticized the Catholic mystics for escaping the 'tyranny of the Faith in the irrational splendour of their visions', (p. 66) is best known for his translation of *The Story of a Soul* written by St Therese of Lisieux. In many ways the story of John Beevers is one that reminds us of the volatility of the intellectual climate and the growing strength of the conversion impulse during the interwar period and beyond.

Chapter Four: The Age of Almamatricide

"You'll find plenty of fellows abusing Harrow," he said quietly;" but take it from me, that the fault lies not in Harrow, but in them. Don't look so solemn. You're about to take a header into a big river. In it are rocks and rapids; but you know how to swim, and after the first plunge you'll enjoy it–as I did–amazingly."

Horace Annesley Vachell, *The Hill: A Romance* (1906)

He loved poetry, because it seemed to express his own emotions so adequately. Byron's "Tempest-anger, Tempest-mirth" was as balm to his rebellious soul. Rebellion was, in fact, at this time almost a religion with him. Only a few days back he had discovered Byron's sweeping confession of faith, "I have simplified my politics into an utter detestation of all existing governments," and he found it a most self-satisfying doctrine. That was what his own life should be. He would fight against these masters with their old-fashioned and puritanic notions; he would be the preacher of the new ideas. It was all very crude, very impossible, but at the back of this torrid violence lay an honest desire to better conditions, tempered, it must be owned, with an ambition to fill the middle of the stage himself.

Alec Waugh, *The Loom of Youth* (1917)

You're thinking us a nasty sight;
Yes, we are poisoned, you are right,
Not even clean;
We do not know how to behave
We are not beautiful or brave
You would not pick our sort to save
Your first fifteen.

W. H. Auden, *A Communist To Others* (1933)

In these three quotes we can discern a chronological movement from traditional values to formative rebellion and on to the conversion in adulthood which still bears the mark of that early rebellion. The quote from Vachell comes prior to World War One and reflects a very traditional view of the public schools as being a bracing and invaluable formative experience. However Alec Waugh's *Loom of Youth* ushers in a new age of criticism and rebellion among England's nascent intellectuals. Waugh's quote contains several of the key elements that we will discover in this prosopographical account of the intellectuals' education. There is the sense of rebellion, there is the first confrontation with the interwar narrative and the first political ideas and there is the underlying sense of a lost faith. Auden, who went through a similar experience, completes the stream of logic by using the analogy of public school life even in the political poetry he wrote as an adult. In Auden's poem we see the lasting influence that the early experience of shaken root-realities and angry rebellion can have on the convert.

Graham Greene's father (the principal of Berkhamsted School) described the spririt of rebellion as 'the spirit of Bolshevism':

> Prefects neglected their duties, a French master turned pacifist and started teaching his pupils that the whole war had been a monstrous mix of crime and blunder in which people had been slaughtered for nothing; and a conspiracy was uncovered among the older boys to wear dark-blue serge suits to chapel on Sundays instead of the short black coats which were required by regulation. All these were manifest indications of the Bolshevistic way things were tending. (Cockburn, 1956, pp. 44-45)

The Spirit of Bolshevism is a useful way to describe the interwar rebelliousness because Bolshevism sought to both destroy and replace. It was a movement of both apostasy and conversion. The myriad of rebellions, apostasies and hastily, even half-comprehendingly, adopted creeds made up the schoolboy stages of countless interwar conversions.

In this chapter we will trace the schooling experiences of the interwar converts. We come to see that they were educated at a crucial juncture in the history of the English public schools. The post-war disillusion, so widespread in England, also found voice within the public schools. A key facet of this disillusion was the rejection of the increasingly secularized 'Arnoldian religion' to that was promoted in England's public schools. (Barnett, 1972, p. 25) This was the latest

manifestation of what Charles Taylor termed 'pre-shrunk religion.'(2007, p. 226) Although he applies the term to the Restoration period, it clearly applies to the religion that was taught in the interwar public schools. An effort to present a 'simpler, less theologically elaborate religion' had given rise to what might be described as 'devout humanism.' (Taylor, 2007, pp. 226-227) Religion, in retreat before reason, was narrowed and simplified and became increasingly moral in its focus. The result was that some boys sought a re-enchanted religion in the form of Anglo-Catholicism or even Catholicism but many simply lapsed into an angry agnosticism, the narrow and rational religion being somehow unconvincing. As intellectuals part of their disillusion was the hungry search for new ideas that might begin to replace the religion of childhood. These new ideas often underpinned the widespread attack on the traditional values of public schooling that for many constituted their first foray into a vague form political activism. These rejected values included the idolization of sport, the O.T.C and the strict moral codes that had defined public schooling since Thomas Arnold's time at Rugby. In short, in this chapter we see the first step to the adoption of a new religion in the rejection of the old and the emergence of the intellectuals burgeoning sense of themselves as the future members of the clerisy.

Introduction

The English Independent schools, in particular the Public Schools,[232] have endured mixed fortunes over the course of the twentieth century. They began it as the cornerstone of British society; molding each generation of political, military, economic and religious leaders. Just prior to the interwar period an astonishing number of memoirs and novels by former pupils began to expose the brutal practices that were either part of the molding process or, at the very least, an untouched facet of school life. These memoirs posed bold challenges for an educational system that hitherto had gone unchallenged. By the sixties and seventies public schools became the focus of several extremely critical socio-historical studies. Yet all the while the elite schools of England were changing; corporal punishment was removed, and many introduced first day-

[232]There is some definitional debate surrounding these terms. Independent schools are those within the private sector and they account for around seven per cent of the British school population. (Sutton Trust, 2012) The term, public schools, has often been used interchangeably with independent schools. Some authors have used it to indicate boarding schools that were open to students from outside the locality while more commonly it has been used to refer to schools whose headmasters are members of The Headmasters' Conference. (Walford, 2012, p. 5) However it has always been 'a contested acolade.'(Walford, 2012, p. 5) George Macdonald Fraser argued that a Public School was one where, when an old boy becomes Prime minister, 'no one takes a blind bit of notice.' ('Introduction.' In G. M. Fraser (Ed.)1977, p. 2)

pupils and later, female students.[233] Science was broadened to become three separate subjects, namely biology, chemistry and physics. And, while the classics were retained, they were rarely compulsory and often coexisted with other modern language options. (Walford, 2012, pp. 33-34)

In 1934 Graham Greene edited a book of essays on the public schools. A number of leading intellectuals contributed an essay on their experiences in England's schools. The book included contributions from graduates of all types of English schools, from Walter Greenwood's Council School in Salford, to Anthony Powell's Eton. In his preface Greene described the book as 'a premature memorial, like a family photograph album… for there can be small doubt that the system which this book mainly represents is doomed.' (Greene, 1984, p.viii) Writing in the heady days of nineteen-thirties class-warfare, Greene was predicting the elimination of snobbishness and the emergence of a more egalitarian system. One suspects that he would be disappointed by the modern reality. Despite a century of legislation and socio-cultural change, independent schools play a very similar role to the one they were playing during the interwar period. This was proven by a recent study of the 7,637 people educated at secondary schools in Britain, whose names appeared in the birthday lists of *The Times, The Sunday Times, The Independent* or *The Independent on Sunday* during 2011. Of these 7,637 elites, forty four per cent attended independent schools; an educational system that serves seven per cent of British students.[234] (The Sutton Trust, 2012)

Greene's predictions and their inaccuracy neatly reflect the paradox of elite education during the interwar period. On the one hand, it is frequently described as something of a Golden Age for public schools. Certainly the much needed reforms of the 19th century had now become tradition and their merits had been validated by the heroism of old boys along the Western Front. As Gathorne-Hardy argued, 'our victory seemed to justify the entire system.' (1979, p. 324) The validity of this system was reflected in the radical growth of schools qualifying for *The Public Schools Year Book*. In 1900 there had been ninety six; in 1939 there were 190. (Gathorne-Hardy, 1979, p. 323) Such growth reflects the demand for this particular product. Indeed the reputation

[233]Today, only Eton, Radley, Winchester and Harrow are still holding out.

[234] Of these 7,637 elites, 330 (4%) went to Eton, while over 900 or 12% went to the nation's top ten schools. As per tradition, over half the elites in the army, the public , civil and diplomatic services, literature journalism, classical music and the theatre, the law, business and financial services all attended independent schools. The major change from the thirties was the fact that the majority of teachers had *not* attended independent schools. (The Sutton Trust, 2012)

of Public Schools was such that, whenever the question of educating the working classes came up, it was widely assumed that the only solution was to send more of the working classes to public schools. (Gregory, 1983, pp. 165-167)[235]

In many ways the public school's position as the educator of the elites in *all* fields was itself a product of the interwar period. It had long been a source of political power[236] but its position as the educator of England's intellectuals was really a product of the mass expansion of the system in the early part of the twentieth century. As Bernard Bergonzi noted of the generation of authors who were active in 1915, an English public school education was the exception. In a list that includes Henry James, Virginia Woolf, T. S. Eliot, Joseph Conrad, George Bernard Shaw, H. G. Wells, Rudyard Kipling, W. B. Yeats, Arnold Bennett, John Galsworthy, E. M. Forster, Ford Maddox Ford, D. H. Lawrence, James Joyce and Ezra Pound, a few went to public schools but only Galsworthy and Forster followed the familiar interwar pattern of public schools followed by the ancient universities. (Bergonzi, 1978, pp. 10-11) Virginia Woolf and later Nancy Mitford, of course, never went to school at all, but were educated at home – for female intellectuals educational change took much longer.[237] However within twenty years the authors who were emerging in 1935 had almost all been to a public school of some note before spending 'the

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[235] In a very telling exchange Dr. A. L. Rowse wrote to *The Times*, during debates on education in the House of Lords, to point out that, 'we do not agree with the Archbishop of Canterbury or Lord Hankey that it will help the nation's education to enable the public schools to play a larger part in it than before...we want the elementary and secondary schools to develop their own ethos and make their own contribution to the national life.' The editor helpfully informed readers that Rowse had attended grammar schools in St Austell. His letter soon prompted a reply from David Cecil, the historian and old Etonian, who agreed with Rowse's attitude, largely because he believed that the modern public school had declined beyond recovery. He pointed out that, 'as schoolboys Pitt, Fox, Peel and Canning, none of them prigs or freaks, were mentally as advanced as boys of twenty today.' (Cited in Gregory, 1983, pp. 165-167)

[236] As the elites at England's most prestigious schools began to diversify, their hold on the political establishment began to wane. In the 19th century it was watertight. There is a story that when Gladstone handed over number ten to Lord Rosebery in 1894, the only piece of advice that he gave him was to get down to their shared alma mater, Eton, and 'address the authorities on the current depravity of the school.' He was reacting, not unnaturally, to the scandal of having seen a picture of a racing horse adorning a wall in the rooms of Pop (the prefectorial society at Eton.) (Johnson, 'Education of an Establishment.' In G. M. Fraser (Ed.) 1977, p. 24) In 1902 the Public school influence was still strong, all of Balfour's cabinet were public schoolmen. However by 1908 Asquith had introduced four outsiders including Lloyd George who hadn't gone to a high school. Under Atlee the public schoolmen were down to half of the cabinet. And by the time Harold Wilson formed government in 1964, the public schoolmen had been reduced to a third of the cabinet. (pp. 25-28.)

[237] In her contribution to *Twentieth Century Authors*, Nancy Mitford claimed to have grown up 'as ignorant as an owl' in keeping with her parents' wishes. Despite being related to both Bertrand Russell and the poet Swinburne, 'my father and mother, illiterate themselves, were against education, and we girls had none though we were taught to ride and to speak French. My brother went to Eton.' (Kunitz & Colby, 1955, pp. 677-678)

inevitable period at either Oxford or Cambridge.' (Bergonzi, 1978, p. 11) In many ways therefore, the essential status of the public schools was confirmed during the interwar years.

On the other hand the public schools, like most national institutions, came under significant scrutiny during the period. The main targets were its curriculum, its obsessions with sport, its discipline system involving prefects, fagging and corporal punishment, its religion and the cult of the old school tie. Gathorne-Hardy summed up the critique, describing what he called 'the Monolith' the arch-conservative, elitist public school system of the period:

> From being anarchic, ill-disciplined, loosely defined societies, uninterested in games, lax about religion, indifferent to sexual license, with huge classes and moderately easy about class, they had become highly disciplined, concentrated into very tight, close communities, obsessed with games and every possible ramification of sexual expression, fervently religious, with small classes and snobbish and class-conscious to an often odious extent. Almost the only respect in which they had not altered was in their intense classical bias. (1979, p. 248)[238]

And yet, as he is forced to admit, for all the criticism, the interwar years were a period in which the curriculum broadened and the influence of Classics masters began to wane.[239] It was the period in which the influence of the church was loosened and the headmaster's study became something more than simply a bishop's waiting-room. It was also the period in which the memoirs written by old boys began to change. Just as the memoirs of ex-servicemen repudiated the romanticisation of war, so too did former students reject the romanticisation of their school-days and, like their older brothers, sought to expose the grim reality of their experiences. The archetypal 19th century schoolboy, Tom Brown, returned to Rugby chapel, groaning in grief at the death of Arnold;

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[238] For some the Public school's conservatism was not conservative enough. Claud Cockburn's father believed that his son would not be taught Latin and Greek properly because the Headmaster of Berkhamsted voted liberal and the school's motto was 'Virtus Laudata Crescit' or 'virtue grows with praise.' This combination of liberal politics and seemingly liberal morals made Cockburn senior feel that it was necessary to coach his son in the classics for a couple of hours every day. (Cockburn, 1956, p. 36)

[239] In the 1840s anything from 75 – 80% of the week was spent on classics. In 1863 staff lists revealed that classics masters outnumbered the others 75-35. The story of the next 100 years is the breaking down of this system. (Gathorne-Hardy, 1979, p. 150)

> If he could only have seen the Doctor again for one five minutes; have told him all that was in his heart, what he owed to him, how he loved and reverenced him, and would by God's help follow his steps in life and death, he could have borne it all without a murmur. But that he should have gone away forever without knowing it all was too much to bear. (Hughes, 1929, p. 410)

In the interwar period, Brown was replaced by figures like A. R. Jeffries in Alec Waugh's *Loom of Youth*. Expelled for homosexual practices, Jeffries laments on the pernicious influence of the school:

> Who made me what I am but Fernhurst? Two years ago I came here as innocent as Caruthers there; never knew anything. Fernhurst taught me everything; Fernhurst made me worship games, and think that they alone mattered, and everything else could go to the deuce. I heard men say about bloods whose lives were an open scandal, 'Oh, it's all right, they can play football.' I thought it was all right too. Fernhurst made me think it was. And now Fernhurst, that has made me what I am, turns round and says, 'You are not fit to be a member of this great school!' and I have to go. Oh, it's fair, isn't it? (A. Waugh, 1984, pp. 54-55)[240]

Waugh's novel was written after he was 'asked to leave' Sherborne, having been caught in flagrante with another male student. (Hastings, 1994, p. 46) Sherborne traces its history all the way back to the eighth century, before its formal establishment in the mid-sixteenth century; it was part of the great tradition that Waugh would attack in his novel. Yet Waugh was very much a product of 'the Monolith', and would later describe his novel as, 'a love letter to Sherborne.' (Cited in Gathorne-Hardy, 1979, pp. 333)

Somehow the great monolith managed to preserve its traditions as well as perpetually ferment revolt. It produced the traditional generation of conservative administrators and politicians who ran the Empire in the last days of its grandeur and won a second World War. But the same system produced a generation of rebels who satirised the system in their novels, who lambasted

[240] Later Jeffries joins the list of the glorious dead along the Western Front and is remembered throughout the school as simply 'a fine forward.' (A. Waugh, 1984, p. 250) By showing the innocuousness of the offence, Waugh strikes a blow against the moralising of the housemasters whom he imagines declaring, '"Just as well; he would have made a mess of his life."'(p.250)

the system in their memoirs, and who often waged an intense class war at home or fought an actual class war abroad.

Such a period of paradoxical consolidation and change must be viewed in its broader socio-political context. In reality the position of the public schools merely reflected the paradoxes of the intellectual climate of the day. As shown in chapter two, it was a period of widespread dissatisfaction and criticism of the governing classes and yet, except for two brief periods of nominally progressive Labour governance, it was a period of fairly consistent conservative rule. A generation of post-war memoirs delivered almost indistinguishable jeremiads about the folly of war and yet the rise of Fascism saw the pacifist movement quickly abandoned for a rearmament program that most saw as being long-overdue. Religiously, it was a period of mass-apostasy but the Established Church maintained its position as the nation's conscience and were joined in the exercise of this prerogative by a number of famous converts and reverts. If anything religious thinking and discussion was popularised, via radio, on an unprecedented scale. The interwar period was as much a period of conservation as conversion.

Cyril Connolly observed that 'The experiences undergone by boys at the great public schools, their glories and disappointments are so intense as to dominate their lives and arrest their development.' (Connolly, 2008, p. 253) Auden, one of those rebels produced by this arch-conservative educational system, went further, arguing in a review of Connolly's work that 'It is impossible to understand modern English literature unless one realizes that most English writers are rebels against the way they were educated…' (Cited in Richard Davenport Hines, *Auden* 1996, p. 34) In 1954 C. S. Lewis looked back over the interwar era and offered the observation that: 'For the last thirty years or so England has been filled with a bitter, truculent, sceptical, debunking and cynical intelligentsia. A great many of them were at public schools, and I believe very few of them liked it.' (Lewis, 2002, pp. 123-124) For that reason a focus on the formative years is so crucial in any study of the interwar converts. Schooling during the period was such a mix of contentious rebellion and untouched tradition that few could navigate their way through without choosing a side. During their schooldays many of the interwar converts lost their faith before developing their own political and religious root realities. As they took their first tentative steps in the search for a new faith, they fought their first ideological battles and they began their journey towards formal conversion.

Schoolboy Rebels

It was Noel Annan who first declared it to be the age of Almamatricide. (1990, p. 47) A generation of schoolboys enjoyed all the benefits of an elite education before rounding on their mother and declaring that the system was doomed. Ronald Knox, in his memoir *A Spiritual Aeneid*, lamented that he would never know happiness in his earthly life like the happiness he found in his senior year at Eton; nostalgically consoling himself by quoting the Roman poet, Catullus, 'fulsere quondam candidi tibi soles.' (R. Knox, 1918, p. 52) The line comes from a short poem about a lost love wherein the poet demands that he cease to be a lovelorn fool because at least, 'bright sun once shone for you.'[241] Within fifteen years W. H. Auden was declaring that 'the best reason I have for opposing Fascism is that at school I lived in a Fascist state.' (Auden, 'Honour.' In Ed. Greene, 1984, p. 9)

It is important to note the ways in which Public School literature evolved during the interwar period because, like trench literature, it hints at the fragmentation of deeper root realities. The books that romanticised the public school experience were many and varied and, like the poetry of Rupert Brooke, proved far more popular than the books that challenged the system. P. G. Wodehouse cut his teeth writing schoolboy novels and short-stories in which the old-school was characterised by the courageous youths it produced.[242] A classic example is *The Gold Bat*, written in 1904 and still published in new editions during the interwar period. The novel can be read as an unqualified defence of the prefect system and the moral education provided by regular, hearty games of rugby.

Wodehouse's loyalty to the public school system was particularly heartfelt. As an extremely shy man, school was one of the few places where he experienced genuine belonging. He was a

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[241] The full quotation is 'Miser Catulle, desinas ineptire, et quod uides perisse perditum ducas. Fulsere quondam candidi tibi soles...' Poor Catullus, stop playing the fool, and what you see is lost, consider lost. Bright sun once shone upon you. (Translation from Kenney & Clausen, 1983, p. 19) Knox's love of his school was such that his conversion to Catholicism was especially Etonian. He actually developed a devotion to 'St. Mary of Eton', claiming that 'perhaps, after all, in the wide sympathies of [the Blessed Virgin Mary's] compassionate heart there is a special place kept for her children at Eton.' (1918, pp. 46-47)

[242] His first overtly comic character was Psmith who emerged in the second half of *Mike*, published in 1909. Psmith (the P is silent) was essentially the prototype of the Drones (or Knuts, to borrow Wodehouse's term) who littered his greatest comic pieces. The voice of Psmith so dominated the remainder of *Mike*, that the novel was divided in two and the second half reissued separately in 1935 as *Enter Psmith*. (See Quigly, 1984, *The Heirs of Tom Brown*, chapter ix 'Apprentice Genius at Work')

graduate of Dulwich College and in many ways school was the happiest period in his life.[243] His love of his old school was so intense that when he was later interred by the Nazis during the Second World War, he found the experience enjoyable since it was something of a return to the experience of school life. 'Never since he left Dulwich had Plum [Wodehouse] attained full membership of any human society.' (Donaldson, 1983, p. 206) For Wodehouse the superficiality of male friendship was a welcome relief from more demanding relationships. 'In the camp, gallantry, endurance, and loyalty to the gang were more important than a capacity for intimate relationships; rumour and jokes took the place of conversation; and the schoolboy code of honour became once more a necessity in the face of the alien authority.' (p. 206) In his infamous World War Two broadcasts, Wodehouse described his experiences, as an internee in a series of German prison camps, in terms redolent of his public school novels. When they were taken to Loos, to their first prison, the trip was infused with 'pleasant atmosphere of the school treat.' (p. 381) Later, when things were grim, he complained that he and his fellow inmates had 'no chance... of getting up an informal football game or a cross country run-meet or anything like that.' He described that particular prison as an 'Alma Mater'. (pp. 363, 366) By the time he was interred in Liège he was complaining about the food in a desultory school boy kind of way. 'I had the good fortune to secure one of the motor oil containers [for a bowl]. It added to the taste of the soup just that little something that the others hadn't got.' (p. 367) Eventually Wodehouse and the other English nationals ended up in Tost[244] where the shambolic parades and the asinine orders of the guards were akin to the pointless but harmless discipline of an ineffectual housemaster. Their slogan was, '"Go and see what the internees are doing, and tell them they mustn't." I remember an extra parade being called, so that we might be informed that stealing was forbidden. This hit us very hard.' (p. 370) In many ways Wodehouse's humour and its

[243] In *Psmith in the City*, perhaps his most autobiographical novel, he describes the recent school leaver, contemplating his future without the intense glory that the athlete can find at school. Pointedly this meditation takes place outside Dulwich College in London. 'He sat down on a bench beside the second eleven telegraph-board, and looked across the ground at the pavilion. For the first time that day he began to feel really home-sick. Up till now the excitement of a strange venture had borne him up; but the cricket-field and the pavilion reminded him so sharply of Wrykyn. They brought home to him with a cutting distinctness, the absolute finality of his break with the old order of things. Summers would come and go, matches would be played on this ground with all the glory of big scores and keen finishes; but he was done. 'He was a jolly good bat at school. Top of the Wrykyn averages two years. But didn't do anything after he left. Went into the city or something.' That was what they would say of him, if they didn't quite forget him. The clock on the tower over the senior block chimed quarter after quarter, but Mike sat on, thinking. It was quite late when he got up, and began to walk back to Acacia Road. He felt cold and stiff and very miserable.' (Wodehouse, 1923, p. 27)

[244] Toszek in Poland

assumptions of bumbling authority and 'silly asses' who have learnt nothing, marks him as a very contented product of the English Public School system.

The Gold Bat centers on the 'Bloods' or athletic leaders of the school whose leadership is challenged by 'The League' a group of non-athletes who attempt to control the school through intimidation and blackmail. The horror of the thing is summed up when they trash Trevor's study, 'But Trevor! Captain of football! In the first eleven! The thing was unthinkable.' (Wodehouse, 1926, p. 76) The case is cracked by the prefects using a process of elimination, 'A prefect is above suspicion, scratch the prefects.' (p. 231) The main culprit turned out to be Ruthven, who didn't play football, and his accomplice, Dashwood, who was described as an 'outsider. No good to the house in any way.' (p. 246) The non-athletic baddies were defeated using the very rugby skills that they had scorned. 'Clowes, handing [Ruthven] off in football fashion...' (p. 234) is able to get into his room and find the stolen property that condemned his man. By the end of the story the bully, Rand-Brown, a boy who funks at football, has been knocked out and honour and authority restored to the legitimate prefects, all without the involvement of the masters or headmaster. [245] Such romantic ideals of schoolboy honour and pride in one's house would soon be as mercilessly derided in the schoolboy memoirs, as the virtues of chivalry and patriotism had been in the war-memoirs.[246]

The initial attack on the romantacisation of the schools came from a trio of novels that soon became more famous for their controversy than their actual literary merits. The first two were *Sinister Street* by Compton MacKenzie and *The Harrovians* by Arnold Lunn, both of which were published in 1913. These were followed Alec Waugh's more controversial *Loom of Youth*, first published in 1917. These three novels changed the nature of public school literature and ushered in a generation of critical works; novels and memoirs that were soon as predictable, clichéd and unreal as the very works they purported to replace with their gritty realism.

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[245] And, in a charming nod to turn of the century medicine, he was sent to bed to sleep it off. (Wodehouse, 1926, p. 266)

[246] Interestingly Wodehouse attempts to separate himself from the more mawkish schoolboy stories by having one of his characters read an exaggerated story about a public schoolman who refuses to sneak on his cousin who murdered an old man in the woods even though it means that he was wrongfully imprisoned for the crime. (Wodehouse P. G., 1926, pp. 134-135) However the muscular Christian values of the hero, Claude Trevelyan, are so close to those of Wodehouse's own heroes, Trevor and Clowes, that any satire is lost.

When the first volume of *Sinister Street* was published Henry James wrote to Compton MacKenzie to congratulate him for emancipating the English novel.[247] (MacKenzie, 1949, p.ix) Much of the novel's controversy was the fact that it centered on the life of Michael Fane, the illegitimate son of Lord Saxeby, conceived during a passionate affair but doomed to bastardry by Lady Saxeby who would not grant her husband a divorce.[248] Yet what makes the novel so important in the history of public school literature are the twin influences progressivism and Anglo-Catholicism that shape the heroes' attitude to his school. Michael attends St. James and slowly but surely his love of the school, its rugby, its customs and its bloods are eroded by a growing circle of radical influences. It is Michael Garrod with his 'polytechnical knowledge', who attacks the school system most directly:

> '"But you aren't properly educated."
> "I'm at a public school," said Michael Proudly.
> "Yes, and public schools have got to go very soon."
> "Who says so?", demanded Michael fiercely.
> "We say so. The people."'(MacKenzie, 1949, p. 211)

While Michael initially scorns Garrod who 'defiled the country with his cockney complacency' (MacKenzie, 1949, p. 211) the onset of the Boer War and the subsequent death of a close friend convince him that change is coming. When his good friend Captain Ross dies he resoundingly rejects the war and rejects the school football team as well, considering it to be an empty vanity in the face of all those 'decent chaps [that] have died for nothing.' (p. 269) He turns on his friends, the bloods, and announces, 'if you think it's decent to wear that damned awful button in your coat when fellows are being killed every day for you, for your pleasure, for you profit, for your existence, all I can say is I don't.' (p. 269) Even though he later apologises for the outburst, by the end of Volume Two Fane has finished school and become something of a progressive; believing that, 'the masses will learn their power.' (p. 278) With its rejection of war and the generals who 'make fools of themselves', (p. 278) with its optimistic belief in the

[247] As MacKenzie noted in his introduction, any new ground that the novel broke was almost immediately outstripped by D. H. Lawrence's *Women in Love*, published two years later. (MacKenzie, 1949, p.ix)
[248] The novel is set at the turn of the century and Fane's father dies in the Transvaal of enteric fever. As Michael's mother explains '...he had a fancy that the last of his name should do something for his country. He had given up his country for me and I knew that if he went to the war he would feel that he had paid the debt.' (MacKenzie, 1949, p. 377)

democratization of the nation, including its schools, and its preoccupation with the rise of Catholicism, MacKenzie's novel is well ahead of its time.[249] Perhaps however its most telling point is made by Fane's mother who demands that he always try to be like his hero, Don Quixote because, 'it really just means being a gentleman.' (p. 286) The association of chivalry and progressive conversion is one that will find many an echo in the romantic conversions of the interwar period.

Compton MacKenzie's novel is fairly generalised in the elements of public school life that it critiques and most of Fane's polemics are rooted in his burgeoning pacifism. However, Peter O'Neill in Arnold Lunn's novel has a very specific target, namely the bullying athletes who prey on the aesthete intellectuals. The novel is essentially the process of O'Neil being rejected by the public school system and then taking his revenge by manipulating that system to destroy the very students who bullied him.[250] *The Harrovians* is essentially an attack on the corrupt system of leadership and discipline in the school, cynically manipulated in favour of athletes.

One of the most powerful scenes in the novel comes early on when the boys read an essay entitled 'The Public School Spirit', by a writer named Handleby, and they contrast each mawkish cliché with the horrible reality that surrounds them. '"In our days boys went to school to have the nonsense'" ─ "knocked out of 'em," shouted Kendal; "good old Handleby! I knew he couldn't get to the end without that. Wish old Cayley [the school bully] could give him six."'(Lunn, 2010, p. 61) In the end the boys delay going to chapel in order to burn the article. By the final chapters O'Neil has become the captain of the House and is able to take his revenge on the bloods. 'An appeal to fists is just the limit of your intellectual horizon. The fun is having a great lout like you on toast, and knowing that you could knock me into smithereens if you dare, only to see that you don't dare.' (p. 245) Here the muscular Christians that dominated the 19th century novels of

[249] MacKenzie actually converted to Catholicism in April 1914, while writing the second volume.

[250] Despite their differences O'Neil is somewhat like Fane in that he can also be viewed as a progressive version of the more traditional heroes through the virtue of chivalry. When the Hunger Marchers turn up at the school O'Neil defends them from the bullies and is accused of socialism. He responds in a fiery letter to the school magazine in which he claims that 'we are supposed to learn to 'play the game' at Harrow... Do we learn at Harrow to treat with chivalry those of less fortunate birth, or do we merely learn to consider them as 'cads,' 'chaws,' and 'the great unwashed'?' (Lunn, 2010, pp. 200-201) This is a charming example of the schoolboy code being used in support of vaguely progressive politics, that the poor should be listened to for the sake of politeness and decency. Admittedly, O'Neill's attitude is absurdley feudal but the public schools, as we shall see later in this chapter, often produced their own , romantic form of progressivism.

Charles Kingsley and Thomas Hughes are replaced by the angry intellectual who manipulates the school rules for the sake of his own benefit and refuses to fight, knowing that he would lose. When we contrast this with the hero of Tom Brown's schooldays who 'distinguish[ed] himself, on his first day, at football, and [was] better, at fighting, a man larger than himself...' (Coke, 1907, p. 30)[251] we realise that O'Neil is a new type of hero.

Alec Waugh's hero, Gordon Carruthers is influenced by both Lunn and MacKenzie. *Sinister Street* is lauded by the progressive master Mr Ferrers as a 'fine book [because it] smashes up everything, shows the shallowness of our education'. (A. Waugh, 1984, p. 152) Gordon himself takes on the cult of games, largely inspired by his own experiences and the ground-breaking novels of MacKenzie and Lunn. He sees himself as carrying on in earnest the work they had suggested in fiction:

> ...it was rather unfortunate that, at a time when he was bubbling over with rebellion, Arnold Lunn's novel, *The Harrovians*, should have been published, as no previous school story had done it stripped school life of sentiment, and a storm of adverse criticism broke out…Gordon fumed. What fools all these people were! When they were told the truth, they would not believe it. Prophets must prophesy smooth things, or else were not prophets. How was there ever going to be any hope of improvement till the true state of affairs was understood? (A. Waugh, 1984, pp. 135-136)

Alec Waugh's novel then veered into truly controversial territory with a discussion of homosexuality. The passage in question comes when Gordon develops a friendship with young Morcombe who makes him 'indescribably happy'. However, rather pointedly, the discussion is

[251] This caricature of Tom Brown comes from Desmond Coke's novel, *The Bending of a Twig* in which a boy prepares for school by reading the great novels only to find that he has been misled and that school life is hard and that muscular virtue is not really the best preparation. Yet the book is not really a satire because Lycidas Marsh is sent away to boarding school by his poet father, in order to be toughened up. ''My dear, I do not mean a village school: I mean one of the great British Public Schools. There, Lycidas will have to look after himself, — no coming home to cry to you; he'll learn self- reliance there.' (Coke, 1907, p. 10) Naturally Lycidas is soon known as Marsh and becomes the head of his house and an example to those around him. He abandons his romantic notions because they made him think that he could 'do everything' and becomes more diffident. However when trouble strikes he stands up to the rest of the house and realises that he can do what he *ought* to do (p. 306) His house master tells him 'I'm very glad that I have made you my Head Boy, Marsh; not only because it has done the house good, but because, as I thought, it has done *you* good.' (p. 305) Having been made into a public school man, he is exhorted to 'remember how much Shrewsbury has done for you and do all that you can for her… [make it] a kind of minor religion with you, ranked by the side of patriotism.'(p. 306)

marked by the fact that Gordon did not pursue a physical relationship with Morcombe. He suggests that the friendship was deeper than a mere homosexual encounter.

> Indeed this friendship, coupled with his admiration for Ferrers, was all that kept Gordon from wild excesses during the dark December days and the dreary opening weeks of the Easter term. During the long morning hours, when Gordon was supposed to be reading history, more than once there came over him a wish to plunge himself into the feverish waters of pleasure, and forget for a while the doubts and disappointments that overhung everything in his life. At times he would sit in the big window-seat, when the school was changing class-rooms, and as he saw the sea of faces of those, some big, some small, who had drifted with the stream, and had soon forgotten early resolutions and principles in the conveniently broadminded atmosphere of a certain side of Public School life, he realised how easily he could slip into that life and be engulfed. No one would mind; his position would be the same; no one would think worse of him. Unless, of course, he was caught. Then probably everyone would turn round upon him; that was the one unforgivable sin– to be found out. But it was rarely that anyone was caught; and the descent was so easy. In his excitement he might perhaps forget a little. (A. Waugh, 1984, p. 245)

This oft-quoted passage strikes the modern reader very differently to the readers in the 1920s. Waugh's name and that of his father, who published the book, were expunged from the list of Old Shirburnians because of the scandal while younger brother Evelyn Waugh was forced to attend Lancing College. But the main target of the novel's invective was actually the 'cult of games'. Gordon uses the Stoics Debating society to argue, 'some fool said 'the battle of Waterloo was won on the playing fields of Eton'; and a fool he was, too. Games don't win battles, but brains do, and brains aren't trained on the footer field.' (A. Waugh, 1984, p. 263) His position is reinforced by the fact that he is a blood, 'one of the best all-round athletes in the school, and if he thought like that, there must be something in what so many people were saying.' (A. Waugh, 1984, p. 263) The need for brains rather than brawn connects neatly with the criticisms so frequently levelled against the butchering generals mindlessly sacrificing the flower of England's youth in the name of keenness rather than cunning. It is possible to place *Loom of Youth* and its criticism of the public schools in the broader context of the interwar narrative.

The novels of MacKenzie, Lunn and Waugh were all mired in controversy. Indeed Cyril Connolly remembers losing considerable face when he and George Orwell were caught reading *Sinister Street* at prep school. (2008, pp. 163-164)[252] But like most controversial books, they broke new ground only for ensuing novels attacking the public school system to become more and more explicit and be less and less noticed by the critics. A perfect example of this comes in the form of Lionel Birch's 1931 novel, *Pyramid*. Like Waugh, Birch was an Old Shirburnian but, having been written more than a decade later, Birch's novel, with its far more explicit treatment of homosexual relationships, was largely ignored by the time it was published in the thirties. By then the iconoclastic hero had become commonplace, As Annan noted, the names of the novels began to tell the whole story; he cited *Out of Step*, *The Day Boy*, *The Shadow of the Chapel*, *Death of a Hero*, and *Unwillingly to School*. (1990, p. 47) The common element of all these novels and the memoirs that emerged alongside them was the hypocrisy and backwardness of the school traditions, presented as a microcosm of the world outside. As Gagnier wrote, 'these critical memoirs thematize idealism and individualism, the authors insisting that they write in loneliness and despair of the school and western society.' (1988, p. 23)

The interwar period was one in which the Public Schools were subjected to the same 'profilmic reality' as the war. Like the memoirists from the Western Front, old boys had experienced a way of life known only to an elite minority. The same personal perspective defines their accounts, and, like Graves, Sassoon and Jones, they were often writing for an audience who were greedy for credible atrocities to replace the propagandised versions of public school education that had appeared in the romanticised novels from the pre-war years. Louis MacNeice wrote that he didn't go to the toilet during his first three days at Marlborough because 'I did not know where it was and was too embarrassed to ask.' (1965, p. 81) Robin Maugham wrote that nothing in the war was as terrifying as being late for class at Eton without a tie. (1973, p. 44) Peregrine Worsthone topped that when, years after leaving Stowe, he visited Auschwitz, and, in the silence that followed the tour, remarked 'I have never been so glad to see the back of anywhere, since leaving public school.' (Worsthone, 'Boy Made Man.' In G. M. Fraser (Ed.)1977, p. 95) Nicholas Monsarrat, a student at Winchester, had a similar view of his own school. 'Bullying,

[252] Later at Eton, their shared love for illicit literature continued where Orwell lent Connolly a copy of *The Picture of Dorian Gray.* (M. Green, 1976, p. 133)

both official and lay,' was the prime sport and for two years, he was a chosen target, 'too old to cry, too small to hit back, too outnumbered to do anything...' he was 'left to sweat, to hide, and (until one forgot all faith) sometimes to pray.' (Monsarrat, 1966, pp. 180-181). These four slightly obscure memoirs serve to illustrate the pattern found across most of the post-schooling memoirs. As Valentine Cunningham noted:

> It was a convention among the writing ex-public schoolboys in the '30s that their prep schools and public schools had been prisons and Fascist prisons at that, totalitarian places presided over by militaristic dictators of headmasters who made their pupils wield destructive weapons in the Officers' Training Corps, concentration camps run by chilling Gestapo bullies of prefects whose canes were as bad as rubber truncheons. (Cunningham, 1988, p. 79)

And more than simply despising the old school, the young intellectuals sought every opportunity to share their experiences with an increasingly weary public. '[E]very other author insisted on pressing his youthful reminiscences upon the public. His prep school, his public school, his university popped up at you out of every imaginable and unimaginable literary corner.' (Cunningham, 1988, p. 120) By the end of the era, courageously exposing the system from the inside had become something of a tedious rite of passage and the innumerable daring tell-all memoirs quickly developed their own generic conventions.

The Schools Respond to Secularism

The novelist and old Harrovian, L. P. Hartley wrote, in his contribution to Greene's collection of essays, that 'school life is a microcosm in which operate, unconsciously but intensely, most of the instincts and passions that agitate the outside world.' (Hartley, 'The Conformer' In Ed. Greene, 1984, p. 76) It is for this reason that the schools, while preserving their own increasingly anachronistic traditions, were nonetheless susceptible to the winds of change that blew through even the most isolated parts of Britain during the interwar years. Consequently it is not surprising that, in keeping with the rest of the country, many students abandoned the practice of their faith while attending overtly Christian schools.

As we have seen in the previous chapter, religion was a major issue during the interwar period and, unsurprisingly therefore, it was a major issue in educational circles during the same period.

Gathorne Hardy is not alone in noting that Cyril Norwood, former classics master of Marlborough and headmaster of Harrow,[253] dedicated three whole chapters of his *The English Tradition of Education* to the question of religion in schools, while spending only ten pages on 'British technological backwardness'. (Gathorne Hardy, 1979, p. 328) Like Gathorne-Hardy, a significant number of commentators noted this bias in Norwood's thinking and argued that it was indicative of the book's irrelevance when in reality it was a mark of its connection with contemporaneous concerns.

In fact, Norwood's preoccupation was very typical of pedagogical books from the period. As John Howard Whitehouse, the founder of the progressive Bembridge School,[254] noted, 'every book about schools, whether novel, history or criticism, presents some aspect of [the religious] question.' (Whitehouse, 1919, p. 21)[255] S. P. B. Mais's book *A Public School in Wartime* covers all aspects of school life during the war. It has separate chapters on chapel, hymns and Sunday and suggests that most masters are troubled by the question of whether or not they should take orders as a means of 'tackling the many serious but secret problems of public school life.' (Mais, 1916, p. 34)[256] Following the War, Bishop Charles Gore dedicated two chapters to religion in

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[253] Norwood was a lifelong educator who sat on parliamentary committees, published a number of respected books and was eventually the president of St. John's College, Oxford. However, having begun his career in grammar schools, his nickname at Harrow was 'boots' an indicator that he was not 'quite, quite.' Gathorne Hardy cites one old Harrovian who was there during Norwood's tenure, nearly fifty years later the former student explained 'with considerable venom' that Norwood failed to clean up Harrow 'because he wasn't really a gentleman.' (Gathorne-Hardy, 1979, p. 329)

[254] An article from the late fifties carefully details the radical experimentation of Whitehouse's school. The curriculum featured American history, art and woodwork. He also notes that all the rooms in the school were even 'furnished with many paintings, both original and reproduction.' (Dearden, 1958, p. 25)

[255] It should be mentioned that Whitehouse was writing in an introduction to a book that gathered together a collection of articles from *The Nation* that were written in response to Alec Waugh's *The Loom of Youth*.

[256] S P B Mais had a somewhat controversial relationship with the Waugh family. He was a progressive master who taught Alec Waugh at Sherbourne. Waugh would later write of him, 'He has himself a genius for teaching. … He is an invaluable asset to any staff, and yet nearly everywhere he has been met by opposition.' (A. Waugh 1922, p. 224) However, he notes that Mais was one of the few progressive masters who 'never yielded to the reactionary influences.' (A. Waugh 1922, p. 224) Mais had a very different attitude to that of Alec Waugh regarding politics at Serbourne. He, in fact, argued that Sherbourne was an exceedingly liberal institution with a long tradition of intellectual freedom and avid reading. He suggested that 'this interest in reading led inevitably to a good deal of original writing, and in addition to the school magazine there were a whole series of unofficial organs … ' (Mais, 1937, p. 67) The problem for Mais was that he got on the wrong side of Arthur Waugh, Alec's incredibly protective father. In a strange coincidence Mais had to resign from Sherbourne because his novel, *Interlude*, was a portrait of the school too thinly disguised to avoid comment. And yet his departure was, by no means a shamefaced, rather it was something of a triumph of much loved teacher leaving a regretful school. Mais later included in the book excerpts from a review by Arthur Waugh which noted the farewell, calling it an 'unusual demonstration of the good-will and popularity with which he was surrounded.' (p. 69) Such a review is interesting considering that Arthur Waugh hated Mais. According to a review of a recent biography of Mais, written by Alexander Waugh, Arthur's

schools as part of his 1918 work *Dominant Ideas and Corrective Principles*, a book that was designed as something of a corrective to 'the weakness of the democratic movement.' (Gore, 1918, p.v) Martin Browne's *A Dream of Youth: an Etonian's Reply to the Loom of Youth*, written in 1919 while the author was still at school, included separate chapters on morality, religion and chapel services in a book that was only six chapters long. Another schoolboy reply to Waugh's iconoclastic novel was Jack Hood's[257] *The Heart of a Schoolboy* wherein, of the ten chapters, two were concerned with morality and a further two with religion. The author who had so rashly earned the ire of both Hood and Browne believed that religion in schools was waste of time, later writing 'I do not think you can expect the average small boy to be deeply influenced by religion. His religion, if he has one, is an unswerving devotion to his house and school. He would be ready to sacrifice himself for what he considered to be the school's service.' (A. Waugh, 1922, p. 246) Yet despite his insistence on the irrelevance of religion, Waugh spends much of *The Loom of Youth* discussing the religion of athletics, the failure of Christianity and dedicates two separate chapters to morality in his 1922 study, *Public School Life: Boys, Parents Masters*. Clearly religion, or whichever code, creed or system of conduct was going to replace religion, was a major concern in the interwar era.

The concern of many interwar writers regarding the place of religion in the public schools was not without cause. The rise of secularism had made religion, and in particular, dogma, contested ideas. An historian writing in the post-modern era, when these contests seem to have been decided long ago, perhaps understandably can fail to appreciate just what was at stake. The question, to which so many were providing an answer, was which form of a rapidly fragmenting religion belonged inside a public school? As dogmatic, enchanted religion lost ground in the nation at large, its relevance to the nation's public schools was debated. In *The Harrovians*, Peter

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great grandson, Arthur only published *Interlude* in an effort to remove Mais from Sherbourne and from his son's life. 'How Arthur must have rubbed his hands in glee when Chapman and Hall's publication of *Interlude* had its desired effect. As soon as the Headmaster of Sherborne read it, S. P. B. was summoned to his office and sacked. After that, Arthur refused to publish any more of S. P. B.'s novels and the relationship between them was definitively terminated in 1924, when S. P. B. wrote a piece in the Evening Standard jeering at the drunken behaviour of Arthur's younger son, Evelyn, at Oxford. Though Arthur despised Evelyn, he loyally telephoned S. P. B to tell him that he wished to have nothing more to do with him.' (A. Waugh, 2005) Mais's inclusion of Arthur Waugh's ebullient praise, in light of the fact that Arthur, an obsessive Old Shirburnian was summarily evicted from the Old Shirburnian Society, along with his son when *Loom of Youth* was published, was most probably an act of spite. Mais's exit must have been retrospectively galling and doubtless Mais wanted to emphasise his exit as an act of revenge against the man who 'relished the role he played' in his sudden downfall. (A. Waugh, 2005)

[257] A pseudonym.

O'Neil, wondered how Christ would fare if he went to Harrow, 'He could see His Housemaster lecturing Him on His indiscreet behaviour. "New boys are expected to keep in the background, and not to lecture their elders on their supposed lapses from virtue. Your views… might help you in a Quaker School, but they won't help you in the rough and tumble of Harrow life."' (Lunn, 2010, pp. 127-128) Yet Lunn's idea that Christ and his teaching wouldn't be relevant to Harrovian life in 1913 was not particularly original. Christian education in English public schools had been trying to make itself more relevant since the mid-19th century.[258] It had been searching for Frederick Temple's 'practical religion' and this generally meant abandoning the search for 'precise definitions of truth'. (Temple, 1860, p. 43)

In the ancient world there were few attempts to make religion 'relevant'; it is a particularly modern endeavour. As has been shown in the previous chapter, when secularism gathered momentum in the 19th century there emerged several responses; some abandoned religion altogether, some maintained religious practices for purely temporal reasons, some embraced more empirical forms of religion in modernism, while others sought forms of religion that were more resistant to secularist disenchantment such as Anglo-Catholicism or even Catholicism. However, the response that had the most influence in the Public Schools was that of practical religion, better known as the schoolboy variant, muscular Christianity. Citing Walter Houghton's description of the religious doubt in the Victorian era, Donald Hall argues that 'the broad strokes in the discourse of the muscular Christians were reactions to the threats posed by a world growing ever more confusing and fragmented.' (Hall, 'Introduction: Muscular Christianity: Reading and Writing the Male Social Body.' In Donald Hall (Ed.). 2006, pp. 8-9) Muscular Christianity or Christian manliness scorned the seemingly pernickety disputes of theologians for a life of action and honour that had no room for doubt. Writers and preachers began to hold-up new Christian heroes for the edification of students. Charles Kingsley[259] was perhaps the most

[258] Martine Browne, used the same devotional exercise and came to a somewhat more pious conclusion, 'I like to think of God here at Eton as I think of my best school friend – only more so.'(Browne, 1919, p. 82)

[259] It should be pointed out that Kingsley hated the term and reacted angrily when it was first proposed in a review of his work, *Two Years Ago* in 1857. Kingsley wrote, 'You have used that, to me, painful, if not offensive, term, ' Muscular Christianity.' My dear Sir, I know of no Christianity save one, which is the likeness of Christ, and the same for all men…' (Cited in Kingsley, 1894, p. 74) Kingsley went on to explain that he was capable of loving Esau and his kind who were often rejected by clergymen and seen as 'poor, profane blackguard[s], only fit to have [their] blood poured out like water on Crimean battle-fields, while Jacob sits comfortably at home, making money, and listening to those who preach smooth things to him'. (p. 75) Kingsley's idea was that he was preaching Christianity in way that the Esaus of this world would understand. In other words, he was making it relevant. In a curious twist,

famous figure in this movement; of him it was said, 'his ideal is a man who fears God and can walk a thousand miles in a thousand hours – who… breathes God's free air on God's rich earth, and at the same time can hit a woodcock, doctor a horse, and twist a poker around his finger.' (Hall, 2006, p. 7) Novels *like Tom Brown's School Days* soon adopted the muscular Christian as the hero and he continued to appear in the romantic public school novels and stories, in varying forms, up until the early nineteen sixties. In 1895, Thomas Welland, the Bishop of Down, Connor and Dromore summed up the value of Kingsley's theology when he said, 'Christian Manliness is a wonderful thing; the objection which a boy had to religion is removed by it.' (Cited in Springhall, 'Building Character in the British Boy: the attempt to extend Christian manliness to working-class adolescents.' In J. A. Mangan, & J. Walvin, Eds.,1987, p. 52)

As a response to secularism muscular Christianity was often positioned as directly opposing the response of Pusey and Newman. 'It struck a successful balance. It avoided the Hogarthian image of the pre-Clarendon commission 'great schools' but it also avoided the mid-century Cuddesdon image of effeminate Puseyism. In brief, it was not too rough and not too religious.' (Mangan, 'Social Darwinism and Upper Class Education in Late Victorian and Edwardian England.' In J. A. Mangan, & J. Walvin, Eds., 1987, p. 138) Muscular Christianity was generally learnt on the sporting field rather than in the chapel. The problem was that, as Mangan pointed out, it was often purely concerned with virtue and suspicious of dogma of any kind. Consequently it often became a combination of stoicism and social Darwinism. (Mangan, 1987, p. 139) By the interwar years it was obvious that the muscles had triumphed over the Christianity. The last great muscular Christian was Eric Liddell, the hero of *Chariots of Fire*, but when he died in a Japanese Prison of War camp in 1945, his English obituaries treated his life as something of an anachronism, 'a throw-back to Calvinist times.' (Vance, 1985, p. 171) During the interwar years, as manliness and Christianity were further divorced, the memoirs began to question the reverence in which games were held. William Plomer, an old Rugbeian, wrote 'at my school I received the impression that the ritual of the cricket field, more elaborate and just a trifle more

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Newman's great opponent eventually lost a daughter to the Catholic Church. His second daughter, Mary St. Leger Kingsley Harrison, more widely known as the author, Lucas Malet, became a Catholic in 1902. Rejecting 'the lean and arid piety of a defunct Calvinism' for 'the charmed and glorifed, the rich and magical atmosphere of Catholic thought', Malet became an explicitly Catholic novelist. (Srebrnik, 'The Re-Subjection of "Lucas Malet": Charles kinsley's daughter and the response to Muscular Christianity.' In Donald Hall (Ed.), 2006, p. 197) In her analysis of Malet's conversion Patricia Srebrnik argues that Malet found an escape from the claustraphobic masculinity of her father's version of Christianity in Catholicism.

sincerely performed that that of the chapel, was equally religious.' (Plomer, 'The Gothic Arch, In Ed. Greene, 1984, p. 112)

Indeed there soon developed a form of sporting theology that is best reflected in the master at Repton who, in 1906, shouted during prayers, 'here, pray up you boys!' (Cited in Vance, 1985, p. 195) Nicholas Monsarrat describes the sorts of sermons where 'a preacher, intent on 'getting through to the boys', set religion back at least a decade.' (Monsarrat, 1966, p. 256) The particular sermon that he mentions was one given by a colonial bishop who used the mawkish analogy of a cricket match to describe the life of the soul, '"You are the batsman! You are alone at the wicket! The wicket is purity! But *ah*-they are trying to take your wicket! *Sin* is the bowler! The *devil* is the wicket-keeper… the blessed *Church* is the umpire! But *ah* – who is the scorer? *Ah*…" (The scorer was God.) We were all very embarrassed.' (Monsarrat, 1966, p. 256) This sermon was remarkably similar to the Bishop's sermon in Arnold Lunn's novel, *The Harrovians*. The Bishop attempts to edify the boys with the example of Tom Bayley, a curate who was 'as good a cricketer as he was a Christian.' (2010, p. 95) The response of the students was certainly similar, 'The school began to hate Bayley rather worse than the Bishop. Boys dislike muscular Christians…' (Monsarrat, 1966, p. 256)[260]

Many historians focus on the cult of games but the reality is that they were merely a symptom of a deep-set suspicion of dogma that had pervaded English public schools from the mid-nineteenth century. Religion in schools was widely regarded as being in crisis but, as Whitehouse pointed out, 'the failure alleged against public school religion cannot be wholly divorced from the failure of religion outside the schools.' (1919, p. 21) As secularism slowly began to influence the schools there was a resounding call to reassert religious influence but it was usually accompanied with the caveat that boys do not want dogma. The much-maligned Cyril Norwood acknowledged that 'the greatest problem of the future is how to bring it about that a definite religion moved by a single spirit, whatever the varieties of interpretation it can legitimately permit within itself, shall inspire the education of the nation that is to be.' (1929, p. 21) To this challenge was soon added the inevitable caution that 'boys are not ready for any but the simplest doctrinal teaching:

[260] Lunn later recalled in his memoir, *Come What May*, a sermon given at Eton in which the boys were told, '"Some of you…will be great statesmen. Some of you great ecclesiastics. Some of you will serve your King with distinction in the army, and some of you" ─ here his voice dropped ─ "will be only engineers."' (Lunn, 1940, p. 27)

they do not understand it and are not interested by it. Their problems are problems of conduct, their minds nebulous and changing, a field in which ideals are beginning to gather and take shape.' (Norwood, 1929, p. 29). Norwood is aware that he is writing in a period of secularising turmoil. He calls it 'a period of transition' and posits a middle road between unscientific Non-Conformity and disloyal Anglo-Catholicism; 'a faith progressive and widening, as the thoughts of men widen.... its emphasis is entirely on character, and the emphasis so laid was first laid by Christ.' (Norwood, 1929, pp. 54-55)[261]

In Evelyn Waugh's first edition of *Brideshead Revisited*, Charles Ryder sums up the religious education system that was promoted by Norwood and his colleagues. Confronted by the enchanted and dogmatic faith of Sebastian, the wholly secular Charles Ryder remembers his own accessible religious education before noting the very same caution that had been promoted by the interwar theorists.

> The view implicit in my education was that the basic narrative of Christianity had long been exposed as a myth, and that opinion was now divided as to whether its ethical teaching was of present value, a division in which the main weight went against it: religion was a hobby which some people professed and others did not; at the best it was slightly ornamental, at the worst it was the providence of 'complexes' and 'inhibitions' - catch words of the decade - and of the intolerance, hypocrisy, and sheer stupidity attributed to it for centuries. No one had ever suggested to me that these quaint observances expressed a coherent philosophic system and intransigent historical claims; nor, had they done so, would I have been much interested. (E. Waugh, 1947, pp. 46-47)

The interwar version of public-school religion was one in which the focus was on molding the boys as young men rather than teaching them doctrine as though it were objective truth. Noel Annan summed it by recalling that Christian education was mostly in the form of moral lessons, with doctrine only occurring in the hymns. (1990, p. 39) Unsurprisingly, it was an education that produced many students like Graham Greene, who claimed that when he left school, 'religion went no deeper than the sentimental hymns in the school chapel.' (G. Greene, 1971, p. 164)

[261] Whitehouse made the same recommendations when he wrote, 'Creeds and dogmas should have little place in a school sermon. It should seek to make real the final virtues of life – truth, chivalry, unselfishness and love – which rise above all questions of doctrine and creeds.' (Whitehouse, 1919, p. 23)

In essence, the public schools reveal in microcosm the progress of secularization. Responding to the fragmentation of English religion, most teachers adopted the position, 'for creeds and forms let senseless bigots fight: he can't be wrong whose life is in the right.' (Norwood, 1929, p. 49) Consequently they educated a generation of schoolboys in a religious creed that declared 'the purpose and end of our existence is to be fellow members in living well, in creating a common life as noble as we can make it, that it is a high adventure, and that we should live in that spirit.' (p. 56) As we shall see this form of chivalrous but vague and somewhat disenchanted Christianity would often still be evident in the lives of the Communist converts.

Losing One's Faith

W. H. Auden wrote of the unconvincing nature of public school religion 'Whether for good or ill dogmatic religion...has broken down among schoolmasters, and religion without dogma soon becomes, as it was at Holt, nothing but vague uplift, as flat as an old bottle of soda water.' (Auden, 'Honour' In Ed. Greene, 1984, p. 11)[262] Sydney Oliver, a Fabian and former governor of Jamaica[263] described the public school religion derided by Auden as 'a healthy secularism.' (Whitehouse, 1919, p. 54) He claimed, as so many others had done, that 'boys of the public school age are for the most part, and quite healthily so, incapable of religion...' Consequently they were given religion, as defined by Matthew Arnold, 'morality touched with emotion.' (Whitehouse, 1919, p. 52) Corelli Barnett actually used the term Arnoldian religion to describe the wholly accessible and partially secularised religion found in public schools. He noted that as the doctrine evaporated it was replaced with a practical system of morality, 'influencing our conduct, principles and feelings.' (1972, p. 25) Moreover, between 1890 and 1914 what was often a quixotic morality was slowly 'fused with a patriotic romanticism.' (Barnett, 1972, p. 27) And this was the problem. As romantic patriotism began to die in the trenches around Picardy, muscular Christianity did as well. As Vance explained, 'the tradition of manly Christianity was too naive to withstand the pressures of modern war.' (Vance, 1985, p. 202) Consequently, public

[262] A subsequent contribution to the book by an old Wykehamist provides clear examples of the vague uplift that Auden described, contained in sermons of minimal doctrine and maximum vacuity. 'School Sermons...offer as good a field as any for the researcher after pedagogic stupidity. There is one gem I cannot pass over... "God is like a camel walking through the desert dropping dung as he goes. We're that dung." Nor can I forget those chatty little sermons of everyday life, the descriptions of his wife's cruise to the Holy Land ("When we came to Mount Sion my wife's hat blew off") with which another preacher used to instruct us.' (Auden, 'Honour' In Ed. Greene, 1984, p. 148)

[263] Later he was appointed as the Secretary of State for India by the first Labour government.

schoolboy religion came under increased attack during the interwar period, and, with little doctrine supporting its chief tenets, many of the interwar intellectuals went through an experience of apostasy while still at school.

Evelyn Waugh argued that the doctrinal poverty of schoolboy religion meant that the usual doubts of adolescence were totally unchallenged. He described his own religious education as surprisingly lacking in apologetics of any kind: 'all the humdrum doubts were raised and left unanswered. We were encouraged to 'think for ourselves' and our thoughts in most cases turned to negations.' (1964, p. 142) Consequently many students filled the space with the secular doctrines that their masters and chaplains simply wouldn't match. Waugh's own research filled the space, 'I read Pope's *Essay on Man*; the notes led me to Leibnitz and I began an unguided and half-comprehended study of metaphysics. I advanced far enough to be thoroughly muddled about the nature of cognition. It seemed simplest to abandon the quest and assume that man was incapable of knowing anything.' ('Come Inside' in E. Waugh, 1983, p. 367) In his truncated autobiography Waugh added, 'Mine was not a unique case. I think at least half the Upper Sixth in my time were avowed agnostics or atheists. And no antidote was ever offered us.' (1964, p. 143) Arnold Lunn found much the same experience at Harrow, nearly twenty years earlier. 'At Harrow not only did I never hear a reasoned case for Christianity, I was not even allowed to suspect that such a case existed.' (Lunn, 1940, p. 201) Like Waugh, Lunn had a similar experience of searching for answers, only to find negations. 'The Bishop who confirmed me at Harrow sent me to the Rationalists in search of a reasoned basis for belief, and the Rationalists in their turn encouraged me, in my reaction against blind faith with which they accepted their dogmas, to search elsewhere for rational grounds for belief.' (Lunn, 1940, p. 186)

This process of unconversion was common to a significant proportion of the memoirs written by intellectuals educated during the period. Cyril Connolly's memoir, *Enemies of Promise* recalls George Orwell reading his way to atheism while Connolly read and reasoned his way to complete skepticism. (2008, pp. 187, 205) Orwell had become such an unbeliever that, by the time he was being prepared for confirmation by John Grace he commented that 'he'd always considered "old-Man Ghost" rather a joke.' (Stansky & Abrahams, 1972, p. 105) Yet despite his fairly obvious reservations Orwell was still confirmed by Bishop Charles Gore.

A significant factor in the accelerating secularism of the public schools was the generation of young masters who had entered the schools during the 1920s. Many of them had themselves lost their faith and were often active in promoting alternate viewpoints. They often 'encouraged the boys to read Strachey, Robert Graves and Huxley' and a range of other dissenting writers. (Annan, 1990, p. 48) The master who most influenced Waugh was the young J. F. Roxburgh who had served in France but returned to Lancing College in 1919 as a housemaster. Waugh noted that while Roxburgh was 'reticent about his skepticism... it was generally thought that that he doubted the entire supernatural order.' (1964, p. 157)[264] However, despite his skepticism, Roxburgh was appointed as the first headmaster of Stowe school in 1923. Stowe was an Anglican school but Roxburgh, a stoic and a moralist, clearly fitted with its religious sensibilities. (Waugh, 1964, p. 157)

Soon many of the intellectuals educated in the twenties were themselves teachers, and were often even less prepared to hide their skepticism. Thomas Cuthbert Worsley, a product of Marlborough and the son of a clergyman, lost his faith in the twenties, 'the temper of the times was...against any sort of religious beliefs: and I no longer had any.' (Worsley, 1985, p. 53) Later, he was a teacher at Wellington College, while the Romilly Boys were students. And there he had to try and put his atheism to one side because tutors were considered the best people to prepare boys for confirmation. 'What sort of fool did I feel? Solemnly expounding the catechism – or even defending it before those who were skeptical.' (Worsley, 1985, p. 161)[265] Another teacher in a

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[264] He adds, 'in this, as in other characteristics [he was a homosexual], he might have been cast as an eighteenth century Anglican bishop.' (E. Waugh, 1964, 157)

[265] Worsley's memoir also gives an interesting insight into interwar attitudes towards what might now be termed, child sex abuse or paedophilia. Worsley invited a female sexologist Dr. Jameson to speak at the school so as to promote a more objective understanding of sexuality for himself and the staff.
Later, walking with Dr. Jameson in the garden 'I tried to explain my problem… I seemed to be gingerly confessing to being no more than over fond of one of the boys. Dr. Jameson wasn't standing for evasions of that kind.
"You mean that you're in love with him?"
I still hadn't put it to myself in those terms, but faced with the question I supposed I was. Yes, that must be it.
"Well then," she went on with her brash straightforward questioning, 'how far has it got?"…
"You mean," she went on disbelievingly, "you haven't had his organ in your hand?"
"No, indeed not." I rejected both her suggestion and the idea.
"Oh, bad luck," she said encouragingly. "Bad luck. Never mind, that will be the next step, won't it?" And she briskly rounded off the interview.' (1985, pp. 132-133) Worsley's book, first published in 1967 argues that many men who sleep with young male students are seduced (p. 124), he also passionately argues in favour of older men teaching young boys 'with gentleness and love the uses of [their] bod[ies].' But castigates himself for failing to teach one particular young boy and merely sleeping beside him 'like a brother.'(pp. 180-181) In many ways the confidence with which Worsley writes about his sexual experiences and desires and the popularity of the book when

similar situation was Aldous Huxley, an old Etonian who returned to Eton in 1917 and taught, among others, Eddy Sackville West and George Orwell. Huxley considered himself a 'scientific housemaster.' (G. Smith, 1969, p. 133) A great-nephew of Matthew Arnold and a grandson of Thomas Huxley, his was a somewhat disenchanted view of religion. He took it upon himself to educate 'some of the more serious minded and thoughtful of the boys' who were interested in theosophy:

> Except for the bunkum about astral bodies, spiritual hierarchies, reincarnation and so forth, theosophy seems to be a good enough religion – its main principles being that all religions contain some truth and that we ought to be tolerant, which is the sort of thing to be encouraged in an Anglican stronghold like this. A little judicious theosophy seems on the whole an excellent thing. (G. Smith, 1969, pp. 136-137)

Added to this, Huxley helped young Herbrand Sackville, who had just become the 9th Earl, De La Warr in forming an Eton Political Society.[266] Sackville was 'a passionate socialist' and would later become a conscientious objector. (Pugh, 1998, p. 49) Despite the reticence of Huxley's letters, it is clear that Huxley was precisely the sort of modern master capable of nurturing Sackville's nascent socialism. Or, at the very least, he was capable of providing a forum that was 'radical in tone, but eminently respectable', (G. Smith, 1969, p. 137) in which Sackville might develop and share his leftist politics. The society began publishing *The Eton Review* which was soon being censored for its articles which were considered 'too revolutionary and pacifist.' (G. Smith, 1969, p. 146) Another influential teacher worthy of mention is Andrew Gow, who was Orwell's English Tutor at Eton in the early twenties, and was named by Brian Sewell as the Fifth Man of the Cambridge Spy Ring in the second edition of his memoirs published in 2012.[267] (Sewell, 2012, p. 138)

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it was published in 1967 says much about the poverty of understanding that existed regarding the effects of child sex abuse, as recently as the late nineteen sixties.

[266] The first speakers were William Temple, then Bishop of Oxford and George Lansbury. (G. Smith, 1969, p. 139) Later, Randall Davidson, the Archbishop of Cantabury spoke to the society on the position of the church and was rewarded with a 'solid vote for disestablishment from the boys.'(p. 158)

[267] According to Sewell 'Gow had clearly played Father Confessor to Anthony Blunt, he might well have been his puppet-master too – and possibly for others.' Sewell adds that when he shared this theory with Blunt, shortly before the latter's death, 'he did not demur'. (Sewell, 2012, p. 138)

Whilst these might be considered isolated examples there is no doubt that many of the students educated during the period claimed to encounter declining standards of religious education. Whether these teachers were men who were genuinely ignorant or themselves skeptics, the reality is that religious education was no longer convincing. The headmaster at Eton, Dr. Alington, was a vague kind of muscular Christian known to the boys as 'creeping Christ.' (Roberts, 1984, p. 37) Alington was the author of numerous accessible books including *Mr Evans: A Cricketo-Detective Story.* In his *Eton Fables* we get an insight into the vague theology that he served the boys in the Lower Chapel. One sermon was based on a conversation he had with a highly opinionated matchstick on his mantelpiece who wanted to help with the sermon:

> "Can't you tell them that?" said the Match, dancing about on the mantelpiece in its excitement. "Can't you tell them that's the one thing that matters–to have their brains and body and the rest of them fit when the great time comes, so that they'll do what they were made to do and not fail in the hour of need ?" (Alington, 1921, pp. 12-13)

Aldous Huxley described Alington's sermons as 'generally pretty good; but, I should think, very shattering to faith.' (G. Smith, 1969, p. 158) Huxley pointed out that Alington would raise 'awkward problems' and then 'answering them wholly inadequately or not at all.' The effect was such that 'He would have made me an atheist long ago, if I had been a believer to begin with.' (G. Smith, 1969, p. 158) Huxley's assessment was certainly vindicated by Randolph Churchill's experience. Churchill was confirmed while at Eton and, almost immediately, began to experience doubts about the tension that must exist between an omnipotent God and the the free will of humanity. He approached Alington and received a reply that was so offhand 'that his faith was shattered and he spent the rest of his life trying to regain it.' (Roberts, 1984, p. 38)[268] Churchill's history master, reflecting the common assumptions of the day wrote to Winston Churchill, 'I

[268]This is one of the few anecdotes that makes the reader take Randolph's side. Churchill's son was notoriously difficult to get on with. When he was first at Eton he was given six of the best by the 'library' for being 'bloody awful all round.' (Roberts, 1984, p. 22) Later stories abound that would suggest that this was not one of those interwar stories of capricious violence visited upon new boys by sadistic prefects. When he was stationed with him in Yugoslavia during the war, Evelyn Waugh wrote to his wife claiming that 'the good time of day for me is the first two hours of daylight before Randolph is awake.' (Cited in Hastings, 1994, p. 470) Eventually Waugh and Freddie Birkenhead (Randolph's fag master at Eton), bet Churchill ten pounds that he couldn't read the bible in a fortnight, just to shut him up. Waugh wrote in his diary that Randolph 'sits bouncing about on his chair, chortling and saying, "I say, did you know this came in the bible 'bring down my grey hairs with sorrow to the grave'?"'(Cited in p. 472)

consider it almost inevitable that a boy with a mind as logical as his should experience very real religious difficulties.' (Roberts, 1984, p. 38)

Unlike Randolph with his doubt in the twenties, John Cornford, a grandson of Charles Darwin, was an active proponent of agnosticism while at Stowe in the early thirties. His brother later wrote: 'One of his favourite pastimes was to tie up the school chaplain in metaphysical knots during Tuesday afternoon religious talks. Poor, wretched chaplain!' (Cornford, 1978, p. 29) Cornford's mother had returned to the Anglican faith after a nervous breakdown, being confirmed in 1924. To her he wrote (a little smugly):

> I have just come from a really superb argument with the school chaplain in which I defeated him rather heavily. The unfortunate man has to take us in 'Divinity' every week, in which we read a hopelessly incompetent book about the Christian religion, on which I and one or two others (sometimes) attack him furiously. The good man is fairly intelligent but extremely slow, and it always ends by one forcing him to the most extravagant statement, or else losing his temper. (Stansky, 1966, p. 167)

It was clear that apostasy was becoming the common feature in the lives of many of the intellectuals. Peter Quennell, who was at Berkhamsted with Grahame Greene and Claude Cockburn, noted that his 'brief devotional phase' was abandoned 'once [he] reached Berkhamsted' and he later refused to be confirmed. (Quennell, 1976, pp. 79-80)[269] Louis MacNeice, who was at Marlborough with Anthony Blunt, wrote that, 'moral values were a delusion, and politics and religion, a waste of time. I had given up saying my prayers. Anthony too had a father a clergyman and we both resented the fact that our parents assumed us to be Christian...' (MacNeice, 1965, p. 98)[270] Blunt's most recent biographer, Miranda Carter, argued that 'Marlborough's twice daily chapel and his father's piety had bored the religion out of him.'

[269] It should be mentioned that Quennell points to an argument that he had with his sister's governess as the moment where he chose between 'aesthetic paganism' and 'the Christian puritanism for which Miss Taylor stood.' (Quennell, 1976, p. 80) However it is clear that his education at Bekhamstead was 'of a rather lay variety' as Greene put it in his memoir, and Quennell found himself lacking any major reason for retaining the vague deism of his father. (Greene Graham. , 1971, p. 68)

[270] He goes on to add that 'neither of us would have dared to stand in their presence and die for a lack of faith.' (MacNeice, 1965, p. 98)

(2001, p. 33) Christopher Isherwood, who was at Repton[271] with Edward Upward, admired the latter, for refusing to be confirmed on the grounds that he was an agnostic. 'I had been through the confirmation a few months earlier... already I had to admit to myself that, as far as I was concerned, the entire ceremony had been altogether meaningless.' (Isherwood, 1953, p. 19)[272] Kim Philby was a very different case. At Westminster School he was confirmed (and possibly baptised). (Seale & McConville, 1973, p. 12) However, 'his family remember him being terribly upset over religion.' (Knightley, 1988, p. 28) Philby's father was an aggressive atheist while it was clear that at school Philby was undergoing a Christian experience of sorts. His biographers generally claim that the school pressured him and he felt cowardly for giving in, that he always regretted agreeing to the ceremony. (Knightley, 1988, p. 28) Philby himself later claimed that the tension caused 'something like a nervous breakdown'. (Seale & McConville, 1973, p. 13) Such a reaction suggests more than an unhappy boy being coerced into a religious ceremony[273] that he didn't believe in. After all many students went through exactly that process, including highly strung students like George Orwell. One wonders if the tension arose from a growing belief, or even a desire for belief. It seems unlikely he would be 'badly mauled' by the experience unless he felt that there was something to lose. (Seale & McConville, 1973, p. 13) The main point is that the school's religious education and liturgy could not match the arguments put forward by Philby's father and Kim Philby would become notoriously anti-religious later in life. (Seale & McConville, 1973, p. 13)

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[271] Following Upward and Isherwood at Repton was a very different writer, the children's author, Roald Dahl. The creator of Charlie's Chocolate Factory and the BFG was at Repton from 1929-1936 and was a fairly popular student but even he produced the inevitable memoir attacking his interwar education and explaining his loss of faith. Dahl explained in *Boy: Tales of Childhood* that the headmaster, Geoffrey Fisher, later Archbishop of Canterbury, used to beat the boys mercilessly and then preach on mercy in the school chapel. 'Do you wonder then that this man's behaviour used to puzzle me tremendously? He was an ordinary clergyman at that time as well as being Headmaster, and I would sit in the dim light of the school chapel and listen to him preaching about the Lamb of God and about Mercy and Forgiveness and all the rest of it and my young mind would become totally confused. I knew very well that only the night before this preacher had shown neither Forgiveness nor Mercy in flogging some small boy who had broken the rules… It was all this, I think, that made me begin to have doubts about religion and even about God. If this person, I kept telling myself, was one of God's chosen salesmen on earth, then there must be something very wrong about the whole business. (Dahl, 2012, pp. 189-190)

[272] Upward is the inspiration for the character Allen Chalmers in *All the Conspirators* and *Lions and Shadows*. (Izzo, 2001, p. 28) Religion was foreign to Isherwood for a long time. This was because, religion in his mind was, muscular Christianity, 'the traditional Christianity of The Others who had bleated "Onward Christian Soldiers" during the war and were, in his eyes guilty of the warmongering that killed his father.' (p. 28)

[273] It should also be noted that rejecting confirmation was not an impossibility as suggested by the church statistics cited in chapter three.

W. H. Auden 'lost interest' in Christianity in 1922. He later claimed that 'to say that... I lost my faith would be melodramatic or false.' (Davenport-Hines, 1996, p. 38) But Davenport-Hines goes on to point out that 'his disenchantment with Christianity was increased by the cant of worship at Gresham's, Holt .' (1996, p. 39) Another biographer claims that it was the influence of the arguments that he was discovering in his own reading and points out that Auden's first encounter with Freud coincided with his 'loss of interest' in 1922. (Osborne, 1979, pp. 24-25) It was clear that this was a generation whose root-realities were rapidly changing. And for many, the vestiges of an increasingly subjective Christianity were fast disappearing.

Finding another

When Lord Plomer addressed his alma mater in 1916 he commented, 'we are often told that they taught us nothing at Eton. That may be so but they taught it very well.' (Cited in Gathorne-Hardy, 1979, p. 151) Plomer's affectionate jibe captures a widespread attitude towards public school education, that it was somehow both elite and utterly impractical. Annan argued that most writing on the subject of educational quality was founded on the assumption that classes were taught badly, and that the talented master who cared was unusual and something of an outsider. (1990, p. 37) Peter Newmark[274] attended Rugby at the same time that Annan was at Stowe, put it even more bluntly; 'Rugby… had no tradition of learning (its stance was anti-intellectual). It was muscular, no nonsense, clean living… Only Winchester and Eton cared about work.' (Newmark, 1982, pp. 264, 273) Dudley Carew, who was at Lancing with Waugh, described his maths classes during the war in which an elderly retired teacher covered 'the blackboard with microscopic and beautifully formed equations in chalk which obviously meant much to him…' while the boys settled down to their 'rich and varied eating which accompanied conversation, the writing of letters, the playing of paper games and occasional fights.' (1949, pp. 89-90) The critic Alan Pryce-Jones, who was at Eton with John Betjeman and Anthony Powell, was taught by the same

[274] Despite his criticism of the way he was educated, Newmark went on to become one of the key academics involved in the evolution of translation as a science. He was also, like so many others, a brief convert to Communism following his time at Cambridge where Anthony Blunt taught him French. Interestingly he stopped voting Labour when the government removed the foreign language stipulation from the curriculum. (Bell, 2011) Like so many of his generation he excoriated the system that educated him while at the same time quickly adopting its unworldly values. During the Second World War he worked in Italy as a translator. 'Sent to interpret the German surrender at Bolzano, he spent the evening with German officers in a villa talking about German Romantic poets. The next morning the surrender was duly signed. Newmark ordered three extra bottles of champagne for the interpreter-general, and to his surprise, they were promptly delivered.' (Bell, 2011)

science master as his father, '…we owned and used, a slide rule; once I made a crystal, and often I weighed small objects in water, but that was the extent of our scientific training.' (Pryce-Jones, 1987, p. 27) Another classmate of Pryce-Jones, the novelist Henry Yorke, better known as Henry Green, summed up their education in a line that may be seen as representing the popular attitude of the interwar intellectuals, 'I was always confused and everything seemed pointless. Even the things we were taught in class had no reference to the life we knew we were to know.' (H. Green, 2000, p. 74)[275]

Newmark described three results of the academic grounding found in a public school; firstly 'reason is superior to emotion'; secondly, pure knowledge, knowledge for knowledge's own sake, is the highest form of knowledge'; and thirdly, classics are the best way to train a mind. (Newmark, 1983, pp. 269-270) The belief in the value of classics was universal among educators. One prep-school classics master preparing his charges for scholarship exams would tell his students, ''there's many a man sleeping on the embankment because he forgot his tenses." (Cited in Gross, 1972, p. 13)

Most writers were so convinced that classics took up an inordinate amount of their timetable that they allowed its discussion to take up an inordinate amount of their memoir. Even one of Clement Atlee's biographers summed up his education at Haileybury College as consisting of the three Cs: Cricket, Classics and Christianity. (Burridge, 1985, p. 13)[276] However there is some truth to the oft-repeated criticism. Martin Browne argued that classics were 'more fitted than any other subjects to be the basis of our education…[because] they make boys think.' (Browne, 1919, p 36) In an effort to show the variety that was offered to the older boys at Eton, he appended his timetable to his book. In doing so he revealed that in the Lent term he enjoyed four hours of Greek, a further two of Latin and two hours of Divinity, which was often a study of the Gospels in Greek. Thus, out of twenty three hours of classes each week, over a third were

[275] Also cited in Gagnier, 1988, p. 20

[276] It seems that cricket was the facet of his education that made the greatest impression. Apparently Atlee could only be convinced to install a ticker-tape machine at Number Ten when he was told that it could be used to receive test cricket scores. He was later furious when he discovered that it was being used to print out cabinet decisions. (Burridge, 1985, p. 13) The biography also goes on to include the obligatory passage of the adolescent becoming 'decidedly fed up with public school religion.' And the 'whole trend of [his] mind' is described as simply 'romantic and imaginative' rather than religious. (p. 15)

directly concerned with the classics.[277] (Browne, 1919, p. 41) Despite their position as masters of the only truly important subject, Classics masters were also criticised for their shoddy teaching. Beverley Nichols wrote of his own education that 'Greek was taught at Marlborough as though it were not merely dead but as though it had never lived at all.' (Cited in Hillier, 1988, p. 94)

Social historians have long debated the significance of a classical education during the interwar period. Gathorne Hardy argued that it reflected the wealth of the students who didn't want to be educated for a career. (1979, p. 151) Given how many did end up having a career of some kind, Corelli Barnett's explanation is probably more accurate. He claimed that the interwar education system, 'permanently divorced intellectual study from the practical activities in life.' (Barnett, 1972, p. 33)[278] While it is easy to dismiss this divorce as a product of unjust economic conditions and a self-perpetuating class system, it is important to acknowledge the intellectual advantages that were offered by such a system.[279] The value lay in the fact that students could luxuriate in impractical intellectual pursuits, generally certain that the only thing for which they need prepare was the Oxbridge education to follow. As Dudley Carew summed it up, 'Oxford for the majority and the necessity of earning a living for the minority'. (1949, p. 100)

In his somewhat satirical essay entitled, "Rotation of Crops", Kierkegaard argued in favour of living 'not through extensity but through intensity.' (2000, p. 56) He noted that students were famous for becoming 'meticulous observers' in an effort to escape boredom. (Kierkegaard, 2000, p. 56) The students of the interwar era, imbued with a love of learning for the sake of learning and confronted with the tedium of a closed routine, frequently pursued what might be described as an alternate education. In their own reading, in their debates, in the articles they read and

[277] In the summer term the hours were reduced to twenty one per week but over forty per cent of each week was concerned with the classics. (Browne, 1919, p. 41)

[278] It must be remembered that the interwar period was one in which education became accessible but also more practical. Under the influence of Lord Percy technical education became more common for the working classes. Between 1922 and 1923 there were 86 junior technical schools in England but by 1938 there were 224 across England and Wales. (J. Graves, 1943, pp. 14-143) This made retaining the classics seem defiantly impractical.

[279] Reflecting the tension of the outmoded educational system and the fact that it clearly had its advantages, Henry W. Nevinson, the war correspondent, wrote to the *The Nation*, in the wake of the *Loom of Youth* controversy, about his education at Shrewsbury in the 1870s, 'I know that our "studies" were antiquated, that our manner of life was barbarian, and that we were hardly aware of the modern world. Still I could not express the gratitude that most of us owe to the beauty of the place, the stoicism of the school, the accurate teaching of all the classical masters, and the immense personal influence of one.' (Cited in Whitehouse, 1919, p. 97)

wrote for school magazines of varying legitimacy, they came in contact with new ideas. Ideas which challenged the seemingly antiquated ideas they had so recently abandoned.

The alternate education soon became one of the major themes of the schooling memoirs. Sir Osbert Sitwell was perhaps the most direct, claiming in his *Who's Who* entry that his education happened in the breaks from Eton. (Cited in Roberts, 1984, p. 29) Alec Waugh warned prospective students and their parents that, 'provided a boy answers his name at roll-call, and fulfils his social engagements in the form room and in the football field, no one worries much what he is doing during the rest of the time.' (1922, p. 47) It was not uncommon for students to use this time to pursue their alternative education. Stephen Spender went to University College School and began to read George Bernard Shaw, a development that prompted his father to say, "I have heard of other people having children like that, but I have always prayed God I might be spared." (Spender, 'Day Boy.' In Ed. Greene, 1984, p. 174) Tom Driberg directly attributed his own conversion to Socialism to reading the prefaces to Bernard Shaw's plays. (Driberg, 1977, p. 50) When Anthony Powell first arrived at Eton he discovered *The Loom of Youth* on the shelves of the house captain, for whom he fagged. (Powell, 1983, pp. 30). His classmate Orwell was regularly quoting Shaw, Chesterton, H. G. Wells, and Samuel Butler at the age of fourteen. By seventeen he could recite all sixty three poems of Houseman's *A Shropshire Lad.* (Stansky & Abrahams, 1972, pp. 120-121) But he was most affected by Jack London's *The People of the Abyss* with its descriptions of poverty in London's East End. (Abrahams, 1972, p. 135) It was while reading famous works of Catholic spirituality and mysticism at school that Frederick Copleston grew in his desire to convert to Catholicism. 'St Theresa of Avila and St. John of the Cross opened up for me vistas of a new world which exercised a powerful attraction on my mind.' (Copleston, 1993, p. 31) Auden also valued the alternate education provided by independent reading. He wrote, 'we had a magnificent library, perhaps the only requisite because real people, who can learn, given that chance, will teach themselves...' And he concluded that 'nearly all education is done by the boy himself.' (Auden, 'Honour.' In Ed. Greene, 1984, pp. 2, 10)

Many students received an alternate education at the hands of 'that one master who made life bearable…' (Gathorne-Hardy, 1979, p. 154) The relationship was often conducted on a level of equality that marks it as entirely opposed to the traditional classroom education with its harsh,

even sadistic, discipline. William Plomer of Rugby fondly remembered Mr. B., the French master who invited him along with some other intellectual students, to tea, thereby beginning a series of regular meetings. 'He encouraged us to think, we read papers on subjects that interested us, and I showed him some verses I had written.' (Plomer, 'The Gothic Arch.' In Ed. Greene, 1984, p. 117) Graham Greene also recalled the French master at his school introducing him to Strachey's *Landmarks in French Literature* and was soon reading Racine's historical tragedy, *Bérénice* while the other students were playing cricket. (Greene G., 1971, p. 109)

Often the students went on to become teachers themselves and, in that role, actively promote an alternate education among their young charges. At Marlborough, T. C. Worsley described his education as occurring *in spite* of his teacher. 'We were unfortunately under a desiccated pedant on the eve of retiring, but we taught ourselves, made world shattering discoveries, such as the poetry of Rupert Brooke and A. E. Housman…' (Worsley, 1985, p. 39) Once he became a teacher he began to read voraciously, 'catching up with the political drift of the times...' (p. 64) Before long he became the enlightened master, 'my rooms had become an even more regular frequenting place for the young intellectuals who dropped in to borrow my books and stayed to talk...' (pp. 94-95) One of those intellectuals was a precocious student named Giles Romilly who soon inspired national headlines through his efforts promoting the revolution at Wellington College.

For others, an alternate education was directed by someone from outside the school. As previously mentioned, Evelyn Waugh's alternate education was concerned with Pope and Leibnitz and the development of a half-comprehended atheism. However, part of his alternate education was an aesthetic and political education received at the hands of Barbara Jacobs (his older brother's then-fiancée and later, first wife) (E. Waugh, 1964, pp. 116-123) And, more importantly, it involved the tutelage of Francis Crease, a curious relic of the 19th century decadents who revealed 'the beauties of nature' to Waugh in what had begun as calligraphy lessons but soon became something closer to an aesthete apprenticeship. (E. Waugh, 1964, p. 153) Anthony Powell came under the aesthetic tutelage of Christopher Millard, a Catholic convert and the compiler of Wilde's bibliography. (Powell, 1983, pp. 38-44) For Graham Greene the alternate education began as a recurring escape into the hawthorn hedge with Morris's *Epic of Hades* or Phillip's *Paolo and Francesca*. (Greene, 1971, pp. 77-78) Later, following a mental

breakdown in 1920, Greene was for a time removed from school and placed in the care of Dr. Kenneth Richmond and his family. Here in Kensington Gardens, Greene found something of an aesthete retreat where he was free to pursue his own education in peace. 'Often in the evening I found myself in the company of authors like Walter de la Mare and J. D. Beresford. (Greene, 1971, pp. 99-100) Later, exploring London, he discovered 'a little bookshop on the Embankment near Albert Bridge' and discovered the work of Ezra Pound. (Greene, 1971,p. 103)

For some, the alternate education became an opportunity to rebuild their quivering root realities, their interpretative frameworks. To put it in Heirich's terms, many would actively seek out the experience of encapsulation, to varying degrees, and slowly form a creed to replace the one that had been abandoned in the school chapel. For Conford it was his childhood mentor, Reginald Snell, who introduced him to many of the issues that would inform his conversion to Communism. Writing to his mother in early 1931, Cornford outlined a plan that he and Snell had concocted in an effort to defeat singlehandedly the Lernaean Hydra that was England's political crises:

> 'We were going to collect a small but earnest band of enthusiasts who were to start from headquarters and travel round the country with great placards of DISARMAMENT, P.R.[280] LIMITATION OF FRANCHISE, BIRTH CONTROL, NEW UPPER HOUSE, DESTRUCTION OF SLUMS etc. writ large all over them. Then we would present a petition to the H of C demanding these things signed by 10,000,000 people. If we did not get into power or get them to do these, the undersigned would cease to pay taxes, obey laws or do anything else, and you can't put 10,000,000 people in prison.' (Galassi, 1986, pp. 129-130)

For others the alternate education was almost entirely concerned with the search for a new religious faith. Reflecting the trends of the outside world, many students abandoned secularized Protestantism and began to seek out a more Catholic form of Christianity. As Nicholas Monsarrat wrote, 'I could not help wanting it all to be real, because of a phrase here and there, a glimpse of majesty, a promise of Divine Love which really would keep the world from breaking down my door.' (1966, p. 257) Many students actively sought out religion; 'the everlasting

[280] Proportional representation.

arms...ready to catch and cradle and protect from all harm.' (Monsarrat, 1966, p. 257) The fact was that while it was assumed few students were interested in dogma of any kind, many were crying out for answers in the form of apologetics. Martine Browne defied the universal dictum that boys were not interested in 'any but the simplest doctrinal teaching' and called for Divinity Schools to be run 'in the form of religious debates in which the presiding master explains and answers any questions.' (Browne, 1919, pp. 93-94) Noting the 'wave of doubt and change that is sweeping over religion', Browne continued by suggesting that chaplains begin running evening debates, 'at least a few boys will probably be found who would welcome the chance to thrash out their thoughts with kindred spirits.' (Browne, 1919 pp. 94-95) Jack Hood went even further and noted that '…many boys are doubting. Many people, they think, including no less personages than university Professors of Science and great writers, do not believe either in the Bible or in Christianity. The boy begins to wonder: Is it all a great hoax to keep me straight?' (Hood, 1919, p. 80) Hood argues that none of the doctrine is being explained and advises the teachers to 'deal with boys as you would with atheists or agnostics' before it is too late and goes on to warn that:

> 'Atheists and followers of psychic cults are doing their best to prevent us, while our own religious teachers merely tell us to believe, and do not explain why Christianity is true. If a boy of fifteen had two days, say, with some very learned theosophists, do you not suppose he could be convinced?'(Hood, 1919, pp. 82, 85)[281]

Sydney Olivier, who embraced the 'healthy secularism' of public school religion, noted that 'the conventional official semi-religious emotion of chapel and Sunday observances does not and cannot adequately lay hold of the boy's full spiritual needs.' (Whitehouse, 1919, p. 55)

Cyril Norwood assumed that Anglo-Catholic liturgy was something that produced either bigotry or cynicism in young men and was therefore undesirable. (1929, p. 47) Norwood clearly failed to realise the attractions that overtly enchanted religion might hold for students weary of accessible religion. One of his own students, Frederick Copleston, the grandson of a clergyman and the nephew of two Anglican Bishops in the East, converted to Catholicism while at Marlborough. As

[281] Interestingly and rather inaccurately, he sees the refusal to fully explain doctrines as a particularly Roman Catholic vice. ''It is so like the Roman Church, which prohibits its sons from asking that any doctrine should be proved. They must take it on trust at the hands of her uneducated priests that it is true. If a man doubts, he is excommunicated.' (Hood, 1919, p. 82)

a student, Copleston became more and more interested in High Church ritual and mysticism. ‘At an early age I came to think (rightly) that the Eucharist should be seen to be the cetral act of Christian Worship.’ (Copleston, 1993, p. 29) His interest in the enchanted elements of religion was even unthinkingly kindled by Cyril Norwood, who, though he thought mysticism unsuitable for students, annouced in a sermon that ‘St John the Evangelist and St Paul were more akin to Catholic mystics than Anglican Divines.’ (Copleston, 1993,p. 32) On a school trip to Oxford, Copleston ducked into the Catholic church of St. Aloysius and ended up speaking to Fr R. H. J. Steuart , an expert on mysticism and, in particular, the teachings of St. John of the Cross. Yet for Copleston the reason he felt that he *had* to join the Catholic Church, regardless of the consequences, was its authority. ‘I conceived the Church as speaking with the clear voice of authority and as comparing very favourably with the Church of England with its various parties and with an episcopate which included members whose orthodoxy seemed to be pretty clearly dubious.’ (Copleston, 1993, pp. 29-30) Upon converting, against the wishes of both his parents and the school, Copleston was summarily expelled by Norwood. Only his father’s pleading allowed him to stay for the remainder of the term. (Copleston, 1993, p. 33)

Another of Norwood’s student’s, and a classmate of Copleston’s, John Betjeman, was a classic example of the student who seemed to be searching for answers to the religious questions that were not being answered in the ‘meaningless jingle of words’ emanating from compulsory chapel. (Mais, 1918, p. 25) In his poetic memoir, *Summoned by Bells*, Betjeman discussed his hobby of visiting churches, while a schoolboy at Marlborough, a hobby he perhaps shared with Copleston: ‘St Aloysius of the Church of Rome/ It’s incense, reliquaries, brass and lights/make all seem plain and trivial back at school.’ (Betjeman, 1960, p. 47) Ironically this hobby had emerged in tandem with a short-lived bout of adolescent atheism during which he had refused to be confirmed. (Gardner, 2006, p. xvii)

Betjeman argued that his visiting churches and his nascent love of liturgy was not initially a ‘conscious search for God’ so much as ‘a longing for the past, / with a slight sense of something unfulfilled.’ (Betjeman, 1960, p. 60) Clearly dissatisfied by his materialist beliefs, he described himself as ‘in quest of mystical experiences’ (p. 87) Betjeman contrasts schoolboy religion, ‘singing hymns/ and feeling warm and comfortable inside’, with the enchanted liturgy of Catholicism:

There were laughs
At public schools, at chapel services,
At masters who were still ‘big boys at heart’–
While all the time the author’s hero knew
A Secret Glory in the hills of Wales:
Caverns of light revealed the Holy Grail
Exhaling gold upon the mountain-tops;
At “Holy! Holy! Holy!” in the Mass
King Brychan’s sainted children crowded round,
And past and present were enwrapped in one. (pp. 86-87)

While critics always notice the Celtic mysticism that Betjeman discovered in the Welsh Hills, few notice the poignant Eucharistic imagery of the Holy Grail and the sense of eternal time that he associates with Catholic liturgy. Betjeman particularly notes its absence in the Malburian chapel. In a powerful scene Betjeman responds to the sermon of a thundering Old Malburian bishop.

"Be pure," he cried,
And, for a moment, stilled the sea of coughs.
"Do nothing that would make your mother blush
If she could see you. When the Tempter comes
Spurn him and God will lift you from the mire."
Oh, who is God? O tell me, who is God?
Perhaps he hides behind the reredos .....
Give me a God whom I can touch and see.
(p. 67)

The Reredos was the highly ornamental screen behind the high altar. In a traditional Catholic church it featured the tabernacle in the centre but in the Chapel at Marlborough it is an enormous Anglo-Catholic design featuring the Crucifixion in the centre. One critic, Kevin Gardner, rightly describes Betjeman’s lamentation as ‘a sensation of God’s absence’. (Gardner, 2006, p.xvi) When Betjeman refers to an image of the incarnate God in the place where he has found the

tabernacle in other churches, and demanding a God he 'can touch and see', it is reasonable to discern a Eucharistic longing, which would be eventually satiated by the discovery of the Anglo-Catholic Mass at Oxford's Pusey house where he 'learnt the Catholic Faith.'

> The steps to truth were made by sculptured stone,
> Stained glass and vestments, holy water stoups,
> Incense and crossings of myself ─ the things
> That hearty middle stumpers most despise
> As, 'all the inessentials of the Faith'.
> (Betjeman, 1960, p. 95)

Betjeman provides a perfect counter to the somewhat complacent assertions of his headmaster, Cyril Norwood, who argued for the most basic forms of liturgy on the grounds that 'a boy is never a man and has not come to his full religious consciousness.' (1929, p. 31)

It is worthwhile noting that the Reverend Wilfred Johnson, the rector of St. Ervan's in the north of Cornwall, gave Betjeman a copy of Arthur Machen's *The Secret Glory* as a means of rescuing Betjeman from his comfortable but unfulfilling school religion and giving his religious search some direction. Written between 1899 and 1908, but not published until 1922, Machen's[282] novel is surely one of the earliest to attack the public school system.[283] The novel centers on Ambrose Meyrick, a student who was sent to Lupton in order to be made into a man. (Machen, 1922, p. 5) Ambrose, an orphaned dreamer, exposed to the brutalities of English Public school life, is

[282] A very peripheral figure in English letters, Machen, like W. B. Yeats and Aleister Crowley, was a member of the occultist movement, The Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn. (Barber, 2004, p. 323)

[283] Machen denounces the bullying that was rampant in the Public school system in the 19th century. In many ways his writing is far harsher and far more didactic than any of the almamatricidal novelists of the interwar era. '…for the average lad there is plenty of fun to be got out of his feebler fellows… After all, the weakest must go to the wall, and if the bones of the weakest are ground in the process, that is their fault. When some miserable little wretch, after a year or two of prolonged and exquisite torture of body and mind, seeks the last escape of suicide, one knows how the Old Boys will come forward, how gallantly they will declare that the days at the "dear old school" were the happiest in their lives; how "the Doctor" was their father and the Sixth their nursing-mother; how the delights of the Mahomeddans' fabled Paradise are but grey and weary sport compared with the joys of the happy fag, whose heart, as the inspired bard of Harrow [Vachell] tells us, will thrill in future years at the thought of the Hill. And we all agree, and say there is nothing like our great Public Schools, and perhaps the only dissentient voices are those of the father and mother who bury the body of a little child about whose neck is the black sign of the rope. But let them be comforted: the boy was no good at games, though his torments were not bad sport while he lasted.' (Machen, 1922, pp. 10-11)

unfairly caned by his Uncle Horbury who is also the school's High Usher, a muscular Christian and the obvious successor to the current headmaster.

Lupton is low-church, with 'broad, earnest religious teaching, with a leaning to moderate Anglicanism'. (Machen, 1922, p. 42) Machen preempts many of the interwar educationalists when he has Horbury suggest that the ideal public school should cater to the wealthier classes who, though calling themselves Churchman, were quite content to have their sons prepared for confirmation by a confessed Agnostic. '"We will retain all the dignified associations which belong to the Established Church," he said to himself, "and at the same time we shall be utterly free from the taint of over-emphasising dogmatic teaching."' (p. 43) Ambrose conforms to this system only on the outside; on the inside he is filled with the Celtic mysticism taught him by his father.[284] This was a mysticism that centers on the Holy Grail and the Eucharistic sacrifice:

> On the outside I was playing games and going up in the school with a rush, and in the inside I was being gathered more and more into the sanctuaries of immortal things. All life was transfigured for me into a radiant glory, into a quickening and Catholic sacrament; and, the fooleries of the school apart, I had more and more the sense that I was a participant in a splendid and significant ritual. (Machen, 1922, p. 180)

Later Ambrose suddenly disappears 'He was just going up to Oxford, and the whole school was looking forward to a career which we knew would be quite exceptional in its brilliance. His scholarship papers astonished the Balliol authorities….[while his] bowling would get him into the University Eleven in his first term…' (Machen, 1922, p. 152) After running away with Nelly, his Uncle Horbury's maid, he is reconverted and becomes an esoteric writer and later, inheriting

[284] His father takes him on journeys into the Welsh hills where he meets Mr. Cradock who is the last in the line of men who are keepers of 'the Holy Cup of Teilo sant' (the Welsh name for the saintly Archbishop of Llandaff). Saint Teilo was said to have received the chalice from the Lord in the state of Paradise, and when Teilo said Mass, using that chalice, the choir of angels was present visibly. It was 'a cup of wonders and mysteries, the bestower of visions and heavenly graces.' (Machen, 1922, pp. 92-93) Later we read that his encounter with the Mass and its physical links with the mystical past have totally transformed Ambrose. 'Ambrose's soul had been caught in the sweet thickets of the woods; it had been bathed in the pure water of blessed fountains; it had knelt before the altars of the old saints, till all the earth was become a sanctuary, all life was a rite and ceremony, the end of which was the attainment of the mystic sanctity—the achieving of the Graal [Holy Grail]. For this—for what else?—were all things made….For this end, final and perfect rites had been given to men to execute; and these were all the arts, all the far-lifted splendour of the great cathedral; all rich carven work and all glowing colours; all magical utterance of word and tones: all these things were the witnesses that consented in the One Offering, in the high service of the Graal.' (Machen, 1922, p. 136)

the Holy Cup of Saint Tielo, he was martyred in its service. It is an unconvincing ending but nonetheless it is a fascinating instance of the School Blood, 'wickets [falling] before him as ripe corn falls before the sickle', rejecting the public school code and its vague religion, which centered on the sermon in the chapel and the 'aimless and flighty merriment' of the service, (pp. 108-110) for a radically re-enchanted form of religion.

Interestingly, MacKenzie's *Sinister Street*[285] and Waugh's *Loom of Youth* can both be said to follow a similar pattern to Machen's novel. All deride the school system, reserving their harsher criticisms for schoolboy religion before going on to promote Catholicism as the new religion for the questing schoolboy rebel. Alec Waugh, who 'accepted religion without belief,' (Alec Waugh, *The Early Years of Alec Waugh*, cited in Hastings, 1994, p. 37) concludes *The Loom of Youth* with his hero drifting towards Catholicism and the attractions of its monastic life. Gordon wonders:

> In the Roman Church at any rate was there not something permanent? *Quod semper, quod ubique, quod ab omnibus....*[286] That boast was surely not in vain. He longed to surrender himself completely, to fling away his own aims and inclinations, and abandon himself to a life of quiet devotion safe from the world… he wanted to merge himself into

[285] In *Sinister Street*, Michael Fane rejects his public school religion in favour of Anglo-Catholicism, that was 'practically 'Roming Catholic.' …Religion had been compounded of Collects, Greek Testament, Offertory Bags, varnish, qualms for the safety of one's top-hat, the pleasure of an extra large hassock, ambition to be grown up and bend over instead of kneeling down, the podgy feel of a Prayer Book, and a profound disapproval that only Eton and Winchester among public schools were mentioned in its diaphanous fumbling pages. Now religion should be an adventure.' (MacKenzie, 1949, p. 182) In the liturgy of Evensong he finds the intoxicating experiences previously denied him, 'Michael, waiting for a spiritual experience, communed that night with the saints of God, as during the Magnificat his soul rose to divine glories on the fumes of the aspiring incense.' (p. 184).Fane's obvious engagement with the liturgy his spiritual elation is neatly contrasted with the dry liturgical minutiae that obsesses his companion, Bernard Prout. While engaged in writing the second volume of *Sinister Street* Compton MacKenzie converted to Catholicism, seeing it as the logical conclusion of his long-held Anglo-Catholicism. Indeed he continued to recognise the validity of Anglican orders after he entered the Catholic Church. (Linklater, 1987, p. 136) Lunn also became a Catholic buts his conversion, which we will examine in a later chapter, was a product of a prolonged and atheistic search for a rational creed, culminating in an epistolary debate with Ronald Knox in which he lost. Following his research he concluded that 'The Church is the last refuge of Rationalism'. (Lunn, 1940, p. 203)

[286] 'That faith which has been believed everywhere, always, by all.'

> the great silent poetry of the Catholic life.[287] The Protestant creed could never give him what he wanted. (A. Waugh, 1984, pp. 255-256)

Fittingly, Gordon chats to a monk when his school plays Downside in cricket and the monk explains the tension between the attractions of the world and the attractions of the monastery. That evening when Gordon is finally given his "Firsts" he is totally underwhelmed even though it is what he has always wanted. By the end of the novel he puts off his conversion confident in the knowledge that Catholicism was his ultimate home. 'Doubtless in the end the Roman Church, the mother of wanderers, would take him to her breast. But that was a long way off yet, and he wished to bring himself to the final surrender, strong and clean-hearted, not a vessel broken on the back-wash of existence.' (A. Waugh, 1984 p. 264)

As Betjeman has shown, the attraction for Catholic theology and liturgy was not unknown among the interwar schoolboys. Many rebelled against the muscular Christianity of their schools and sought solace in a more enchanted religion. Tom Driberg, at Lancing with Waugh and Carew, would leave the school after the early Communion service and ride the ten miles into Brighton to attend Anglican High Mass at St. Bartholomew's. Driberg contrasted his growing attachment to the Mass with the services that he had been used to. It was 'a sacrificial drama, action as well as utterance, not just a static series of psalms, readings, and prayers; a temple, not a synagogue, function.' (Driberg, 1977, p. 47) Driberg saw his interest in Catholic liturgy as being directly akin to that which is described in *Sinister Street*. (p. 45) He also saw his Anglo-Catholicism as growing parallel with his homosexuality and socialist politics and just as Brighton provided him with a spiritual oasis, its Communist party soon provided him with a political refuge from the Labour party which, significantly, he described 'as [being] dull as a 'middle stump' church.' (p. 50)

Philip Toynbee is another example of this impulse towards enchanted religion. He was expelled from Rugby[288] for running away in order to become a Communist and was sent to Ampleforth

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[287] He cites Ernest Dowson's decadent poem, "Nuns of Perpetual Adoration," '"They saw the glory of the world displayed,/They saw the bitter of it and the sweet./They knew the roses of the world would fade/And be trod under by the hurrying feet./Therefore they rather put away desire...."' (A. Waugh, 1984, p. 225)

[288] Toynbee cited Waugh's immortal Captain Grimes when explaining his shameful banishment, 'they may kick you out but they never let you down.' When he was traced to Parton Street, living with Esmond Romilly, he returned to the school and was promptly expelled. But all the same he was allowed to say goodbye to all his friends and was

Abbey (his mother had recently converted to Catholicism) to spend six months working towards an Oxford scholarship.[289] He soon made friends with the younger monks and found himself eyeing their faith with sympathy and interest.

> For a time I suspected that I might be, not only a Communist and an outcast, but a natural Catholic; not only a Catholic but a Catholic with a vocation. I took to attending Mass and Vespers from a little hidden gallery above the choir of the Abbey church; I began to pray and to interrogate the monks about their beliefs. It was a period of conversion, to one thing or another, and the Catholic Church presented itself as an enticing alternative to the cause of political revolution. (Toynbee, 1954, p. 27)

Toybee would eventually join the Communist Party at Oxford and publish a letter in the *New Statesman* declaiming against the stream of young men joining the Catholic Church rather than the Communist Party. (Toynbee, 1954, p. 72) However, his youthful flirtation with Catholicism reveals the attraction that it held for the young interwar intellectuals. Clearly a religion that was rich in dogma expressed in an enchanted liturgy held attractions that few educationalists of the period would have credited.

Aesthetes and Intellectuals Rebel

S. P. B. Mais noted in his autobiography that the Borstal prison system was successfully based on the public school system. 'Boys run away from both. In both bullying reaches a pitch of insensate cruelty.' (Mais, 1937, p. 37) He might also have added, as per the popular belief, that in both a complex web of rules and traditions order every moment of the inmate's life in an effort to curb his natural instinct for vice and to promote a sense of selfless conformity. Peter Ustinov's 1939 School Report from Westminster School included the dire warning, 'he shows great originality, which must be curbed at all costs.' (Cited in Gathorne-Hardy, 1979, p. 329)

It was this individuality that marked out the intellectual convert. Many bucked the system by rejecting their religion and then compounded this apostasy by rejecting many other elements of their public school life. It would be simplistic to suggest that these rebellions were somehow the

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given a glowing reference from the headmaster. 'We consider that the boy's action was in many ways a fine one.' (Toynbee, 1954, pp. 25, 26)

[289] The easy movement from an elite private school to a bed-sit in Camden, to a monk's cell in a North Yorkshire Benedictine Abbey, is surely a testament to the Spartan conditions of English public schools.

first strains of Communist revolution or Catholic detachment from the world. Indeed the first thing that one notices is that much of the rebellion was characterised by a substantial dose of youthful petulance and embryonic wit. What makes them so interesting is the fact that much of the rebellion was an assertion of the intellectuals' presence within the school and an attack on the muscular Christian milieu that seemed to reject them. On an even more subtle level we can see the influence of the interwar narrative in the schoolboy rebellion. Like the ubiquitous unconversion, the active rejection of the Officers' Training Corps is common to most of the memoirs and biographies of the intellectual converts. Indeed it became so conventional that enjoying one's time with the OTC became as noteworthy as never being brutalised with the cane or enjoying chapel.

Antony Bulwer-Lytton's letters from Eton, like those of working class soldiers from the trenches, reveal the limitations of the popular narrative of widespread misery at English private schools. 'I am awfully happy and have a glorious life and am looking forward passionately to next holidays.' (Lytton Knebworth, 1936, p. 48) However even a paragon like Bulwer-Lytton described the raucous scenes on Armistice Night, in which a mob of boys marched on the commander of the OTC and demanded his resignation. Initially the mob was 'the whole of Eton linked up arm in arm in thousands of ranks' but soon the nervous students returned home while the hardier ones charged the masters who were impeding their progress. 'We charged Butterwick, Billy Marsden, and the constable (Hindenberg) and knocked them over and on we swept.' (Lytton Knebworth, 1936, pp. 52-53) Eventually Bulwer-Lytton was separated from the mob and returned home only to hear that the majority of the mob returned to the college when Rayner-Wood publically retired as C.O. of the Corps. Meanwhile the novelist Henry Green, known to his contemporaries at Eton as Henry Yorke, added an important detail that Bulwer-Lytton missed. Despite being two years younger than Bulwer-Lytton, Green witnessed a revolutionary moment in English public school history. He wrote in his memoir of that same occasion: 'the great men [members of Pop, most of them bloods] sallied forth from their clubroom to keep order we turned on our heroes and chased them back inside again. In doing this, the most natural thing in the world as it seems today [1938], we showed then that we were mad.' (H. Green, 2000, p. 66) This madness, so run of the mill by the late thirties, characterised the rebellion of the intellectuals in the twenties and early thirties.

The conclusion that the end of the war had ushered in a deep-seated change in the power structures of the English Public school, much like in the English nation at large, was unavoidable. Consequently, perhaps spurred on by the growing pacifist movement as much as by any pubescent cynicism, the OTC became a favourite target. John Cornford, who once boasted to his mother that he had broken every school rule, 'on principle', simply refused to join, while others joined and either luxuriated in their own incompetence or worked hard to undermine the entire organization. (Galassi, 1986, pp. 129-130, 155-156)

Though he was later caricatured as a bumptious conservative, Evelyn Waugh's diaries reveal that he too was caught up in the interwar narrative and spoke during a school debate in support of the motion that, 'The war having ended the Corps should do likewise.' He was in a clear minority. 'It resulted in an outstanding victory for militarism 9-37… man after man got up and talked the imperialist trash about discipline and the capacity for leadership.' (Davie, 2009, p. 56)[290] Waugh's response to his position was to make the Corps as absurd in reality as he believed them to be in theory.

> Rifles were dropped, the platoon would have to fall in several times before they satisfied procedural rules of smartness. Then came the refinements. One boot would be scrupulously polished and the other left filthy. On a defaulters' parade in 1920: 'Fulford wore running shorts, tweet coat with huge sprigs of holly, and socks (with suspenders), and corps boots. I wore running things and a great coat and a woollen muffler.' (Stannard, 1986, p. 55)

Waugh became a legend among his schoolmates. His good friend Dudley Carew saw the beginnings of Waugh's satirical genius in his rebellious schooldays. '...in his many duels with authority, Evelyn showed the same impassive exterior, the same innocence of the intent to be amusing as later characterized his books.' (Carew, 1949, p. 94) Waugh soon graduated from deliberate incompetence to the more deviant plan of winning the Platoons House Shield in an

[290] Also cited in Stannard, 1986, p. 54

effort to hold a funeral procession for the trophy when they claimed it from the more enthusiastic houses. (Stannard, 1986, p. 55)[291]

Where Waugh was 'a debunker; in delighting in 'iconoclastic attacks on established reputations', (Carew, 1949, p. 93)[292] most other students were satisfied with perfidious indolence. The novelist, L. P. Hartley simply avoided the Corps and, instead, attended the hitherto shamed 'non-corps schools'. (Hartley, 'The Conformer.' In Ed. Greene, 1984, p. 68) Derek Verschoyle, the literary journalist, argued that the O.T. C. was so hated at Malvern that 'it therefore had the merit of converting at any rate a minority to a dislike of militarism.' (Verschoyle, 'Indian Innocence, LTD.' In Ed. Greene, 1984, p. 188) Blunt and Betjeman at Marlborough and Isherwood at Repton turned the Corps into a joke through a long-practised game of comic incompetence. (Carter, 2001, p. 26) Robin Maugham simply resigned from the Corps 'in a spirit of rebellion.' (Maugham, 1973, p. 68) Unsurprisingly, it was Orwell who provided the most iconic image of interwar rebellion. During a particularly hot summer's day, Orwell led his section away from the action and, ordering them to remove their uniforms, he spent half of an OTC field day, hiding under a haystack reading *Eric or Little by Little*[293] in a comic voice. (Shelden, 1998, p. 69, and Stansky & Abrahams, 1972, p. 127) The extent of the rebel's influence can be gauged by the peace celebrations held at Eton in 1919. Organised by the O.T. C. 'as a kind of military triumph' they provoked a 'riotous demonstration in the School Yard during which the boys invented mocking lyrics for the patriotic songs they had been expected to sing... ridicule thereafter became the accepted weapon of [the corps'] pretensions'. (Stansky & Abrahams, 1972, p. 127) By the Second World War the Corps had retained some of its status but it was only as a necessary evil. Peregrine Worsthone remembered, with no little distaste, having buckets of pigs' blood poured

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[291] However in this instance his motives were not pure 'bolshevism.' Rather Waugh wanted to be a house captain and yet didn't want to lose face by cooperating with 'the gods' as, in his diary, he termed the authorities.

[292] This description was Carew's who, even while at school, was so taken with Waugh's rebellion that he wrote him a poem. It began with the lines 'You have broken all my idols, / given me fresh creeds to keep.' Waugh copied the poem out in his diary before adding, 'It is rather embarrasing to have so large an influence which works out in such a bad poem.' (Davie, 2009, pp. 90-91)

[293] This was one of the classic schoolboy stories from the 19th century, ranking alongside Tom Brown's Schooldays as a mawkish didactic spiritual journey. Dean Farrer's novel is famous for being the most reviled of the Victorian schoolboy stories that essentially revolve around 'the making of a muscular Christian.' Indeed, as Jeffrey Richards points out, it is so reviled that it was mocked by such hidebound writers as Rudyard Kipling, P. G. Wodehouse and Talbot Baines Reed. Reed, who wrote for the *Boy's Own Paper*, a magazine launched by the religious tract society, wrote that 'the Dean administered a powder of religious dogma and Christian morality, mixed with the narrative 'jam' of school life but he thought the 'powder' too aggressive the 'jam' too insipid and the mixture as a whole nauseous to the average boy.' (Richards, 1988, p. 70)

over him while he went through bayonet training at Stowe during the war. ('Boy Made Man.' In G. M. Fraser (Ed.) 1977, p. 80) And by the 1950s Tim Brooke-Taylor was at Winchester, 'committing suicide' during the field exercises in order to avoid further participation. (G. M. Fraser, 1977, p. 169) Despite the intense need for the OTC during the Second World War and the widespread belief in an impending war during the early years of the Cold War, it seems that the OTC never really recovered from the iconoclasm of the thirties and would be finally killed off by the more violent pacifism of the sixties.

While it is possible to link the anti-militarism that ran through many of England's elite schools with the growing pacifism of the outside world, the aesthetic rebellion that features in just as many memoirs and biographies was an exclusively public school rebellion. It was one facet of the rejection of the cult of games; a revolution that had been simmering in the novels of MacKenzie, Lunn and Alec Waugh and was motivated by a growing reverence for the clerisy in the intellectual life of the nation. The survival of a system that deified athletes before releasing them to relative obscurity while, at the same time, torturing the young men who would become go on to become forceful clerists was, in itself, something of a miracle. However, as mentioned earlier in this chapter, the majority of the influential writers and thinkers of the period were public school men, as opposed to the handful of pre-war clerists. Consequently, the ranks of the aesthetes were swollen as never before and the relatively unquestioned authority of the bloods became a very public victim of the interwar schoolboy rebellion.

The position of the bloods was such that when Alec Waugh was interred in a German prison of war camp in 1918 he still heard about the feats of Lionel Paget Hedges of Tonbridge who, in the absence of first class cricket, was named one of five schoolboy Wisden Cricketers of the year in 1919.[294] (A. Waugh, 1922, p. 80) By 1933 Hedges had died of influenza after a relatively indifferent first class career that was cut short by the demands of his career as a school master at Cheltenham College.[295] (Wilde, 2013, p. 93) However his status as a national hero of schoolboy

[294] They were, Norman Partridge (Malvern), Percy Adams (Cheltenham) Percy Chapman (Uppingham) Adrian Gore (Eton) Lionel Hedges (Tonbridge). Of the five only one, A. P. F. Chapman of Uppingham, ever achieved greatness as a cricketer, later captaining England to two Ashes series wins, the first in England in 1926 and then later in Australia in 1928-29 His career was later undone when he was given a job in a brewery and somehow his batting technique left him. (Wilde, 2013, pp. 91-93)

[295] His only subsequent claim to fame was the fact that, as a passionate amateur actor, he featured in the 1931 film, *Tell England*. (Wilde, 2013, p. 93) Based on two brothers signing up to take part in the landings at Gallipoli, the film

cricket between 1918 and 1919 is a testament to the seemingly untouchable cult of games. In most schools the position of the bloods was such that the intellectuals were simply there to support them by doing their homework. During Lunn's time at Harrow one 'Cadby, an excellent cricketer, raffled his homework for the week every Saturday evening. He would walk round the house with a bag from which the intelligentsia would be invited to draw a ticket.' Clearly this was a long-established tradition. Lunn adds that the same system had been in place during Churchill's time at the school and the poetic phrases of one of Britain's greatest orators frequently found their way into the work of one of the most illiterate members of the school football eleven. (1940, p. 29)

Martin Green argues in his seminal work, *Children of the Sun*, that the aesthetes, or 'Children of the Sun', rebelled against the consensus humanism of Victorian and Edwardian culture. Their intellectual outpourings would come to be defined by their status as rebels. '[W]e shall… expect to find that their books (their ideologies, their narratives, their images) present[ing] themselves as being *in opposition*.' (1976, p. 4) The rebellion that would dominate their intellectual life naturally began to emerge in the same period in which their intellectual life was being formed.

As mentioned previously, this formation was taking place in a period of widespread discontent with political and religious institutions and the iconoclastic attacks of the aesthetes were sometimes linked, either directly or indirectly, to the broader upheaval that marked the world outside. The connection with the interwar narrative of discontent can be seen in the war memoirs that included, as Graves' did, a portion on their pre-war education. In *Goodbye to All That* Graves speaks in even harsher terms of the public school system than in those he reserves for the bumbling Army. He begins his description of his life at Charterhouse school by recalling a conversation in which he and another intellectual suggest that the only solution is to close the school, sack the staff and begin again. 'However, even this would not be enough, the school buildings being so impregnated with what passed as the public school spirit, but what we felt as fundamental evil, that they would have to be demolished and the school rebuilt elsewhere under a different name.' (Graves, 2009, p. 36) William Plomer linked his rejection of the school, its values and its religion with the sickening experience of the war itself.

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also starred, Fay Compton, who was Compton Mackenzie's sister. The film was directed by Anthony Asquith, the son of the former Prime Minister, H.H. Asquith.

> What I do say is that powerful feelings were there in my heart, of resentment against those who taught me and their teachings, and of pity for the wounded soldiers, of sympathy and love, as if I were on their side, somehow taking their part against the huge forces that had filled this man's lungs with gas, driven this one mad, and torn away that one's genitals. *Onward Christian Soldiers*, we sang in chapel. (Plomer, 'The Gothic Arch.' In Ed. Greene, 1984, pp. 113-114)

Having rejected Christianity, many of the aesthetes or intellectuals now turned to reject the muscle. Their rebellion took on several distinct forms: the establishment of societies that usually excluded the bloods, the publication of magazines that contained a range of juvenilia desperate to commit some form of cultural blasphemy, and a range of exhibitionist stunts that usually struck at the heart of muscular Christian educational system. Graves describes one of the latter, perpetrated at his school, as 'the bravest deed ever done at Charterhouse', when three senior members of the debating society entered chapel wearing the uniform privileges reserved for the bloods or hearties, along with a pink carnation and contrived to avoid any retribution. Consequently he notes, 'the prestige of the bloods declined greatly.' (Graves, 2009, pp. 43-44)[296]

Mirroring Graves' admiration for the rebels, Christopher Isherwood described the schoolyard Auden as a mystical rebel.

> I remember him chiefly for his naughtiness, his insolence, his smirking tantalizing air of knowing disreputable and exciting secrets. With his hinted knowledge and stick of mispronounced scientific words, portentously uttered, he enjoyed among us, his semi-savage schoolfellows, the status of a kind of witch doctor. (Cited in Bergonzi, 1978, p. 12)

The aesthete, who shocked convention and undermined the dignity of the hearties or bloods, became a familiar figure. At Marlborough the rebellion centered on the enigmatic figure of a young Anthony Blunt who led his fellow aesthetes such as Ellis Waterhouse, John Bowles, Tom

[296] Also cited in Gathorne-Hardy, 1979, p. 338) Hugh Dalton, while at Eton before the Great War did something similar. He single-handedly took on the privileges of Pop, to which he had no technical right, 'wearing pumps as a symbol of rebellion and irreverence.' (Pimlott, 1985, pp. 30-31)

Mynors, John Betjeman and Louis MacNeice in a spirited rebellion. According to Betjeman, their target was 'the establishment generally, of the more out of date and pedantic masters, of all forms of organized sport, of Officers Training Corps, and of all the other features that we hated in school life….you might say, the intellectual discomforts of school.' (Hillier, 1988, p. 101) The rebellion was exhibitionist, with Blunt, MacNeice and Betjeman forming a 'cult of childhood' as an effeminate provocation of the bloods. Betjeman would trundle a hoop through the school courtyard, wearing a feather behind his ear. (Hillier, 1988, p. 118) Blunt and his friends would interrupt games of rounders by playing catch with a brightly coloured ball in the outfield or they would attend chapel flaunting long silk handkerchiefs. (Carter, 2001, pp. 25-26) In early 1924 Blunt and a group of his friends immortalised their contempt for the athletic cult by producing a magazine called *The Herritick*. The magazine was suppressed after two editions because of references to Oscar Wilde. (Carter, 2001, pp. 29-31)

At Lancing Evelyn Waugh was at the center of a similar rebellion. It is important to note that, according to his diaries, his rebellion against the OTC really began about the same time as his aesthete education at the hands of Francis Crease. (See Davie, 2009, pp. 56ff) Waugh formed several clubs that served as a means of promoting aesthete culture, the first of which was the Dilettanti. 'We were, in the language of the day, Bolshies.' The society was concerned with politics, literature and art. The politics was under the supervision of a young Hugh Molson, who, at the time, 'professed socialism, atheism, pacifism and hedonism.' (E. Waugh, 1964, pp. 126, 128) When Waugh was elected to a leadership position he was 'divorced from the Bolshie elements of the school and in true decadent fashion, founded a Corpse Club for students who were equally weary of life. 'We wore black ties, a black tassel in our button-holes and wrote on mourning note-paper.' (E. Waugh, 1964, p. 138)

At Eton, Waugh's future Oxonian friends were engaged in the aesthete rebellion that, like almost everything else that was Etonian, moved beyond the school boundaries and captured the attention of the outside world. The two leading figures of the aesthete rebellion were Brian Howard and Harold Acton. The latter came to Eton as an aesthete rebel. While still at prep school, during the war, he had written an article for the school magazine 'proposing that the British Army should march in uniforms designed by Bakst and to marches composed by Stravinsky….' (M. Green, 1976, p. 110) At Eton the rebels tended to gather about the Drawing school which Powell

described as a ‘Latin quarter – Du Maurier’s or even Thackeray’s – magically reconstituted among the byways of an English public school.’ (1983, p. 33) Late in his career Brian Howard founded the Eton Society of Arts, which met at the studio in Keate’s Lane. Powell, though somewhat dismissive of the society later in life, said that Howard pretended that it was a new sport, electing himself as captain or ‘keeper’ and printing a list of eleven names, each chosen for a particular aptitude and pinned up on a wall like any other team list. (Powell, 1983, p. 47) Unsurprisingly the membership was uniformly rebellious. ‘Everyone there had been prepared to come out in the open as belonging to a newly formed association bound to excite a good deal of ridicule among the boys....’ (Powell, 1983, p. 47) The high point of the society came when they produced *The Eton Candle*. Like *the Herritick* at Marlborough it was in the style of a decadent magazine from the 1890s. The magazine was, in essence, a means of introducing Eton to aesthete culture. It included contributions from old-boy rebels like Sacheverell Sitwell and Aldous Huxley. It also firmly linked the aesthete cultural rebellion with the interwar narrative. Howard penned a poem on the War Dead:

> You were a great generation...
>
> And then you went and got murdered ─ magnificently
> Went out and got murdered... because a parcel of damned old men
> Wanted some fun or some power or something.
> (M. Green, 1976, p. 143)

Another member of the club was Henry Green who pointed out that ‘we were out to annoy by being what we called ‘amusing’ ...we took fearful joy in making fun of all that we thought the school held sacred’ including the memory of the war dead. (H. Green, 2000, p. 100)

The Etonian aesthetes stood for ‘modernism in general, understood as the movement against the consensus culture.’(M. Green, 1976, pp. 125-127) They promoted Roger Fry’s workshops ‘a hive of criminal aesthetics’. (M. Green, 1976, p. 143) In *The Eton Candle* Howard attacked the Georgian poets and promoted ‘The New Poetry’ as well as their own tentative attempts at fiction, very much in the decadent style. The influence of these two, deeply connected, literary and cultural movements can be identified in *The Herritick*, *The Eton Candle* and the various societies

such as the Corpse Club and, more obviously, Eton's Cremorne Club, which was directly inspired by Howard's reading of Huysmans' *Á Rebours*. The combination of decadence and modernism is a fairly natural one because it essentially couples the reality of decay with the ideal of renewal. Both come from a marginalized position, railing against an untouchable status quo, but both are animated by an equally strong, 'cultural conviction.' As a movement, modernism is not simply concerned with breaking old rules;

> It was rather first of all to challenge an unfreedom, the oppressions of journalism, of genteel audiences, of timid readers, of political and religious orthodoxy. So much of the story of that [the modernists] told themselves was a tale of tyranny and resistance. The name of the tyrant changed – the Editor, the Lady, the Public, the Banker, the Democrat – but whatever the scenario, the narrowness of the oppressor was seen amply to justify the violence of the art. (Levenson, 1999, p. 2)

In essence, modernism was a pre-conversion movement; it was the movement that waged a war on what it perceived as the banality and illogicality of Victorian and Edwardian culture. It provided many of the interwar intellectuals with the language with which they too could play their part in that war. Whilst many had discovered the modernist movement in their alternate education, only the most cultured, like Howard and Acton, actually joined the movement while still at school. Both of the aforementioned went on to Oxford having already published work and having received the praise of modernist notables like Edith Sitwell. When Howard first read Arthur Symons's *The Symbolist Movement in Literature* he wrote to Acton, 'I HAVE JUST DISCOVERED OUR CATEGORY.' (M. Green, 1976, p. 141) Many of the schoolboy iconoclasts might well have had the same response to modernism, without knowing it; they were 'of the movement.'

Evelyn Waugh later admitted that his group, 'hunted as a small pack to bring down our equals and immediate superiors,' and that they ragged on the OTC, not for 'high motives of pacifism' but from the fact that they were less likely to be punished. (1964, pp. 130-131) It was a rebellion that from the perspective of forty years in the world may have simply looked like intemperate spitefulness and exhibitionism but it was undoubtedly real to the young intellectuals of twenties. These were the nascent political struggles underpinned by slowly forming root realities. Alec

Waugh blamed the widespread spirit of revolt on simple ennui (1922, pp. 202-203) but clearly, since many of the young men continued rebelling when freed from the narrow tedium of school life, boredom is not a satisfactory explanation. It is perhaps more accurate to describe the Spirit of Bolshevism as a desperate search for meaning, animated by the conviction that such a search would prove fruitful.

Douglas Goldring wrote that 'When England goes Communist no doubt the party in power will call itself the "conservative cooperative" party and, as usual, half the government will be Old Etonian.' (Cited in Blythe, 1963, p. 110) Goldring, who was not an old Etonian, was clearly frustrated by the dominance of former public schoolboys in the socialist movement. However unintentionally, he raised an interesting point; namely that there was a curious compatibility between the public school man and left wing politics in general. As Corelli Barnett pointed out, Arnoldian Protestantism was primarily concerned with good and evil; it was a system of morality rather than theology. (Barnett, 1972, p. 25) At least eight times a week, for six years, the interwar clerists were educated in this astringent moral religion. While they rejected the doctrine that underpinned the morality they often retained a deeply moral worldview that was as romantically heroic as that of muscular Christianity. Norwood offers another clue when he unctuously declares that most boys leave a public school with three discernible qualities.

> [First]...a definite desire for right conduct, a desire... to live decently and to do something that may be of real use to the world... [Secondly] a sense of membership in a community which stands for something higher than that to which he could individually attain.... [and thirdly] some sense of the meaning of the kingdom of God, a world to be made better, social conditions to be altered, something real conveyed in the vague word, 'progress'. (Norwood, 1929, p. 60)

For the Communist converts the kingdom lost its God but the uncompromising belief in progress and the ideals of personal virtue and the service of others would prove crucial. Barnett summed it up best when he wrote: 'School thus marked [the interwar] generation deeply. How deeply is shown by the renegade public school men who, violently attacking the public school, themselves argued from a romantically ideal and moral standpoint.' (Barnett, 1972, p. 36) They, like

Mackenzie's Michael Fane, had left school with a Quixotic understanding of the public-school man.

It is reasonable to argue, as Barnett does, that while the interwar converts rejected the religion of their education they were often marked deeply by it. And, perhaps ironically, this seems truest for the Communist converts. At Eton during the period, the school accepted the 'Bolshies' as eccentrics and somehow continued 'turning out Etonians, conformists and non-conformists alike', as they always had. (Stansky & Abrahams, 1972, pp. 101-102) The fusion of left-wing radicalism and schoolboy values is perhaps best exemplified by Antony Blunt when he gave his notorious press conference in the offices of *The Times* (where else?). (Carter, 2001, pp. 480-481) In the course of his written statement he justified his long loyalty to Russia by appealing to the public school code.

> When later I learnt the true facts about Russia I was prevented from taking any action by personal loyalty, I could not denounce my friends. In 1964 an event took place which meant that I was no longer bound by this loyalty and being promised immunity I was relieved to give the authorities all the information in my possession. (Penrose & Simon, 1986, p. 512)

The assumption that everyone in 1979 would appreciate the inviolability of the public school code and its ban on sneaking made Blunt seem more like an anachronism than a political radical. In essence Blunt's reasoning showed that he was 'public school to the core', a description that Orwell applied to John Cornford in his essay, 'My Country Right or Left':

> Let anyone compare the poem John Cornford wrote not long before he was killed (*Before the Storming of Huesca*) with Sir Henry Newbolt's *There's a breathless hush in the close tonight*. Put aside the technical differences, which are merely a matter of period, and it will be seen that the emotional content of the two poems is almost exactly the same. The young Communist who died heroically in the International Brigade was public school to the core. He had changed his allegiance but not his emotions. (Orwell, 2000, p. 137)[297]

[297] Other details from Cornford's final days reveal a mentality that might be described as 'public school to the core.' When he briefly returned home in September, he borrowed his father' s World War One revolver, a significant

Blunt and Cornford and a myriad of other clerist converts changed their allegiances, their root realities but not their emotions, which remained obstinately romantic. Orwell himself said that 'at the age of seventeen or eighteen' he was 'both a snob and a revolutionary [who was] against all authority' (Orwell, 2001, p. 130) It is this curious mix of conservative and elite education combined with the politics of radical revolution that make the interwar converts to Communism so fascinating for the intellectual historian.

Schoolboy Converts

By the 1930s the conversion phenomenon was at such a fever-pitch among British intellectuals that it was no longer the prerogative of the university student. Indeed many of the converts were now teachers and, unsurprisingly, the conversion phenomenon soon affected the public school system. Valentine Cunningham noted that 'many of the writers had with almost indecent alacrity gone back into the system as schoolmasters. (1988, p. 123) He goes on to list some of the schoolboy rebels that we have been discussing such as T. C. Worsley, Evelyn Waugh, Christopher Isherwood, W. H. Auden, Louis MacNeice, Anthony Blunt, George Orwell, Tom Driberg, and John Betjeman, all of whom followed in the footsteps of T. S. Eliot and Aldous Huxley and took to teaching. Evelyn Waugh, who saw teaching as a last resort for those who could not get a prestige job or a private income, called them 'men degraded and lost to hope.' ('Careers for our Sons: Education.' Cited in Cunningham, 1988, pp. 124-125) However they were often the men who, like T. C. Worsley, educated, in the truest sense of the word, schoolboy Communist rebels like the Romilly Brothers. (Cunningham, 1988, pp. 124-125)

In *The Road to Wigan Pier* George Orwell recalled an incident from Eton that acted as an example of the 'queer revolutionary feeling of that time':

> One day the master who taught us English set us a kind of general knowledge paper of which one of the questions was, 'Whom do you consider the ten greatest men now living?' Of sixteen boys in the class (our average age was about seventeen) fifteen included Lenin in their list. This was at a snobbish expensive public school, and the date

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gesture, and, remembering the long periods of boredom at the front, took two books back to the front; the first volume of Marx's *Capital* and a collection of Shakespeare's *Tragedies*. (Stansky, 1965, pp. 360, 364)

> was 1920, when the horrors of the Russian Revolution were still fresh in everyone's mind. (Orwell, 2001, p. 130)

Orwell rightly points out that such 'bolshevism' was a product of the prevailing attitudes of the day. Richard Crossman who was at Winchester during the twenties was something of a Socialist rebel but his rebellion resulted in a fairly typical career as a Labour politician.[298] Yet at school Crossman controversially stood as a Labour candidate in the school's mock-elections, losing by 21 votes to 105 and later deriding the Conservative Party in *The Wykehamist* as the party that 'stood not simply for stagnation [but] was trying to frighten people.' (Howard, 1990, pp. 20-21) The Socialist conversion also began to appear in the schoolboy stories. In his diaries, Aubrey Fowkes[299] becomes 'vaguely socialist and begins to sympathise with the strikers and reject the OTC. (Annan, 1990, p. 47) However by the thirties schools were rocked by more public conversions to the more radical destination of Communism, the most notorious being that of the Romilly Brothers in the early 1930s. Their rebellion took on the explicit tone and purpose of the Communist convert.

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[298] Clive James reviewed Crossman's extensive diaries, delighting in the awkward comedy produced by an elite public schoolman who owned a magnificent country estate, Prescote, expostulating socialism during Britain's rapid economic decline in the late sixties. Two incidents are worth mentioning as examples of Crossman's Quixotic public school Socialism. First, when planning a speech accepting responsibility for 10,000 men being thrown out of work at the British Motor Corporation Crossman wrote, 'I assumed that the right way to handle the news…was to be tough and say, "Yes, we are deliberately creating transitional redundancy in order to prevent mass unemployment".' Someone stopped him in time. That the working population would swallow a concept like 'transitional redundancy' was a very odd assumption for a Labour cabinet minister to be caught holding. The second was from Crossman's brief tenure as the editor of *The New Statesman*. 'He once told a young journalist of my acquaintance to get himself togged out in St. James's. 'I,' said Crossman, 'eat in St. James's, get my hair cut in St. James's, and have my suits, shirts and shoes made in various parts of St. James's. St. James's — that's the place for you, my lad.' To one of the New Statesman's notoriously underpaid junior staff members this was good but useless advice, since the shops in St. James's are very expensive. No doubt it struck Crossman as a good socialist solution for an impecunious young man to kit himself out with durable clobber. The factor he neglected was the magnitude of the initial outlay.' (James, 1977)

[299] Though much forgotton, Aubrey Fowkes' teen diaries, twelve volumes of which were published between 1937 and 1954, covering the years 1900 to 1920, were a very typical interwar piece of writing. (See: Watson, 1992, pp. 52-58) Written under the pseudonym , Esmond Quinterley, little is known about their real author. The diaries purport to trace the career of a sensitive student at Portlow School. Annan argues that the diaries read like they were based on real diaries. (Annan, 1990, p. 46 ft) Watson suggests that they were written by Reginald Ashley Caton 'a mysterious and elusive proprietor of the Fortune Press throughout the Thirties and Forties [who] divided his publishing activity between poetry and what then passed for pornography, often of a homosexual tinge.' (Watson, 1992, p. 53) He goes on to outline the homosexual and pederastic themes that were central to each diary. The final instalment was an imaginary account of Shakespeare's time studying at Repton, 'like every other Fowkes character, young Shakespeare is shown to have an eager interest in flagellation.' (p. 58)

Giles and Esmond Romilly

When Esmond Romilly ran away from Wellington in 1934 and set himself up as a Communist journalist working out of a Bloomsbury bookshop the newspapers eagerly took up the story. Sensational headlines such as, 'Mr. Churchill's Nephew Vanishes from Public School' and '"Under Influence of London Communists" says Mother' appeared around the country and for a few weeks Esmond Romilly's exploits were widely reported. (Romilly & Romilly, 1935, p. 264) Despite all the fanfare, when one reads the memoir *Out of Bounds*, one is immediately struck by the conventionality of his conversion and that of his brother. Both Giles and Esmond attended Wellington College and, because they were nephews of Winston Churchill and sons of Colonel Bertram Romilly, a much-vaunted military hero,[300] a conventional career was expected of both.

Giles was the elder and went two years before Esmond. His was something of a lonely, manic-depressive personality and descriptions of bleak periods litter his half of the memoir. He described himself as being depressed by the 'very fact of Wellington.' (Romilly & Romilly, 1935, p. 47) Before his political conversion he underwent something of a religious conversion, although it was a conversion that was primarily concerned with sexual morality. 'I revived the habit of saying prayers – morning and evening… I prayed to God to strengthen me in my fight against Sin… It was some time before my conscience, helped by a semi-scientific atheism, began to disperse.' (p. 79) He later underwent a purely emotional confirmation that inspired a short period of piety. His preparation was typical of public school religion; his tutor established 'an atmosphere of drowsy piety, through which perhaps one felt more emotionally religious than one had done in the College chapel. But it was not an atmosphere in which any but the most generalised questions could have been asked.' (p. 128) After the ceremony he felt changed, but only for a short time.

> I felt unselfish toward everybody, and wondered if I should refrain from eating a big lunch… I imagined that I was going about my daily tasks in a "new" spirit, and went to Holy Communion two or three times in order to fortify myself for carrying on the struggle. I prayed for all the qualities which I lacked, and would never acquire. (p. 129)

[300] Kevin Ingram gives a brief summary of Bertam Romilly's career. He entered the Scots Guards in 1899 and by 1902 he had won the DSO for acts of bravery in the Boer War. He later commanded the Camel Corps in Egypt between 1911 and 1914. In World War One he was severely wounded and invalided home. (Ingram, 1985, p. 6)

Giles Romilly's moral struggle was, to some extent, a response to the fact that during his time at school he was actively homosexual. By the time he left school he said that sex, along with his weekly piano lessons and some of the lectures made up the 'occasional pleasant interludes' in a picture in which any light was merely 'on the surface.' (Romilly & Romilly, 1935, p. 155) His political conversion was one of those few bright periods.[301]

Naturally, the first stirrings of his developing convictions were expressed in his resignation from the OTC. His pacifism was born of his personal hatred of the Corps, along with his private reading, in this case Norman Angell's seemingly 'unanswerable' book, *The Unseen Assassins*. Following a long row with his tutor he emerged, 'one at last of the noble company of "damned rotters."' (Romilly & Romilly, 1935, p. 140) His continued movement leftwards culminated in a brief period of happiness and acceptance. 'I threw away all the old traditions at once, and swung heavily in the other direction. I "became" a Communist and atheist, without in the least considering what it meant to "be" either…I was too intoxicated with what to me seemed the infallibility of the new ideas.' (pp. 141-142) He and his rebellious friends, Basil Lawrence and Gordon Elliott, loudly expressed their political opinions in an effort to discombobulate the more conservative masters. When those friendships petered out, so too did the momentum of his conversion. 'Except for [the romantic interest in small boys] there was nothing on which I wanted to exercise my powers of concentration, which were rapidly dwindling. So, through not being exercised, they dwindled still more, and left a painful emptiness and depression.' (p. 151)

Esmond, though the younger brother, was in many ways the leader. Where Giles struggled with his religion, Esmond abandoned his faith when young and violently promoted his atheism. Churchill's daughter told the story that he tried to convince her to stop believing in Jesus Christ 'in sixty seconds' by holding her head in a bucket of water. ''Now do you believe in Jesus Christ?' [he asked.] Of course, after the second time I jacked the whole thing in.' (Ingram, 1985, p. 16) Like his brother Esmond stood in stark opposition to the muscular heroes of countless novels by virtue of his constant aloofness. Both were isolated intellectual figures. Giles wrote, that early on at Wellington, 'there were perhaps four boys with whom I regularly consorted [but]

[301] Again, it is important to note that the explicit discussion of homosexual activity in Romilly's memoir is usually ignored by historians. By the mid-thirties discussions of Communism were far more titillating than schoolboy homosexuality which had become passé.

whose company I did not particularly enjoy, except at times…' His brother, writing of the same period in his own life, was in even less felicitous circumstances; 'there was only one boy of my term with whom I had anything in common, and I spent my first year quarrelling with him.' (Ingram, 1985, pp. 108, 187). But where his brother was prone to depression and self-loathing, Esmond was preternaturally political. During his time at Seacliffe Preparatory School and his first terms at Wellington, he was a romantic conservative; a Jacobite who celebrated the execution of Charles I as 'the martyrdom of St. Charles.' (Ingram, 1985, p. 178) This was followed by his interest in Mosley's 'New Party', after having tea with Mosley and Harold Nicolson. 'I read *Action* keenly, and had distributed a few copies to friends at Wellington.' (Ingram, 1985, 179)

Like that of St. Ignatius Loyola, Esmond Romilly's conversion was a product of voracious reading in the face of boredom.[302] Holidaying in Dieppe he chanced to buy a copy of *The Daily Worker* before crossing the channel and 'though I did not learn much Communism, I learned that there was another world as well as the one in which I lived.' (Romilly & Romilly, 1935, p. 181) He ordered copies to be sent on to him in France. When he returned to Wellington it was with a bust of Lenin and six copies of the *Communist Manifesto* and a great deal of similar literature. Where students like Orwell had read Bernard Shaw and other Socialist iconoclasts, Romilly's alternative education in the thirties was an exclusively Communist education.

> Having read a good deal of the literature I had brought with me, I came to the conclusion that Communism, after all, was not "rot" and began to take a real interest in the study of Marxism. I never gave any faith then to what I may call "Labourism." I saw almost at once that however I might calculate about dividends and inflated currency, there were clearly two sides, and one must choose one. (Romilly & Romilly, 1935, p. 188)

It is interesting that Romilly's description of his 'encapsulation' contains the assumption that he had faith to give to a particular cause, as though he must convert to something and that Communism won. The experience of having to 'choose a side' was particularly common to the

[302] Ignatius was recovering from a truly painful series of operations and had nothing to read excepting '*The Life of Christ* by Rudolph, the Carthusian, and another book called the *Flowers of the Saints* both in Spanish. By frequent reading of these books he began to get some love for spiritual things. This reading led his mind to meditate on holy things…' (O'Connor, 1900, p. 24)

interwar era along with the prevailing assumption that the country desperately needed a renewal of some sort.

Where Giles resigned from the OTC, Esmond refused to join and even went so far as to write a letter to the *Student Vanguard* (a university publication by Socialist students[303]), unfairly condemning the school's habit of coercing students into the Corps. The school did no such thing but, such was the reputation of public schools at the time, the letter was published unquestioned. Esmond's work as a Communist was, from this point onwards, a classic mix of the fiery radical and the privileged elite. He sent lists of names to the 'Friends of the Soviet Union' of students and staff who would benefit from receiving circulars. He escaped to London during one half-holiday to meet up with 'some "Comrades". (Romilly & Romilly, 1935, p. 196) When he realized he had no money for his return fare, he was forced to go to his maternal Aunt, Clementine Churchill, in order to get the requisite sum. Another time, turning up at the radical bookshop in Parton Street, Bloomsbury, he was naturally greeted by a fellow Old Wellingtonian, David Archer.[304] He eagerly attended his first Communist demonstration because, 'I knew I would be able to make a good story of it when I got back to the house party' in the country. (p. 205) Even his work as a Communist propagandist at Wellington was not dissimilar to the traditional schoolboy prank. His disruption of the Armistice Day celebrations in 1933 was described as 'a great rag' and was more of a battle against the 'toughs' or bloods. 'The whole affair soon became a veritable battle royal; there were frequent all-in fights in the quadrangles.' (pp. 220-221)[305]

His most telling contribution to the class struggle was the establishment of a short-lived journal. Couched in the dangerous language of the schoolboy rebel, it was provocatively entitled, *Out of*

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[303] The first issue of the *Student Vanguard*, issued in November 1932, enunciated its purpose in clunky but passionate terms, 'The *Student Vanguard* makes no pretence of impartiality. It is written by the students who are convinced that conditions in every section of social existence are more and more forcing a radical alteration which alone can remedy its many evils.' (Cited in Ingram, 1985, p. 47)

[304] Archer had come down from Cambridge in 1932 'searching for some kind of social work to which he could devote his life.' (Ingram, 1985, p. 51) His shop became home for Romilly and, briefly, Toynbee. It was a hangout for noted left-wing converts like John Cornford and Stephen Spender as well as vaguely left-wing poets like David Gascoyne, John Pudney and the critic, Michael Roberts. These writers were at the centre of the group known as David Archer's Parton Street Café Poets.

[305] The oscillation between the radical margins of society and the elite pinnacles was a continuing factor in Esmond Romilly's life. Soon after he left Beadles, he was arrested for public drunkenness, along with Philip Toynbee and was placed in the Ponton Road Remand Home for eighteen days before repairing to the country estate of a wealthy second cousin, 'his only orders [were] to relax and take the country air.' (Ingram, 1985, p. 102)

Bounds. The journal's raison d'être was the spread of Communist material throughout England's public schools. Such egregious proselytism was greeted with genuine alarm in the more sensationalist conservative publications. The *Daily Mail* published the magazine's manifesto but, 'out of consideration for the boy's family, his father is a distinguished Army officer,' did not give the name of the author – Esmond Romilly.

> Disintegration affects in our period the whole of society. It affects profoundly the public school. This disintegration shows itself in a deliberate attempt on the part of the public schools to exclude themselves from genuine contact with political and cultural realities; and the positive and blatant use of the public schools in the cause of reaction.
>
> In the public schools as in the universities the fight to free us from this system has already begun and is steadily growing. "Out of Bounds" will openly champion the forces of progress against the forces of reaction on every front, from compulsory military training to propagandist teaching. ('Red Menace in Public Schools' *Daily Mail* February 2nd, 1934, cited in Romilly & Romilly, 1935, p. 248)

The 'special correspondent' who penned the article showed an inability to understand the conversion movement that the Romillys embodied. Asking 'what is the type of schoolboy who can indulge in such Communist twaddle' the correspondent then went on to suggest two possible causes. The first was 'a deliberate attempt [by party officials] to introduce Communist propaganda among [the boys]' and the second was the suggestion that this was a case of 'abnormal boys' who had lived with acutely anxious mothers during the war or worse, had been born of woman who had suffered the loss of a husband, 'before or soon after the birth of the son.' (Romilly & Romilly, 1935,) It is interesting to note that the conversion movement, so obvious by the end of the decade, was considered a product of either spies or pre-natal trauma.

Soon Giles convinced Esmond that he should probably run away from school and continue his work. Initially Romilly was caught up in the romantic bohemianism of activist life. The poet, George Barker, described the world of Parton street and its curious mixture of 'overcoated poets and truant schoolboys... [its] atmosphere of industrious conspiracy and illegal enthusiasms.' He described the figures surrounding the romantic schoolboy:

> John Cornford, filthy and consumed with a ferocity of nervous energy, ashamed and delighted when it was disclosed that he had written the two beautiful poems published in the *Listener* under a Welsh pseudonym… a small, thin Dylan Thomas with a dirty wool scarf wound around himself like an old love affair, looking liker to a runaway schoolboy than Esmond Romilly, who really was one…I do not know how many juvenile revolutionaries were temporarily harboured on the top floor of this bookshop, but they came and went like a rotation of furious tiger moths, always at night. Mothers arrived, weeping in taxicabs. Did all the conspirators die, I wonder, in Spain? (Tolley, 1975, p. 223)

As suggested by Barker's description, the initial burst of excitement was soon replaced by dreary reality. When the controversy finally died away, Esmond was left to endure the bleak life that comes with living in an impoverished London bookshop and the glacial pace of British Revolution.[306]

Initially the work of *Out of Bounds* kept him occupied. When the magazine was sold at some schools the OTC attacked the vendors. Initially it was the Etonians who were their best customers. However, on their second visit to the school, the sellers were only saved from being ducked in Barnes Pool by the intervention of the police. (Romilly & Romilly, 1935, p. 283) Eventually however even these excitements palled and cynicism set in. 'There were always new schemes; enthusiasm for work on new committees, work for demonstrations, the idea of "new quarterly review[s]," new art supplements, always committees.... I was soon tired of London; and in June I returned to school.' (pp. 285-286) Having been expelled from Wellington Romilly was sent to Beadles School, a co-educational progressive school. He lasted eight weeks before abandoning his formal education altogether.[307]

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[306] One fabulous description in the memoir is that of the desultory schoolboy protesting. 'About ten or twelve people finally turned up and before starting off we decided to "pass a few resolutions." So we condemned the Sedition Bill and a few other Bills and the National Government's policy in general. For our march, we had painted a large red banner with the slogan "Public schoolboys demonstrate against the 'National' Government of Hunger, Fascism and War" in large white uneven letters.' (Romilly & Romilly, 1935, p. 281)

[307] Romilly claimed that, of Beadles and Wellington, 'any sentiment that I may have of the 'Old School' variety goes unhesitatingly to the former' However, on some points he was more critical of the progressive school. For instance he claimed that the 'public school code' existed at Beadles to much greater extent than at Wellington. 'A strictly moral, almost puritanical, attitude prevailed in the school...' (Romilly & Romilly, 1935, p. 299) Esmond also noted that at Wellington 'the standards set by the "intellectuals" while I was there was remarkably high. It was not

Both Giles and Esmond Romilly were attracted to Communism for a number of very different reasons. For Giles it presented a means of rebelling against the school he hated and created a bond with a small band of intellectuals. For Esmond it was a means of rebelling against his father as well as suiting his particularly pugnacious and political temperament. Giles waited until he was at Oxford before joining the party while Esmond's fierce independence prevented him from ever formally joining. One of his few close friends, Philip Toynbee, had tried to recruit him but gave up.

> ...he had watched Communists from a position close beside them and he never for a moment wavered in his determination to remain a free-booting ally on the flank... it is likely that the Party would have refused to accept him as a member. Good Communists always spoke of him with the shuddering distaste of a nanny referring to the rough street-urchin playmate of her charges. (Toynbee, 1954, p. 64)[308]

Yet for both the conversion was real enough to take them to war in Spain; indeed, Esmond went almost immediately despite being only eighteen, broke and travelling alone. [309] Later, both would enlist in World War II along with the hearties they had both enjoyed taunting; Esmond would be shot down over the Atlantic in the Canadian Air Force, while Giles would be captured at Narvik and still later become one of the few to successfully escape from Colditz. Yet, like so many of the Hearties they despised, their later career never quite matched the heady excitement of their schoolboy conversions. Giles was a fringe member of the Auden group, a journalist and writer who was consistently in print until his eventual drug overdose in 1967. Yet for all his achievements his significance and that of his brother has been as a symptom of the period. What had been a movement leftwards and a rapid spread of 'bolshie' rebellion and apostasy in the twenties, had, by the nineteen thirties, become a loosely organised movement of Communist conversion and propaganda. Giles and Esmond Romilly accurately reflect just how far the conversion movement had spread and how it was more likely to be founded on action rather than

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reached at all at Beadles.' (p. 301) However the liberal atmosphere at Beadles prompted a more intense student-directed learning experience and he went on to add that 'the general standard of the reading of literature was considerably higher' at his second school. (p.301)

[308] Also cited in Ingram, 1985, p. 105

[309] He spent most of his money on the passage, purchasing a bike in Dieppe and then, as he cycled to Marseilles at night, buying brandy to get him through the cold. He lost all his papers and remaining money when the jacket that contained them simply fell off the bike somewhere between Paris and Valence. Undeterred he simply rode on to Marseilles and set about getting passage to Spain without the necessities. (Ingram, 1985, p. 119)

abstract speculation; on mobilisation rather than meditation. As we shall see in the ensuing chapters no family or institutions were immune to the siren songs of the two red ladies that dominated the period.

Chapter Five: Come to Reason

There is such a thing as the momentary power to remember that we forget. And the most ignorant of humanity know by the very look of earth that they have forgotten heaven.

G. K. Chesterton *The Everlasting Man* (1925)

One knew well enough that whatever happened this life I have tried to describe would always continue at Oxford, even if the one set should be the sons of commissars and the other brass finisher's children, but we lived at a time when no one who remained conscious could fail to ask himself whether it was the life for him. At any rate, without holding any political views, that is what drove me to go down in a year's time, in 1927 to see for myself how by far the greater number live in England.

Henry Green, *Pack My Bag* (1940)

Cambridge was important in my life through the fact that it gave me friends, and experience of intellectual discussion, but it was not important through the actual academic instruction… Most of what I learned in philosophy has come to seem to me erroneous, and I spent many subsequent years in gradually unlearning the habits of thoughts which I had there acquired. The one habit of thought of real value that I acquired there was intellectual honesty. This virtue certainly existed not only among my friends, but amongst my teachers.

Bertrand Russell, *Autobiography Vol. 1* (1951)

Chesterton's quote neatly sums up the effect of the interwar crises which was the obvious need for renewal of some kind. For the Catholics the vulnerability of mankind, weakened by original sin, was obvious in the interwar narrative. For the Communists that same narrative seemed to embody the prophecies of Marx regarding the inevitable decline of capitalism. This is an important point because this chapter contains a prosopographical account of the intellectuals attending university. It was there that many had their first direct engagement with the interwar narrative and discovered the alienation of interwar England.

The quotes of Green and Russell tap into the tension that was at the heart of the university experience. Green dwells on the relative isolation of the Oxbridge milieu and explains that even in Oxford's ivory towers he senses that it was out of touch with the reality of interwar England. Russell focusses on the other side of the coin and that was that the university was defined by the clash of ideas and by the lasting influence of the Dons. It was in that intellectual fermentation of Oxbridge that many young intellectuals re-formed their root-realities, so disturbed by the experiences of their schooling. In this chapter we look at the root realities of the intellectual converts and see how they were changed and developed by the experiences at university. Of particular importance is the influence of many older intellectuals who themselves were no strangers to the conversion phenomenon.

Introduction

In leaving Sherborne Cecil Day Lewis, like so many other public school boys, left behind formal religion as well. The son of an 'increasingly High Church' clergyman, Day Lewis had lapsed into agnosticism whilst at school. (Day Lewis, 1960, p. 52) 'I had not lost my faith, for I had nothing so positive as a faith to lose ─ only a tradition and habit of Christianity.'(p. 117) Lewis's account of his agnosticism follows the familiar interwar pattern. There were, for example, the facile sermons which at Sherborne included denouncing as untrue Alec Waugh's *Loom of Youth* before a congregation of students, most of whom knew full well the accuracy of the novel: '…this blindness, or hypocrisy, or moral cowardice ─ as it seemed to some of us ─ devalued in our eyes the religion of which [the preachers] were spokesmen.' (p. 113) He was prepared for confirmation by a former Rowing Blue who cumbrously explained the Trinity using the analogy of the rowing eight, 'the launching and control of which took him into such deep waters that the

candidate's half-hour was up before any other "difficulties" could be broached.'(p. 117)[310] This preparation was followed by the now-familiar disillusioning Confirmation ceremony where expected supernatural manifestations failed to materialize. His final years at school reflected the fairly typical passage of the intellectual who balanced rebellion with promotion. Day Lewis became head of his house and a prefect and a creditable member of the 2nd XV. (pp. 121, 125) But these honours were offset by his self-described "Bolshie" mentality and he finished his time writing controversial articles in the school magazine about the Sherborne games-mania, doubtless in the style of Gordon Carruthers. (p. 128) His final year petered out into growing ennui which was only broken when he received an exhibition scholarship to Wadham College, Oxford, 'on the strength…of my English essay and of an entirely spurious reputation as a Rugby footballer.' (p. 129)

Despite his later image as one of the radical young poets of the interwar generation, Day Lewis went up to Oxford from his father's vicarage in Edwinstowe, as something of a naïf. 'Outside our house were the League of Nations, The Bright Young Things, Birth Control, the rise of Labour, the "trouble" in Ireland ─ troubles everywhere in a world that had fallen to pieces and did not know how to put itself together again: within the habits and values of the Victorian age largely held sway…' (Day Lewis, 1960, pp. 135-136) The interwar narrative and Day Lewis's own shifting root-realities meant that, even without the university experience, he was destined to undergo intense intellectual fluctuations. In this he was not alone. The period after school when they were fully exposed to the full gamut of the interwar crises as well as a plethora of new ideas and potential conversion destinations, was the period in which many of the interwar intellectuals began their movement towards conversion. Day Lewis wrote:

> During my Oxford years England was still in a trough after the 1914-18 war: the cross currents, eddies and ground-swell uneasiness, affecting a country which desperately lacked stability and direction, were felt within our academic haven… when I went up I had no clue to the meaning of such undercurrents, just as most of my contemporaries had

[310] According to Day Lewis it was widely believed by the students that the pre-confirmation private interview given by the housemaster was an opportunity for him to 'discover what was really going on in his house.' The boys therefore asked their father-confessor about the Trinity the explanation of which allowed for no personal revelations of personal perfidiousness. 'I dare not imagine this kindly man's feelings when, prompted by the ingenious boys who had gone in first, candidate after candidate hurriedly confessed to the same doctrinal worry.' (Lewis C. D., The Buried Day, 1960, p. 117)

> no conception how deep was their country's unrest till the General Strike broke out. (Day Lewis, 1960, p. 158)

With already volatile root-realities further troubled by the hydra of interwar crises the young intellectuals naturally sought answers, any answers, in the mosaic of academic and pseudo-academic pursuits that littered their Arcadian days. 'Ideas were the sirens that sang to us, seducing our virgin minds with the charms of the forbidden, the paradoxical or the shamelessly abstract: like adventurers on unknown seas, we lived for a few years in a world and weather of discovery, as we voyaged enchantedly among the eternal truisms.' (Day Lewis, 1960, p. 162) It was in this mood of restless intellectual ferment that Day-Lewis embarked on his study of the Greats, describing his passage through the philosophers as one of constant conversion 'each proposition advanced by Plato or Aristotle, Hume, Berkley, Spinoza, or Kant, seemed irrefutable ─ until I read the opposing viewpoint… I was young enough to believe that the truth can be found.' (pp. 166-167) Writing with the cynicism of middle age when earlier conversions had been undermined by experience, Day-Lewis was perhaps too quick to dismiss, as merely the product of youth, the intoxicating pursuit of truth that came to define his experiences at Oxford. These experiences and his openness to conversion are better reflected in his first major poem, *Transitional Poem*, published in 1929. He wrote the majority of the poem in the evenings while employed as a school master at a North Oxford preparatory school, Summer Fields, where he was forced to seek work immediately after leaving the university. In his memoir he observes that in the poem, 'the scars of my unequal struggle with the philosophers are clearly visible.' (p. 185)

In many way *Transitional Poem* is one that captures the conversion impulse that was slowly gripping the majority of the interwar clerists as they emerged, blinkingly, from their public school disbelief and took their first steps on the road to conversion(s). As Day Lewis says in the poem's notes, 'the central theme of this poem is the single mind.' (Day Lewis, 1992, p. 99) This search for a single mind, 'this architecture [that] will stand', (p. 60) is a response to the intellectual fragmentation that has ill-prepared him for the disarray that suddenly surrounds him.

> Now I have come to reason,
> And cast my schoolboy clout,
> Disorder I see is without,

And the mind must sweat a poison…
(Day Lewis, 1992, 59)

Day Lewis divides the search for a single mind into four sections, the metaphysical, the ethical, the psychological and then the synthesis of all three. Among other things in his Edwardian childhood, he rejects the root-realities proposed in sermons at Sherborne Abbey

The time has gone when we
Could sprawl at ease between
Light and darkness, and deduce
Omnipotence from our Mean.
For us the Gregorian
Example of those eyes
That risked Hell's blight and heaven's blinding
But dared not compromise.
(Day Lewis, 1992, p. 61)

Here Day Lewis rejects the specifically Anglican form of Christianity, the Via Media (or Mean) that proved incapable of illuminating Omnipotence. Instead, he seeks root-realities that are far more radical, that 'dared not compromise' and he uses specifically Catholic imagery to describe this conversion destination. Sherborne Abbey, in which he sprawled while at school, was founded during the brief reign of Pope Gregory V. Within the tenth century Abbey walls the young Day Lewis was exposed to the drama of uncompromising religious iconography. His hatred of compromise, elsewhere he calls it the 'Agag stance', (Day Lewis, 1992, p. 73)[311] leads him to announce that 'It is becoming now to declare my allegiance…' in the search for the 'messiah sprig of certitude ─/ promise of ground below the sprawling flood.' (pp. 66, 73)

This search for a stable faith becomes the defining quality of the entire poem and, in different ways, he poses the same question:

[311] Agag was King of the Amalekites. Taken prisoner by Saul his life was spared, which, acording to the Prophet Samuel, was in defiance of God's will. (I Samuel 15) The Lord had ordered the complete destruction of the Amalekites. Day Lewis picks up on the problem of practical religion which was to attempt the impossible, to have belief live in peaceful coexistence with with skepticism.

Where is the true, the central stone
That clay and vapour zone,
That earthquakes budge nor vinegar bites away,
That rivets man against Doomsday?

Where is the invaluable star
Whose beams enlacèd are
The scaffolding of truth, whose stages drawn
Aside unshutter an ideal dawn?
(Day Lewis, 1992, pp. 86, 87)

By the final verse sequence he has declared his intention to continue the search for the single mind, like the hawk above who has;

…learnt to keep
The distance which can strip
Earth to its blank contours.

Then trod the air, content
With contemplation till

The truth of valley and hill
Should be self-evident.
(Day Lewis, 1992, p. 97)

In his final lecture as the Oxford Professor of Poetry, Day Lewis spoke on "The Thirties in Retrospect" and summed up the search for encapsulated root-realities that defined *Transient Poem* and his later works, 'We did not have to read *Waste Land* to know that this world had been fragmented. We obscurely felt the need to do more with the fragments than shoring them against our ruin. The magic word, the cant word, of the time was synthesis.' (Cited in Gelpi, 1998, p. 14) This desire for synthesis would launch many on the road to conversion.

Another member of Auden's circle, Louis MacNeice emerged from Marlborough College and went up to Merton College, Oxford in 1928, the year before *Transition Poem* was published. He

offers an insight into the mental tribulations created by a profoundly fragmented intellectual landscape. MacNeice described himself prior to his arrival at university as being gripped by a frightening paralysis engendered by the experience of anomie:

> Apart from my instincts I was now almost without principles. For example, if I felt sorry for people, I might be ready to do them a good turn, but I would have vigorously denied that there was anything morally good in this good turn. So-called altruism was merely a projection of egotism. Spinoza and Nietzsche had been right to repudiate pity. On this basis it was hard to choose unless one's appetites came into it – between one course of action and another; it meant weighing one's ultimate self-interest and that was a bore. When in doubt I used to play over and over to myself a gramophone record – the Rondo of Mozart's E Flat Horn Concerto –and then do whatever came into my head. (MacNeice, 1965, p. 115)

Admittedly, MacNeice is an extreme example of the post-school apostate but the confusion of his root-realities and the crippling inertia they produced give us a useful insight into the plight of many of the interwar intellectuals as they began university.[312] Confronted by new ideas, comparative intellectual and personal freedom and the insistent interwar crises, many would begin to form or 'synthesise' new root-realities, and these root-realities would lead them, at varying speeds, to a number of divergent conversion destinations. For most it would be a tumultuous period, as Day Lewis warned,

> Those Himalayas of the mind
> Are not so easily possessed:
> There's more than precipice and storm
> Between you and your Everest. (Lewis C. D., 1992, p. 91)

The Oxbridge Interlude

As the number of schools earning the classification 'public' grew during the interwar period, the preeminence of Oxbridge remained untouched. If anything Oxbridge became *more* important

[312] Incidentally MacNeice would was one of the few non-converts associated with the Auden Group. Visiting Spain in 1936 with Anthony Blunt, MacNeice was totally unmoved by the experience, treating 'the slogans and riots as a joke.' (Carter, 2001, p. 147)

during the period by virtue of the fact that, by the nineteen twenties, 'education at an elite public school and/or Oxbridge had replaced landownership and, arguably even formal title as the main definitional criterion and marker of membership in Britain's elites.' (Rubinstein, 2010, p. 6) Somewhat ironically, such a status symbol was far more accessible than landownership ever had been. Increasingly, these new elites were members of the emergent middle-classes and often members of the lower middle classes. Rubenstein argues that the small minority of aristocracy in the United Kingdom 'voluntarily ceded the status of 'gentleman' to a vastly wider group' through the expansion of access to elite education. It was this movement that carried many of the new clerisy into a role that might otherwise have escaped them. (2010, p. 7) In 1933 Sir William Spens gave a talk on the English college system and was able to say that at many colleges nearly half the students were in receipt of financial assistance and many were being educated gratis. (Cited in Howarth, 1978, p. 66)[313] As Oxbridge became ever so slightly more accessible, a short period within its confines soon became de rigueur for the aspiring interwar intellectual.

The stability of Oxbridge was, for some, its greatest virtue, while for others it was its greatest vice. Henry Green described Oxford as a place where life was 'unperishing'. '[M]y generation had been through a time of upheaval and had not in their homes or at their public schools known until joining the University a life they could be sure would continue.' (H. Green, 2000, p. 137) In *Brideshead Revisited*, Evelyn Waugh, who knew Green while the latter was at Oxford, and maintained a lifelong, but desultory, relationship with him, echoes the sense of timelessness that had captivated Green. In contrast, Waugh saw this 'unperishing' stability as being threatened by the upheaval outside.

> Oxford ─ submerged now and obliterated, irrecoverable as Lyonnesse, so quickly have the waters come flooding in ─ Oxford, in those days, was still a city of aquatint. In her spacious and quiet streets men walked and spoke as they had done in Newman's day … when the chestnut was in flower and the bells rang out high and clear over her gables and cupolas, exhaled the soft vapours of centuries of youth. It was this cloistral hush which

[313] As Howarth goes on to explain however, there was still room for basic nepotism. Cecil Beaton was admitted to St. John's College, Cambridge because his father was charming. Armitage, the Senior Tutor, knew the college was full but apparently valued congenial company over any other practical consideration. (Howarth, 1978, p. 68)

> gave our laughter its resonance, and carried it still, joyously, over the intervening clamour. (E. Waugh, 2011b, p. 25)

In the literature that has centered on Oxbridge as a setting there has been a common understanding that the ancient universities were retreats from the world and that the students housed therein enjoyed a rare Elysium that combined languorous education and intoxicating freedom, in the full sense of the word. During the General Strike, 2,650 students (slightly more than half) from Cambridge[314] and a similar proportion of students from Oxford[315] registered to provide emergency services in order to keep the country going. Indeed Oxonian volunteers were so conspicuous, driving buses and providing a number of other vital services in their plus-fours that they were frequently referred to as the 'plus-force' among the working classes. (Saltzman, 2012, p. 86) Yet amidst all the exciting drama, the master of University College Oxford, M.T. Sadler, reminded his students that the university was essentially immune to the fleeting rumblings of the outside world. He pointed out that the college quadrangle 'looked all of a piece' but its building had been interrupted by the civil war. (Harrison, 'College Life, 1918 – 1939.' In B. Harisson (Ed.), 1994) For left-wing students such an isolationism was unacceptable. In fact, Oxbridge insularity was so unpopular among interwar students that both the strike-breakers and the supporters of the miners returned to the university with something of a bond, being united in their detestation of those who had refused to become involved; 'it was not the winning but the playing the game.' (Wheen, 2001, pp. 45-46)

The growing activism of the undergraduates flew in the face of a long-held ideal that Oxbridge was an idyll free from the vulgar whims of the outside world. The notion of Oxonian

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[314] Their reasons for going were not always idealistic, many students registered in order to fulfil a life-long dream of driving a train. One undergraduate drove the train from Cambridge to London and, upon being given a tip by an elderly passenger at Liverpool street station, made the astonishing admission that it had taken him until Bethnal Green to work out how to employ the brakes. (Howarth, 1978, p. 149) In Hull students from Trinity and Balloil Colleges, Oxford, were put to work driving trams. Naturally enough they decked their trams in college colours and engaged in 'mildly competitive bumpings.' (Harrison, 1994, p. 100)

[315] A. J. P. Taylor, one of the few members of the Oxford Communist Party, described the enthusiasm to register in terms of the previous war. 'It was 1914 all over again. The volunteers saw themselves gallantly at war against the revolution. One of them said to me, "I wonder if I shall ever come back." The enrolment was Tom Brown's Last Stand.' (Wheen, 2001, p. 44) In Brasenose, a College famous for the sort of hearties who made life hell for Communists like Taylor, only eight members of college failed to register. (Wenden, 'Sport.' In B. Harisson (Ed.), 1994, p. 528) Fifteen were left in Trinity College, only four of whom remained on principle; refusing to blackleg. (Hopkins, 2005, p. 380) According to Taylor, after the strike it was those who had refused to pick a side that were most abused by returning students.

isolationism is a central theme in Max Beerbohm's only novel, *Zuleika Dobson*. Though now not as well known, Beerbohm was perhaps the greatest of the Edwardian parodists, ranking alongside H. H. 'Saki' Munro and being termed by many critics as Oscar Wilde's heir. (See: Hillebrand, 1920, p. 254) Beerbohm's 'Oxford Love Story' is a satirical masterpiece written in the light *fin de siècle* style of the decadents. Published in 1911, though begun in 1898, it details the arrival at Oxford of an outrageously beautiful and fickle young woman. Like Robbie Burns' Bonnie Lesley, to see her was to love her, but Zuleika could only love those who didn't love her. Consequently an entire generation of undergraduates, led by a peerless dandy, the Duke of Dorset, drown themselves in the Isis, following the final race in Eights Week. The unattainable beauty of Zuleika was such that, as the narrator dispassionately observes, 'To die for Miss Dobson was "the thing to do". The Duke was going to do it. The Junta [club] was going to do it. It is a hateful fact… that snobbishness was one of the springs to the tragedy here chronicled.' (Beerbohm, 1947, p. 108)

Beerbohm stresses the links between the Ancient and Medieval worlds and Oxford, describing it as enticing the tourist with 'last enchantments of the Middle Age.'[316] (Beerbohm, 1947, p. 7) Beerbohm takes great pains continually to link Oxford to the past, creating an enchanted sense of time.[317] He uses obscure archaic language to describe modern actions and transforms the Bearded Gentlemen[318] into a chorus of Roman Emperors who, from their vantage point in deep

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[316] According to Felicia Bonaparte, Beerbohm was directly quoting Matthew Arnold's "Preface" to *Essays in Criticism*.

[317] The novelist, Vladimir Nabokov, was a student at Cambridge during the interwar period, having escaped the Bolsheviks in Russia after the civil war. Nabokov described the Oxbridge experience in similar terms to those of Beerbohm, suggesting that even to a relative newcomer the sense of timelessness was an inescapable quality. '…deeper than ritual or rule, there did exist the residual something about Cambridge that many a solemn alumnus has tried to define. I see this basic property as the constant awareness one had of an untrammelled extension of time. I do not know if anyone will ever go to Cambridge in search of the imprints which the teat cleats on my soccer boots have left in the black mud before a gaping goal or follow the shadow of my cap across the quadrangle to my tutor's stairs; but I know that I thought of Milton, and Marvell, and Marlowe, with more than a tourist's thrill as I passed beside the reverend walls. Nothing one looked at was shut off in terms of time, everything was a natural opening into it, so that one's mind grew accustomed to work in a particularly pure and ample environment, and because, in terms of space, the narrow lane, the cloistered lawn, the dark archway hampered one physically, that yielding diaphanous texture of time was, by contrast, especially welcome to the mind… I had no interest whatever in the history of the place, and was quite sure that Cambridge was in no way affecting my soul, although actually it was Cambridge that supplied not only the casual frame, but also the very colors and inner rhythms for my very special Russian thoughts.' (1967, p. 269)

[318] At the entrance to the Sheldonian Theatre, Oxford, there are thirteen busts of bearded men. No one knows for sure what the busts actually represent. Commissioned by Christopher Wren in the 17th century, they have been described as Apostles or philosophers, but most commonly they have been called 'the Emperors.' Each head has a different beard and it has also been suggested that they might represent a history of beards. (Marshall, 2011)

history, constantly philosophise about the action of the novel and the fate of its characters. By the end of the novel, when Zuleika, a bizarre celebrity-Venus, has precipitated an unprecedented crisis among the student population, the university remains unmoved.

Beerbohm himself saw Zuleika as a symbol for 'the modern age' (Bonaparte, 1998, p. 340). Bonaparte in fact suggests that Beerbohm inserts the imagery of a conflict into the novel, as part of the *fin de siècle* atmosphere of coming crises and the destruction of civilization. (pp. 355-356)[319] The destruction that Zuleika wreaks on the slumbering university reveals a fear of modernity. Perhaps for that reason Beerbohm was unable to allow Zuleika to change the university in any meaningful way. At the end of the novel Zuleika rejects her original intention of entering an Anglo-Catholic convent and instead, refusing to learn from the destruction she has wrought and fearing that the sacrifice offered for her was not enough, she decides to visit Cambridge. (pp. 251-252)[320]

The central point that Beerbohm makes is that the cloistral calm of Oxford is untouchable. In her insightful analysis of the novel, Felicia Bonaparte acknowledges that Beerbohm sees Oxford as a 'sanctuary' but she fails to see that Oxford is only able to be a sanctuary because it is so deeply rooted in the past. It is for this reason that it survives the 'destruction more final and devastating than Achilles' attack on Troy.' (Bonaparte, 1998, p. 357) Indeed, following the mass suicide, the dons of Judas College hold the traditional Bump Supper and no one has the impudence to tell the Warden that every student is dead. Instead they console themselves that without students there would be ataraxic peace. 'No lectures to deliver to-morrow; no "essays" to hear and criticise; time for the unvexed pursuit of pure learning...' (Beerbohm, 1947, p. 223) As they emerge from their dinner the dons are reassured by the stroke of Great Tom which acted as 'a solemn and plangent token of Oxford's perpetuity'. (Beerbohm, 1947, p.223) This perpetuity is reinforced

[319] However, reading the novel in the twenty first century, one cannot help also reading it as an oddly prescient allegory for World War One. The madly romantic dandies rush to their pointless death as the final consummation of their love for Zuleika who may be viewed as a metaphorical representation of Mother England, and the remaining characters are left to ask, 'What was there in this woman that men should so demean themselves for her?' (Beerbohm, 1947, p. 225)

[320] Sir Sydney Castle Roberts, who worked in Cambridge his whole life and finished his career as Vice-Chancellor, wrote a sequel to Beerbohm's popular work in 1941. Zuleika gets to Cambridge only to find that instead of dying for her they 'feel very much like living' and in consequence, 'Cambridge men gave no sign of wanting to lie down and die for love of her. Instead, they stood about and make harmless jokes. Unsurprisingly Zuleika quickly abandons the university. (Roberts, 1943, p. 139)

by the image of Zuleika beating the stones of New College with her fists ‘at sight of the great shut gate before her.’(Beerbohm, 1947, p. 237)

The idea of Oxbridge as an untouched oasis of calm is maintained into the interwar novels but with one significant change, namely that the cloistral calm was frequently contrasted with images of decay and decline on the outside. In *Brideshead Revisited*, Charles Ryder’s begins his reminiscences of the Flyte family during the interwar period with images of Oxford and ends with his return to the wartime decay of Brideshead, the family’s ancient house. It had been ‘planned and planted a century and a half ago so that, at about this date, it might be seen in its maturity.’ (E. Waugh, 2011b, p. 20) But it has been inherited by a childless divorcee and knocked about by a requisitioning army. Unsightly but practical roads were laid through the lime trees, the fountain was used as a rubbish bin and the valley, where once the fallow deer grazed, was valued for its potential as ‘an assault course and a mortar range.’ (E. Waugh, 2011b, pp. 444, 446)

In Waugh’s earlier novel, *Decline and Fall*, written in the late twenties, there is a similar movement from the untroubled stability of Oxford into the decaying world outside and then back home to Oxford once more. The novel opens on the night of the Bollinger Club dinner, an evening of orgiastic depravity that has become part of the ageless traditions of the university.[321] A bevy of inebriated clubmen stumble across the innocent Paul Pennyfeather, strip him naked and so launch his progress into the world; first to the decaying Llanabba Castle, then on to King’s Thursday, a home that had been preserved by poverty for three hundred years and had become ‘the finest piece of domestic Tudor in England,’ but was now being demolished to be

[321] ‘There is tradition behind the Bollinger; it numbers reigning kings among its past members. At the last dinner, three years ago, a fox had been brought in in a cage and stoned to death with champagne bottles. What an evening that had been!’ (E. Waugh, ‘Decline and Fall.’ In E. Waugh, (2003a), p. 5)
The excesses of the clubmen provoke their own traditions and Mr. Sniggs and Mr. Postlethwaite, two Dons from Scone College, look forward to a week of Founder’s Port paid for by the fines.

> 'The fines!' said Mr Sniggs, gently rubbing his pipe along the side of his nose. 'Oh my! the fines there'll be after this evening!'
>
> There is some highly prized port in the senior common room cellars that is only brought up when the College fines have reached £ 50.
>
> 'We shall have a week of it at least,' said Mr Postlethwaite, 'a week of Founder's port.'…
>
> 'There must be fifty of them at least,' said Mr Postlethwaite. 'If only they were all members of the College! Fifty of them at ten pounds each. Oh my!'
>
> 'It'll be more if they attack the Chapel,' said Mr Sniggs. 'Oh, please God, make them attack the Chapel.' (E. Waugh, Decline and Fall, E. Waugh, (2003a), pp. 5-6)

replaced by ‘something clean and square’ in ‘ferro-concrete and aluminum’. (E. Waugh, 2003a pp. 138, 142) Pennyfeather’s progress takes him to brothels in Marseilles, suites in the Ritz, Blackstone Gaol, and then Egdon Heath penal settlement before he is smuggled off to Corfu. Unsurprisingly Pennyfeather retreats back to the peace of Scone College, disguised by a cavalry moustache and his natural diffidence, and undertakes his rigidly conservative theological studies once more. However, the interwar converts were those who would not simply hide from the chaos outside; many would even work for its redemption.

In Nicholas Monsarrat’s 1939 bildungsroman, *This is the Schoolroom*, the contrast between the leisurely life of the (Cambridge) undergraduate and the howling reality outside is summed up in the opening line, ‘I was unusually drunk the night my father died.’ (Monsarrat, 1943, p. 13) Monsarrat’s autobiographical protagonist Marcus Hendrycks was ‘without effort or hesitation… one of the young company which went from public-school to University, and then to a year abroad, to the Bar or to some smooth money spinning job in the City, at the same leisurely pace which had ruled the years of childhood.’ (p. 25) However, returning home he farewells his friends, telling them to put ten quid on Turtledove, and then confronts the shabby gateway that hints at the decay lurking beyond the drive. In his sudden descent into poverty he repents of ‘playing at life’ at Cambridge and ‘spreading six weeks’ work over three years’ while the house rotted away. (pp. 55, 56) However, as we shall see, that secluded period, ‘playing at life’, was to play a crucial, formative role in the lives of the interwar converts, educated at the ancient universities. Many of the interwar converts would have regrets about a wasted youth, however their time ‘playing around’ would often shape them irrevocably.

W. H. Auden lamented the traditional Oxbridge insularity in his brief poem, ‘Oxford’, written following his embittered return from the Spanish Civil War, during the time in which he was beginning to lose his Socialist faith. However, in this poem, with typically Audenesque insight, he noted that the insularity of Oxford also gave rise to idealistic conversions of a kind and shaped student responses to the decaying world outside. While a student at Christ Church Auden had dismissed the ancient university as ‘an artificial institution quite out of touch with the real world.’ (Cited in Grass, 2001, p. 87) In ‘Oxford’ he denounces the insularity of the university; ‘the stones in that tower are utterly/Satisfied still with their weight/... where Wisdom worships herself/... the widow’s tears forgotten/ the fatherless unheard.’ (‘Oxford’ in W. H. Auden, 1940,

p. 22) Sean Grass has argued that Auden chastised Oxford's intellectual isolation because he saw it as inspiring the naive idealism of the international brigades. It was the isolation that made the widow's tears such a scandal. In other words, Oxford allowed students to believe in simple dichotomies of right and wrong, to believe, with nineteen-fourteen-style naivety, that 'knowledge is conceived in the hot womb of violence' and learn nothing of the complexity of the world. ('Oxford' in W. H. Auden, 1940, p. 22) When Auden returned from Spain, 'he had come to know only too well that Oxford was, as Arnold had written, a 'home of lost causes, and forsaken beliefs, and unpopular names, and impossible loyalties'.' (Cited in Grass, 2001, p. 95) The poem ends by explaining that Eros Paidagogos (informed passion – a symbol of Oxford's educated idealists) must weep on a 'virginal bed' rejected by the natural world outside. (W. H. Auden, 1940, p. 23)

For Auden, the vision of Eros Paidagogos was a melodramatic image of wasted, even sterile, death; with only the word, 'Comrades' separating it from the poetry of the trenches. Yet the poem also has a curious link with another poem that celebrates Oxford's isolation and its inspiration of conversion. Grass notes that the title of the poem and the naturalistic imagery of the opening stanza link the poem with Gerard Manley Hopkins' 'Two sonnets: To Oxford' and 'Duns Scotus's Oxford.' It must be remembered that though most of Hopkins' poetry was written in the second half of the 19th century, it wasn't published until 1918 and that Auden had first read him at the suggestion of Fr Martin D'Arcy at the University Poetry Society.

Where the poetry of Auden suggests that undergraduates escaped their isolation by looking towards Moscow and political conversion, Hopkins' Oxford poetry points to a time when many undergraduates were looking towards Rome and religious conversion. The first poem, 'Two Sonnets: To Oxford' was written in 1865, while he was still a student at Balliol College, and dealt with the two themes common to Oxbridge writing, namely isolation and discovery. The first stanza deals with the sense of isolated beauty,

> This is my park, my pleasaunce; this to me
> As public is my greater privacy,
> All mine, yet common to my every peer.
> (Hopkins G. M., 1970, pp. 21-22)

While the second details a spiritual discovery made by Hopkins, standing flat against the wall of a Church, from which he gains a fresh perspective.

> None besides me this bye-ways beauty try.
> Or if they try it, I am happier then:
> The shapen flags and drillèd holes of sky,
> Just seen, may be to many unknown men
> The one peculiar of their pleasured eye,
> And I have only set the same to pen.
> (Hopkins G. M., 1970, pp. 21-22)

In 'Duns Scotus's Oxford' Hopkins preempts Auden by focusing on the tower as an architectural symbol for Oxford and its relative isolation. He begins the poem, 'Towery city and branchy between towers.' This poem was written in 1879, while he was stationed at the Church of St Aloysius in Oxford as a Jesuit priest.[322] In his second Oxford poem, Hopkins clearly builds on the themes evident in his first poetic tribute to the university, which hinted at a shifting religious perspective. Here he conflates the timelessness of Oxford and the very practical wisdom, that 'not / Rivalled insight', that it has to offer in the form of Scotus; a wisdom unrivalled in Italy (Aquinas) or Greece (Aristotle). Over fifty years later, the Oxford and Cambridge of the interwar converts would continue to provide the necessary elements to conversion.

In order to understand the relationship between an isolated formation at the ancient universities and the undergraduate predilection for conversion, it is best to start with John Henry Newman's *The Idea of a University*, probably still the most quoted treatise on university education. The first part of that book is comprised of a series of discourses that Newman gave in 1852, in response to Dublin Archbishop Paul Cullen's request that he 'give us a few lectures on education.' (Ker, 2010, p. 376) For Newman the attraction of a Catholic University in Ireland was the chance to win for his new religion all the glories of Oxford. 'Curious it will be if Oxford is imported into Ireland, not in its members only, but in its principles, ways and arguments.' (cited in Ker, 2010, p. 377) Newman had himself played a part in the development of the modern liberal education

[322] Interestingly enough, this Church is now run by the Oratorians, thus fulfilling, since 1990, Newman's dream of an Oxford Oratory .

which centered on the notion that a university education is more concerned with forming the mind than with simply filling it.

For Newman, a university had to teach all branches of knowledge because they are concerned with 'the attainment of truth'. (Ker, 2010, p. 99). 'As to the range of University teaching, certainly the very name of University is inconsistent with restrictions of any kind… a University should teach universal knowledge.'[323] (Newman, 1886, p. 20) Newman rejected the utilitarian model of a university which limited the students' study to the subjects most relevant to their profession, and instead demanded that students be exposed to all branches of learning in an effort to produce in them a 'habit of mind' or a 'philosophical habit'. (Newman, 1886, pp. 101-102) Universities were therefore concerned with what he termed, the 'science of sciences' or 'that special philosophy';

> …a comprehensive view of truth in all its branches, of the relations of science to science, of their mutual bearings, and their respective values… You see, then, here are two methods of Education; the end of the one is to be philosophical, of the other to be mechanical; the one rises towards general ideas, the other is exhausted upon what is particular and external. (Newman, 1886, pp. 103, 112)

The fruit of this 'science of sciences' was the enlargement of the mind. This was not simply the narrow growth of information but rather the formation of a comprehensive view; the 'single mind'. This would only occur when root realities were tested against new knowledge and experiences.

> [I]t is a digestion of what we receive, into the substance of our previous state of thought; and without this no enlargement is said to follow. There is no enlargement, unless there be a comparison of ideas one with another, as they come before the mind, and a systematizing of them. We feel our minds to be growing and expanding then, when we not only learn, but refer what we learn to what we know already. It is not the mere addition to our knowledge that is the illumination; but the locomotion, the movement onwards, of that mental centre, to which both what we know, and what we are learning, the accumulating mass of our acquirements, gravitates….It possesses the knowledge, not

[323] He also uses the term 'large knowledge' (See: Newman, 1886, p. 121)

> only of things, but also of their mutual and true relations; knowledge, not merely considered as acquirement, but as philosophy. (Newman, 1886, pp. 133-134)

In other words, a university is concerned, not so much with technical knowledge, but with root-realities, the formation of a world view, something more secular thinkers of the period would term a *weltanschauung*, and, in a postmodern age would term *an interpretative framework*.

Newman argues that, because of the depth and comprehensiveness of the views developed during a liberal education, the University is concerned with the promotion of a religious viewpoint. 'The educated mind may be said to be in a certain sense religious; that is, it has what may be considered a religion of its own…' this religion was entirely secular, he called it the religion of reason. (Newman, 1886, pp. 180-181) The 'religiosity' of a liberal education is a particularly telling element in the lives of the interwar converts. Their time at Oxbridge trained them in the habit of synthesizing new knowledge and experiences and seeking to understand 'the ultimate problems of human life' or the 'ultimate conditions of their existence' to quote Yinger and Bellah. (Yinger cited in Aldridge, 2007, p. 34; Bellah, 1964, p. 359) Walter Moberly described Oxbridge products as 'men at unity with themselves.' These were men whose surface opinions were not in conflict with 'their working convictions.' (Moberly, 1950, p. 10)[324] In other words these were men with fully formed root-realities. Thus, despite the common agnosticism with which they left school, many developed a religious outlook of sorts in their early adolescence. Some, like Christopher Hollis, moved straight into the Catholic religion; others like Anthony Blunt moved into Communism; while others like Evelyn Waugh moved deeper into an agnostic hedonism of their own making, but few were entirely apathetic.

Writing of his own experiences of Oxford, nearly a century after Newman gave his discources, Henry Green noted that education was primarily concerned with the experience of conversion. He uses the analogy of a 'bewildered, suspicious and rather tired' traveller who journeys along a

[324] Moberly made this assessment a part of his Ludwig Mond lecture in which he attempted to synthesise the Oxbridge liberal education with the newer civic or 'redbrick' universities. Moberly, writing during the early years of the Cold War, argued that universities needed to 'rise to the height of the times' and pioneer a 'fundamental reconstruction' of post-Christendom society by 'bringing to birth a working philosophy of life.' (Moberly, 1950, p. 27)Moberly had been the principal of University College of the South West of England and Vice-Chancellor of the University of Manchester during the interwar period and his call for a new humanist religion in the 1950s reflects a disillusion with the other conversion destinations of that period. Clearly none were able to solve the problem of hyperpluralism.

difficult path full of broken bottles and nettles and wasps and lined with signs that are 'obviously false.' At an intersection he meets a 'tall gaunt figure…with something untidy about him'. The figure is resting on a path with stingless nettles and there are no insects about him.

> He speaks first, in time he will ask the traveller to sit down, but for the present he is content to describe exactly where you want to go and just why what you want is so necessary. One is suspicious at first that he will conclude with an overpowering argument or even with proof that one is a fool to look for whatever it may be but, when the time comes for his conclusion, one finds with delight that he is in complete agreement and what is more that he has far more cogent reasons in one's favour than one has been able to produce… it is all hedged about by the steam power of this trained mind and in a rain of words. (H. Green, 2000, p. 132)

Green moves on to explain that within the year the lesson may be contradicted by a new lesson but the experience of encapsulation continued. The important point was that the students of his era were interested in what Tillich would call 'ultimate concern' and life at the university was conducive to this pursuit.

Green notices that soon the students' conversation is more concerned with ideas rather than words. (H. Green, 2000, p. 139) This intellectual climate was such that root-realities were constantly evolving where later they would be settled and immovable. He identifies the hallmark of Oxonian conversation as being the preparedness to extrapolate, to form fresh conclusions, to enlarge the mind; later conversation would be limited by the narrow assumptions of fixed root-realities. 'We talked forward from the particular to the general, whereas we are wise enough now after dinner…to talk back.'(p. 136) Green left Oxford early, unable to get on with his tutor, C. S. Lewis[325] but, writing over a decade later, Green looked back on that intellectual ferment of his liberal education and repined, 'we were never to be so sure of anything afterwards.' (p. 153)

For Newman the influence of personality was crucial in the education of students because it precipitated such a beneficial conflict of ideas. He argued in the seventh discourse that a university that simply brought young men together for a number of years and sent them away

[325] Interestingly John Betjeman had similar problems with Lewis and was far more comfortable learning from Maurice Bowra, the Classics tutor of Wadham College. (See: Dougill, 2010, p. 130)

again would be better than ‘a so-called University, which dispensed with residence and tutorial superintendence, and gave its degrees to any person who passed an examination in a wide range of subjects’. (Newman, 1886, p. 145) The tutorial system has been a hallmark of education at Oxbridge education since the 19th century revival. In his introduction to a recent defence of the tutorial system David Palfreyman argued that within that system ‘the good student will acquire independence of his teacher, will grope after his own means of interpretation.’ (2008, p. 18) While Palfreyman was referring to academic interpretation it is clear that pursuit of a personal interpretative framework has deeper implications than the individual’s response to a topic like Athenian democracy. In the early twenties, the Canadian academic and humorist, Stephen Leacock, whether consciously or not, echoed Newman’s words when he wrote that the Oxford Don, unlike his American counterpart, ‘…contained within him a reservoir of learning of such depth as to be practically bottomless. None of this learning was supposed to be of any material or commercial benefit to anybody. Its use was in saving the soul and *enlarging the mind*.’ (Leacock, 1922, p. 91)[326]

Moberly echoed Newman’s idea that young men would find education simply by virtue of each other’s company, calling community life, ‘the chief educational influence of Oxbridge’. (Moberly, 1950, p. 11) In *A Little Learning* Waugh acknowledged that many families took the ultimate liberal view, sending their sons to Oxford, ‘simply as a place to grow up in. Some concerned themselves with rowing or cricket, some with acting and speech making, and some with pure pleasure.’ (1964, p. 172) During Tom Driberg’s first interview with his tutor, a rich undergraduate put his head around the door and announced, ‘I shan’t be coming to any tutorials or lectures this term, because I’ve managed to get four days’ hunting a week.’ (Wheen, 2001, p. 38) Slightly more intellectually gifted, Louis MacNeice wrote of his time at Merton College, ‘I had not gone to Oxford to study, that was what Grammar Schoolboys did. We products of the English public schools went to Oxford either for sport and beer drinking.... or the aesthetic life and cocktails.’ (MacNeice, 1965, p. 102) Despite a modern horror at such intentional dissipation,

[326] Leacock subscribed to the common North American assumption that the Oxford Don ‘was expected to moon around the Campus oblivious of the world around him...of money he knew nothing, of business far less.’ (1922, p. 91) The problem with this view is not that it was inaccurate; Dilly Knox became known for suddenly stopping, stock-still, lost in thought, ‘Colbeck of Marlborough ran into me at good pace, and fell in the pavement, but escaped with some bruises.’ (Fitzgerald, 1977, p. 73)

such attitudes could still foster an education of sorts. Moberly consciously borrows Newman's language in order to explain the process:

> From the earliest beginnings of the ancient universities, students were uprooted from their old surroundings and plunged into new ones in company with one another... It was educational because it was a fellowship of young men coming from different backgrounds and having different interests and different opinions. This provided practical experience in adjusting dissimilar views and habits of mind, and the enlargement of mind which that entails. The collisions of mind with mind set up an intellectual ferment which generated a particular kind of intellectual excitement. (1950, p. 11)

As Harrison so neatly summed it up, 'supreme among educational influences was talk: casual at mealtimes, witty and stylized in college and university societies, ruminative and prolonged in late-night conversations with friends.' (Harrison, 'College Life, 1918 – 1939.' In B. Harisson (Ed.), 1994, p. 99) The inestimable number of clubs that dotted the universities provided an entertainment that, however hedonistic, invariably involved the exchange of ideas. Here too students would meet and often form new root-realities. As Waugh later wrote of his experiences, 'I knew everything about my friends' political and religious opinions, their love affairs, finances, homes, families, their tastes in food and clothes and drink, but would have thought it indelicate to inquire what school they were reading.' (E. Waugh, A Little Learning, 1964, pp. 172-173) Their talk was all-consuming. The Hypocrites' Club was perhaps the most famous of these clubs (at the time), its membership including most of the Eton Society of the Arts. An article in the *Isis* described them as, 'the most entertaining people in the University. They express their souls in terms of shirts and grey flannel trousers and find an outlet for their artistic ability on the walls of their clubrooms.' (Cited in Taylor, 2007, p. 24) The Hypocrites', like the more historic Bullingdon, was largely concerned with drinking but in all other matters it was different, its overall tone being that of a determined irony. Its motto was 'water is best' and its most quoted rule was 'gentlemen may dance but not prance.' As Waugh himself wrote, there was 'an element of a resistance group about the drunkards of the period.' (Cited in Byrne, 2009, p. 54)

Theirs was not aimless self-indulgence so much as the development of a calculated hedonist philosophy; as the dandy par-excellence Brian Howard wrote to his mother, 'I'm not 'busy

having a good time' ─I am busy LIVING, *for the first time in my life*.' (Cited in M. Green, 1976, p. 157) Howard's hedonism was often expressed at the more historic Bullingdon Club. He rode to hounds, smashed windows with the clubmen and pursued 'tumultuous nights' with other members. Christopher Hollis pointed out in his memoir of the period that Howard combined his aristocratic connections at the Bullingdon, 'with a profession of Communist opinions.' (Hollis, 1976, p. 104)[327] While he was at Oxford Harold Acton, a member of the Hypocrites', published *An Indian Ass,* his second book of poems. In 'Commedia' he hints at a similar credal justification for the pursuit of pleasure:

> Our lives are cratered with great pocks and scabs...
> Then let us sing the world's hilarity...
> Our clowns are turned into tragedians,
> And Pierrot's chalk-white face is crinkled up
> With bitter weeping; roguish Harlequin,
> His apple cheeks all wet and blobbed with tears,
> Wanders the streets of Bergamo alone.
> (Cited in M. Green, 1976, p. 161)

D. J. Taylor's remarkable propospographical account of the Bright Young Things locates the birthplace of Mayfair's iconic outbreak of undergraduatism in Oxford. (2007, p. 24) The excesses of the Bright Young Things have, of course become legendary. The parties, the in-jokes, the overpowering odour of celebrity, were all probably best sumarised by the Labour politician Arthur Ponosnby. In his diary, Ponsonby lamented that his daughter, Elizabeth, was merely 'famous for her extravagant pranks in wastrel society.'(Taylor, 2007, p. 144) D. J. Taylor saw something more in the post-war 'age of parties', explaining that the hedonism of early youth was often simply a stepping stone to more dogmatic faiths. He explained that,'in the diaspora of the 1930s when the Mayfair alliances had broken up, [the Bright Young Things] searched desperately for political and religious certainties – [becoming] Socialists, Communists, Fascists

[327] Peter Quennell locates the conversion in the thirties, describing Howard's transition into 'an impassioned, though slightly unorthodox supporter of the anti-Fascist Left Wing. (Quennell, 1976, p. 121) It is probable that political posturing as an undergraduate eventually manifested itself in activism in the thirties.

and Catholics...' (p. 9)[328] However it might well be argued that many were already engaged in that search while at University.

The intellectual clubs such as the debating societies and the infamous Apostles Club at Cambridge also centered on the exchange of ideas but represented a much more obvious pattern of intellectual development and the progress towards conversion.[329] The Oxford and Cambridge debating societies reached a number of controversial progressivist resolutions throughout the period. The resolutions, by themselves, should not be read as a perfect intellectual record of the period. It must be remembered that many resolutions were carried because certain political groups thought it worthwhile to attend and vote as a bloc, while others were carried because of a widespread reverence for wit as the primary virtue of orators. That said, the resolutions of both debating societies combine to demonstrate a generalized movement leftwards among the students. In 1919 the Cambridge Union voted against hanging the Kaiser, in defiance of the rest of the nation. Overwhelmingly they put their faith in the League of Nations. In 1923 they voted to recognise the Soviet Union; in 1927 they voted in favour of the national adoption of pacifism and in 1932 they voted to abolish the means test for the unemployed. The following year Socialism out-pointed Fascism (355–218)[330] in a debate involving Mosley and Atlee. In 1937 the union agreed, by a single vote, that the Soviet Union was the new civilisation. Interestingly they twice voted against contraceptives; first in 1924 and again in 1927, although by this time the losing margin had been reduced by twenty per cent. (Cradock, 1953)

Despite the obviously political topics religious topics were often canvassed and frequently returned surprising results. In 1926 Conan Doyle beat the atheist-Communist J. B. S. Haldane in a debate on spiritualism. In 1929 the union defeated the motion that foreign missions had outlived their purpose. In 1939 the topic was 'that organized religion has lost and deserves to lose its hold on the mind of the contemporary generation.' A smaller crowd voted in favour of

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[328] Evelyn Waugh, briefly secretary to the Hypocrites' club would obviously go on to become a Catholic, but it is worth noting that his predecessor, Frederick Charles Loveday, left the University and went to study black magic under Alistair Crowley and died under mysterious circumstances in the Abbey of Thelena Crowley had formed on the isle of Cefalu, near Sicily (E. Waugh, 1964, p. 180). (See also: Tobias Churton, 2011, *Aleister Crowley: the Biography: Spiritual Revolutionary, Romantic Explorer, Occult Master and Spy*, Watkins Publishing: London.

[329] The cultural historian Geoffrey Ashe attended Cambridge University immediately after World War Two, whilst there, he joined the Karl Marx Club and the Thomas Aquinas Club. Aquinas, it seems, had the final say and Ashe became a Catholic. (Blissett, 1981, p. 14)

[330] Most of the conservatives sided with Mosley before leaving university and eventually fighting against Nazism.

the claims of religion on society, 36–350. (Cradock, 1953) By 1941 the Oxford Union had voted so overwhelmingly in favour of the motion, 'a return to God through organized religion is essential for the establishment of a New World Order' that no division was taken. (V. H. Green, 1964, p. 353)Within the Unions of both universities it is possible to see the nascent expressions of the popular conversion movements throughout the period.

The Apostles Club has been shrouded in a particular mystique ever since it was revealed that the Cambridge spies were former members. This mystique only instensified when subsequent inquiries were frustrated by the obstinate secrecy of its members. When Tom Driberg flew to Moscow to interview Guy Burgess after the latter had defected to the Soviet Union, Burgess refused to discuss the society with his friend. (Driberg, 1956, p. 21) Though prepared to betray his country, Burgess felt duty-bound to honour the oath he took upon entry.[331] The Cambridge Conversazione society was founded as a debating society in 1812 by George Tomlinson, the future Bishop of Gibraltar, and eleven others – hence the nickname Apostles Club. Interestingly all the original members were evangelical and actively sought to promote the gospels. (Deacon, 1986, p. 1) The society's reputation for activist members and romantic causes was confirmed by the connections made there between the Cambridge spies, both confessed and suspected. Guy Burgess, Anthony Blunt, Michael Straight, Victor Rothschild, Leo Long and Alister Watson were all members, as was Julian Bell, who died fighting in Spain. One of the earlier members wrote to Bishop Tomlinson explaining that in a previous meeting they had secretly attempted to resolve their religious doubts. (Deacon, 1986, p. 3) The debates increased the doubts and as the 19th century progressed the society was riven with mystical and rationalist divisions. (Deacon, 1986, pp. 7-10) By the interwar period religious doubt had given way to confident atheism. Bertrand Russell, George Moore and Maynard Keynes were all former members or 'angels' who, though excused from attendance, were still a part of the society. The society debated all the 'avant-garde views of the late twenties' and a gradual sympathy for Marxism emerged. Deacon argues that the society's instinctive opposition to authority, founded on a pervading irreligiosity,

[331] The oath, as described by Michael Straight, was rather startling, 'I held up my right hand and repeated a fearful oath, praying that my soul would writhe in unendurable pain for the rest of eternity if I so much as breathed a word about the Society to anyone who was not a member.' (Cited in Deacon, 1986, p. 38) The idea of materialist Communists praying to bring down eternal punishment on themselves if they betrayed their oath, while developing the skills to betray their country, is an hilarious indictment on the mental confusion of the period where tradition and radicalism often formed inharmonious combinations in undergraduates early attempt to form harmonious root realities life at the ancient universities.

spawned ‘an illogical devotion to the Soviet Union…’ (Deacon, 1986, p. 103) In the following chapter we shall trace the varying conversion processes but, for now, we confine ourselves to saying that it is clear that in the Apostles, and indeed in the other clubs and societies that so enlivened college life, there was a gradual exploration and formation of root realities and the ‘habit of mind’ whereby those root realities continued to be tested in the ensuing years. Central to this habit were the undergraduate friendships in which the soul was bared and a range of opinions tentatively expressed, corrected, re-expressed, defended, developed and/or abandoned.

The educative role of personality is evident in many of the interwar novels set in Oxbridge. In *Brideshead Revisited*, Charles Ryder’s education is so bound up in his relationship with Sebastian that he dates his ‘Oxford life’ from their first meeting. (E. Waugh, 2011b, p. 29) It is with Sebastian that he discovers ‘the low door in the wall… which opened on an enclosed and enchanted garden, which was somewhere, not overlooked by any window, in the heart of that grey city.’ (pp. 37-38) This enchanted garden is the first stage of the aesthetic conversion that precedes Ryder’s Catholic conversion in the novel.[332] He later refers to his days with Sebastian as an ‘aesthetic education’ (p101) and locates within them the seeds of his subsequent conversion to Catholicism:

> All the wickedness of that time was like the spirit they mix with the pure grape of the Douro, heady stuff full of dark ingredients; it at once enriched and retarded the whole process of adolescence as the spirit checks the fermentation of the wine, renders it undrinkable, so that it must lie in the dark, year in, year out, until it is brought up at last fit for the table. (p. 56)

Monsarrat’s *This is the Schoolroom* also has an educative relationship as the well-spring of Marcus Hendrycks’ conversion to Communism. Removed from Cambridge, Marcus ends up in a bed-sit and, in a sense, recreates the university life under the tutelage of Cummings, the Communist teacher at the local council school and a fellow lodger. Cummings’ passionate defences of socialism fire Hendrycks’ imagination and he accepts Cummings’ offer of direct tutelage. ‘Give me four weeks: read what I tell you and listen to me, really listen, as fairly as you

[332] See Laura White’s Essay ‘The Rejection of Beauty in Waugh's *Brideshead Revisited*’ where she argues that, ‘*Brideshead Revisited* charts for its protagonist what Waugh sees as morally necessary, learning that art and beauty cannot substitute for religion.’ (White, 2006, p. 181)

can. And I'll try and show you in detail what's wrong in the world, and the plans we have to cure it. Will you do that?" (Monsarrat, 1943, p. 131) Whilst it wasn't quite the Socratic method, Hendrycks essentially re-creates the Cambridge system of supervisions[333]

> It was the most intensive effort of study I had ever made in my life, and yet it was as easy and natural as poker-playing and drinking had been a short time previously; I had set out with the resolve to give the thing all the concentration I could, and before three days had gone by I realised that such resolution was unnecessary ─ the immense range and novelty of the subject carried their own momentum. Of course I was talking with Cummings the whole time, and listening and commenting on what he said…and every point I raised was expounded with a candour and honesty which I had never encountered before and in which I could only discern an eagerness to assist and buttress my curiosity. (Monsarrat, 1943, p. 133)

At the end of his reading 'that seemed sometimes cool and crystal-clear, sometimes torrential mysticism' (Monsarrat, 1943, p. 133) Hendrycks suddenly achieves his moment of conversion, describing it in dramatically Pauline terms. It was:

> …the trenchant conviction of knowledge, the 'light from heaven' of Saul… the unassailable faith in the rightness of Socialism which came into being that night and burnt up like the flaring of a furnace….
>
> "So I am a Communist?"
>
> "Yes." He laughed suddenly, "Don't look so scared it's quite simple really." (Monsarrat, 1943, p. 135)

Both Charles Ryder and Marcus Hendrycks left their respective universities without taking their degrees but both would ultimately become converts to the choice destinations of the period; Catholicism and Communism. Both were indolent failures at their universities and yet both managed to acquire something of what Newman would have called the habit of philosophy, the ability to *digest* knowledge and experience. Both demonstrate the connection between a liberal

[333] Supervisions are the same thing as Oxford's tutorials although often involving small groups rather than one on one interviews.

education and the constant re-examination and even reformation of one's root-realities. Hendrycks undergoes an experience of encapsulation while Ryder undergoes a series of transformative conversions culminating in the final revivification of his long dormant Catholic conversion. It is clear in these very different representations of the Oxbridge experience that the individual was forced to re-consider his core beliefs and at least attempt to find a faith; to find what Day Lewis called 'the true, the central stone…' Such a belief would precipitate many of the interwar intellectuals into roads of varying length towards conversions of varying durability.

The Waters Come Flooding In

Having earlier stressed the permanence or 'imperishability' of Oxbridge it is important that we identify the particular elements of the interwar experience. Perhaps the most obvious were the waters that came flooding in. The university became increasingly politicized as the interwar narrative spilled in and the interconnected Pacifist and Communist movements became highly visible responses to that narrative. As students became more and more aware of the interwar crises more and more of them sought solutions in political activism, frequently under the Communist banner. Indeed the preparedness of undergraduates at both universities to take Communism seriously and accept the tutelage of missionaries like Cummings reveals the intensity of the interwar crises and the seeming infallibility of the interwar narrative.

In his autobiography Basil Willey argued that Cambridge initially seemed immune to the changes that were shaking the world outside. 'Of the major corrosives of the century, of Marx and Freud, for example, hardly more than a soupçon had as yet trickled through into our fool's paradise.' (Cited in Howarth, 1978, p. 70) Words that would later become interwar cliches briefly held a novel fascination in the antiquated lecture halls. 'I shall never forget the amazement, the incredulity, with which I first heard from one of my own pupils (who was a Communist or about to become one) that a poem, an image, an emotion or an ideal could be bourgeois.' (Howarth, 1978, p. 70)

As has been remarked upon by numerous historians, the interwar period in Britain was marked by an intellectual movement leftwards. Part of the reason was the inescapability of the interwar narrative. In 1920 the Reverend F. Holmes Dudden, Master of Pembroke, published a collection of sermons among which was a sermon entitled, *A Plea for Other-Worldliness*. In this sermon he

lamented that the spirit of other-worldliness was so ‘completely foreign to the spirit of our age’ and urged his hearers to ‘Consider again the lesser world of the individual life. How transitory and vain is all its temporal beatitude!’ The solution? ‘When everything around you is wavering, changing, fluctuating; when opinions come and go, and customs and fashions alter, and empires rise and fall, and the race itself is as a procession of ghosts that tremble and flutter and pass by…the solution is to cling with all your might, to the splendid certainty of the other world.’ (Dudden, 1920, pp. 14, 18, 24) Yet by 1930 things had changed so that Dudden was lamenting the signs of the times while delivering the University Sermon at Cambridge, employing phrases like, ‘Wide-spread dissatisfaction with the general conditions of life… all seem more or less unhappy… we have been woefully let down… our hopes have not been realized…’ (Cited in Howarth, 1978, p. 155) Even the least worldly could not escape the interwar narrative of political and economic failure.

Politically, both the Oxford and Cambridge electorates were overwhelmingly Conservative. Indeed the Conservative candidate had won both university seats at every election from 1832 to 1931, with the exception of the 1859 election. (Harrison, ‘Politics.’ In B. Harisson (Ed.), 1994, p. 381) Even as the intellectual movement leftwards became more obvious in the thirties, it was never more than a highly visible minority. The difference was that most of the conservatism at both universities was instinctive and nascent whereas Socialism generally required a conversion of sorts, the adoption of a formed political consciousness. It is estimated that by 1935 Oxford University had 800 Socialist students, of whom 600 were active; at the same time it had 2,000 conservative students of whom only 200 were active. (Harisson, 1994, p. 392) Cambridge enjoyed similar ratios during the thirties. The Cambridge Socialist Club began with two hundred members in 1933, increasing to 600 members in 1936 and peaking, just short of 1,000 members in 1938, in a university of 5,000 students. (Wood N. , 1959, p. 52) Yet for all the growth in membership, historical accounts of political activism during the period are generally dominated by a handful of names, like those of Anthony Blunt, John Cornford, Maurice Dobbs and James Klugmann.

It may be noticed in our description of interwar Oxbridge politics that the term Socialism is being used rather than Communism. This, to a certain extent, reflects Communist politics during the era where political distinctions were frequently blurred for the sake of political exigencies.

According to Philip Toynbee, despite a widespread belief that Oxford was moving leftwards, it only ever briefly reached a highpoint of two hundred Communist Party members, of whom no more than thirty or forty were actually 'open Communists.' (Toynbee, 1976, p. 146) Michael Straight estimated that for Cambridge only twenty percent of the Socialist Society members were actually involved in Communist cells. The highly influential Trinity College cell contained only a dozen members, despite the influence it would have on the twentieth century. (Straight, 1983, p. 60) Conversion to Communism was often an amorphous and somewhat confusing process but those who remained committed to the cause beyond their time in the university demonstrated the efficacy of small, highly organized party groups.

It is necessary to understand the statistical anomaly of small membership and widespread influence as a result of the policies of the Communist Party of Great Britain which were themselves directly resulting from orders emanating from Comintern in Moscow. The era contained three distinct policies. The first was operative during the early twenties in which revolution was deemed imminent. Then a cluster of socialist groups were combined into the Communist Party of Great Britain. The largest of these was the British Socialist Party which had been associated with the Labour party and contributed 5,000 members to the CPGB. Lenin provided £55,000 (£1,871,000.00 by 2012 standards)[334] and also channelled money to other organisations such as the ILP, despite the objections that would have come from party members had they known. (Beckett, 1995, pp. 11-12) During this early period when strength in numbers was of the essence, Lenin urged party members to seek affiliation with the Labour Party as a means of creating a 'united front'.[335] (Beckett, 1995, pp. 11-12) By the time of the General Strike, there had emerged a new policy of doctrinal purity, known as Class against Class.[336]

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[334] This is the purchasing power of the original sum based on the historic standard of living. (Williamson, 2015)

[335] In a classic summation of the BCP experience, Beckett explains, 'while the issue [affiliation to the labour party] was being debated in London, it was being decided in Moscow. Two key players were not at the London Conference at all. They were at the Second Congress of the Comintern in Moscow, both of them arguing strongly against affiliation. They were Willie Gallacher and Sylvia Pankhurst.' Both were later told they were wrong, and while the disagreement would ultimately lead to Pankhurst's resignation, Gallacher, a tough Scottish trade-unionist would began what soon became a party tradition; the meek acceptance of party policy from his betters. He explained, 'It was on... the conception of the Party that the genius of Lenin had expressed itself... Before I left Moscow, I had an interview with Lenin during which he asked me three questions. Do you admit you were wrong on the question of Parliament and affiliation to the Labour Party? Will you join the CP when you return? Will you do your best to persuade your Scottish comrades to join it? To each of these questions I answered yes.' (Beckett, 1995, pp. 15-16)

[336] It should be noted that there are several revisionist and indeed, controversial historians who have argued that the Class against Class theory was, in fact 'a blended response' (both Moscow and London involvement) to local needs.

Believing that Capitalism was standing on the brink of final collapse, the party dismissed other factions of the left as 'social Fascists' and in consequence, 'recruited fewest members and reached what, by most indicators, was its lowest point of influence between the wars.'[337] (Morgan, Cohen, & Flinn, 2007, p. 4) From 1933 onwards the rise of Fascism, embodied in the sudden rise of Adolf Hitler into the position of German Chancellor, was sufficient cause to replace Class against Class with the Popular Front approach. In a portent of things to come Hitler's election was greeted by a joint demonstration in London, combining the CPGB and the ILP decrying the perils of Fascism. Between 1932 and 1935 there was a conscious loosening of the dogmatic strictures that had marked the previous period and, from 1935 until August 1939, there was an official policy of united resistance to Fascism.

During the Popular Front period Communist identity was a very fluid notion. In the class-against-class era many intellectuals felt the need to abandon their upper and middle-class identities and take on a more working class approach. Gabriel Carritt, who was the son of an Oxford philosopher, 'adopted the name Bill, dropped his aitches and on conducting his first party activities in Clay Cross [east midlands] remembered trying to 'talk like the Derbyshire miners'.' (Morgan, Cohen, & Flinn, 2007, p. 82) Richard Crossman, an old Wykehamist who received a double first in Classics, and was the son of a judge, was known to use phrases like, 'working class chaps like you and me' when addressing the Oxford Labour club. (Walter, 1984, p. 106) Suddenly things began to change. Under the Popular Front period William Gallacher told students at Cambridge,

> …we want people who are capable, who are good scientists, historians and teachers. It doesn't follow at all you'll be good workers. We need you as you are. If you have a vocation it is pointless to run away to factories. One or two of you may become full-time

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Andrew Thorpe's *The British Communist Party and Moscow, 1920-43* and Matthew Worley's *Class Against Class: The Communist Party in Britain Between the Wars* have both provided extensive insights into this complex political relationship.

[337] This common view should be balanced by the more nuanced understanding revealed by the party's archival material. By the end of the twenties, membership began to pick up again largely due to the perceived incompetence of the ruling Labour Party. As Thorpe pointed out, party membership after the installation of the second Labour government appears to have risen to around 4,100 during October, 1929. Given that this figure was higher than the pre-1925 figure, the policy wasn't the total disaster that most historians have suggested it was. (Thorpe, 2000, p. 782) However by August, 1930 membership was approaching its lowest ever point of 2,350, thus any positives created by the policy were extremely short-lived.

> revolutionaries but this is a thing only a few of you will be able to do. We want you to study and be good students. (Cited in Penrose & Freeman, 1986, p. 105)

Denis Healey, an Oxonian who joined the party in 1937, wrote that party members 'started shaving, tried to avoid being drunk in public, worked for first class degrees and played down their Marxism-Leninism.' (Cited in Beckett, 1995, p. 84) The threat of Fascism was such that all the dogmatism of the previous period was abandoned in favour of more generalised aims. Consequently many groups describing themselves as Socialist were in fact Communist, and many Communists were actively discouraged from joining the party. To cite just one example, in December 1931, Oxford's October club was formed to study Communism. Willmoore Kendall discussed the name in a letter to his father,

> 'There functions in Oxford an organisation known as the October Club – though nobody seems to have any notion why it has that particular name... it isn't...difficult to decide why it doesn't operate under the name demanded by its scope and purpose; for then it would be called the Communist Club and no such organisation would, in loyalist Oxford, be assured much of a welcome.' (Mason, 1993, p. 75)

By 1934 the October Club had fused with the Labour Club and in effect that club was then 'communist dominated for the remainder of the decade.' (Walter, 1984, p. 73) The interest in Marxian theory was so widespread that a purely academic interest was not considered an indication of Communist loyalty. Thus, many Communists suddenly had access to interested students in an environment of studious objectivity.

Such was the fluidity of the Popular Front period that it made the recruitment of the Cambridge Spies even easier. Arnold Deutsch who was the original recruiter of Anthony Blunt, Guy Burgess, John Cairncross, Donald Maclean and Kim Philby, explicitly utilized the political confusion in his work.[338] The policy of targeting clerists was an intentional one; Oxbridge was clearly able to provide high-fliers who would soon be in a position to help the Soviet Union. In

[338] All in all he recruited twenty agents and was in contract with a total of twenty nine agents. Deutsch had a PhD in Chemistry and, on the strength of it, was able to move in academic circles in London and elsewhere. His focus on Cambridge was a product of Philby being his first recruit. The others were all from Philby's Trinity College or the nearby Trinity Hall. In the end, unlike many of his colleagues, Deutsch only escaped Stalin's paranoia by being torpedoed by a German Submarine while crossing the Atlantic to supervise a spy network in the United States in 1942.

an atmosphere of political upheaval and fluid political identities it became easy to observe and to recruit promising young men and women. Soon Deutsch was able to recruit James Klugmann[339] and Anthony Blunt as talent spotters to help in the pursuit of intellectuals with promising careers. Deutsch explained his policy in a report to his seniors in Moscow:

> Given that the Communist movement in these universities is on a mass scale and that there is a constant turnover of students, it follows that individual Communists whom we pluck out of the Party will pass unnoticed, both by the Party itself and by the outside world. People forget about them. And if at some time they do remember that they were once Communists, this will be put down to a passing fancy of youth, especially as those concerned are scions of the bourgeoisie. It is up to us to give the individual [recruit] a new [non-Communist] political personality.' (Cited in Andrew & Mitrokhin, 1999, p. 58)[340]

Deutsch soon convinced his recruits to distance themselves from the left and 'conform to the ideas of the establishment in order to penetrate it successfully.' Maclean was soon able to persuade his mother that he had moved past his 'undergraduate flirtation with Communism.' (Andrew & Mitrokhin, 1999, p. 61.) Philby went further and joined the British People's Party,[341] a proto-Fascist organisation and, along with Burgess, joined the Anglo-German Fellowship. Philby was, at one time editing the fellowship's publication, the *Anglo-German Trade Gazette* while Burgess had taken up a position as the personal secretary to the Conservative MP Captain "Jack" Macnamara, who had close ties with the Nazi Party. In this

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[339] This was something the KGB has never publically admitted. Klugmann's guilt was revealed by the Mitrokhin files. (Andrew & Mitrokhin, 1999, p. 63)

[340] This quote comes from the thousands of KGB files stolen by Vasili Mitrokhin who, over a twelve year period smuggled 'six large cases of top secret material from the KGB's foreign intelligence archive.' From 1972 Mitrokhin worked alone, checking and sealing over 300,000 documents from the archives prior to their move to a new office complex. Most of his time was spent with documents from the First Chief Directorate, as part of which Directorate S. organised illegals to live in foreign countries under deep cover. Mitrokhin initially tried to commit what he read to memory, later he made tiny notes on scraps of paper and hid them in his shoes, and finally, gaining confidence he simply copied out the files onto normal paper and hid them on his person. Not once in twelve years was he stopped and searched as he left the building each night. On weekends he took his notes, and typed many of them up before burying them under his dacha, several kilometres outside Moscow. In 1992, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, Mitrokhin smuggled samples of his notes to the British embassy in Latvia. (Andrew & Mitrokhin, 1999, pp. xx, 1-14) Thus it was that Vasili Mitrokhin, educated in an obscure Central Russian school and later demoted to an archivist position within the KGB, was able to provide his country's enemies with a far greater treasure-trove of top secret information than that provided by those elite Cambridge-educated spies to the Soviet Union.

[341] Philby's father actually ran as a candidate for the party in 1939.

position Burgess frequently visited Germany. Anthony Blunt wrote in his unpublished memoir that no one appreciated 'how much agony [Burgess] went through' suppressing his political convictions. 'He would much rather have remained an open party member… But his belief in the cause of Communism was so complete that he accepted without question that he must obey the order…' (Cited in Holzman, 2013, p. 78)[342]

Geoffrey Cox, the New Zealand born journalist, was a Rhodes Scholar at Oriel College, Oxford from 1932 to 1935. Cox joined the Communist October Club during his first term, having already visited the Soviet Union on one of the Intourist trips so ignominiously mocked by Malcolm Muggeridge. Cox was a Thatcherite during the eighties and in his memoirs, written in 1999, he takes great pains to assure the reader that he was 'not ignorant of the political methods which lay behind the Soviet experiment.' (Cox, 1999, p. 41) However, during the interwar period he clearly was. Cox follows a very traditional pattern of the progressive intellectual[343] undergoing the ubiquitous flirtation with Communism while at university. When he arrived at Oxford he had hoped to find answers to the questions that were foremost on his mind. 'Were the Russians…right in arguing that only the root-and-branch change of violent Communist revolution would remedy times so manifestly out of joint? Did Freud…hold the key to human happiness, and perhaps even to peace?' (p. 88) He noted that the greatest advantage of the Oxford experience was the intellectual freedom provided by its liberal education: 'you can be a Communist or an Oxford Groupist, or a Nihilist, provided you can justify your position on rational grounds.'(p. 124) Cox marched in the May-day parades in 1933; he assisted hunger marchers who were 'surprisingly lacking in bitterness'; and he developed friendships with working class students from Ruskin College. (pp. 95, 109-110)While Cox maintained that he soon grew convinced that Communism was not the solution, and was now advocating instead democratic Socialism, he could see *why* it appealed to so many.[344] 'In that autumn of 1932, with

[342] When he was 'drunk and high' Burgess would hint to Michael Straight that he was learning valuable information from a Nazi diplomat. Straight's biographer, Roland Perry explained that 'Straight's immersion in Marxist ideals and the romantic notion of the international Communist movement made him aware of Burgess's true allegiance no matter what Fascist façade he presented to anyone else.' (Perry, 2005, p. 62)

[343] He visited the Soviet Union, Weimar Germany, the Western Front and A. S. Neil's experimental Summerhill School before finally going up to Oxford.

[344] He points out that, 'Since I was now clear in my mind that Communism did not offer an acceptable answer to the slump, I did not resume my membership of the October Club. Instead I concentrated on the Labour Club, the stronghold of the social democrats amongst whom I now numbered myself.' Oddly enough this move came in late 1933 and Cox fails to mention that by 1934 the Labour club was a Communist dominated organisation.

unemployment at record levels, with banks collapsing and industries closing, it was possible to believe that capitalism was like a ring-barked tree, doomed to decay and collapse. Signs of hope for its future were rare.'(p. 92) Communism presented itself as the inevitable system of the future.

Many would undergo rapid conversions or more vague affiliations like Cox 'to keep in with the Communist Party – at least as a fellow-traveller – if not as a full Party member.' (Cox, 1999, p. 92) When Vladimir Nabokov arrived in Cambridge after escaping with his family from the Crimea in early 1919, he was confronted with cultured, urbane, undergraduates who, 'for all their decency and refinement, would lapse into the most astonishing drivel whenever Russia was being discussed.' (Nabokov, 1967, p. 261)[345] Nabokov singled out one undergraduate, whom he nicknamed Nesbit. This student would defend 'the bestial terror that had been sanctioned by Lenin' by repeating clichés he had picked up from the early writings of English and American sympathizers. 'He maintained that the reason for what he demurely called "less variety of opinion" under the Bolsheviks than in the darkest Tsarist days was the want of any tradition of free speech in Russia.'(Nabokov, 1967, pp. 262-263) Nesbit was none other than Rab Butler, the future conservative politician and deputy Prime Minister under Macmillan. (Boyd, 1993, p. 168) In his biography of Rab, Gerald Sparrow, who was at Cambridge with him and who clearly shared his politics, made no mention of his youthful heterodoxy, instead presenting him as a sober, Churchillian figure among pimply undergraduates and indelicate debutantes. (Sparrow, 1965) Even by the end of the twenties, Nabokov observed Butler's growing conservatism as he became vehemently anti-Stalinist and explained it with characteristic insight; 'Nesbit had mistaken his own ebullient idealism for a romantic and humane something in Lenin's ghastly rule. Ibsen, in the days of the no less ghastly Stalin, was mistaking a quantitative increase in his own knowledge for a qualitative change in the Soviet regime.' (Nabokov, 1967, p. 272)

[345] The treatment of the Nabokovs by the progressive left was not restricted to the son. When his father, Vladimir Dmitrievich Nabokov arrived in London, as a former member of the provisional government and supporter of the defeated White Army, he and his family were snubbed by many of the literary figures whose hospitality he had enjoyed when visiting London as a journalist in 1916. 'Now there were no banquets, no speeches, and even no fives with [H. G.] Wells whom it proved impossible to convince that Bolshevism was but an especially brutal and thorough form of barbaric oppression – in itself as old as the desert sands – and not at all the attractively new revolutionary experiment that so many foreign observers took it to be.' (Nabokov, 1967, p. 255)

Nicholas Henderson and John Briggs-Davison toured the Dorset countryside holding socialist meetings on street corners. As David Walter dryly observed, 'The…locals who heard them would no doubt have been surprised to learn that the young comrades addressing them were to become, respectively, HM Ambassador to the United States and a pillar of the conservative right.' (Walter, 1984, p. 105) Even Willmoore Kendall, the maverick conservative political philosopher, converted to Communism while studying as a Rhodes Scholar at Oxford in the early thirties. His father a blind Methodist minister living in Oklahoma blamed himself, believing that he had bequeathed his son a 'fervour of religious dogma' that had precipitated his conversion. (Mason, 1993, p. xxi) In a series of polemical letters to his father, Kendall laid out his growing Communist faith. He was convinced that the great challenge was to present a moral system in a world wherein 'religion has lost its meaning.' (Mason, 1993, p. 450) In Communism he found such a system. Many of his letters were concerned with excoriating Roosevelt's responses to the Depression which were 'only staving off the awful day when *some* when kind of revolution is going to happen' and as far as Kendall was concerned, 'I'd rather have a bloody revolution than no revolution at all.'(Mason, 1993, p. 470) By 1953 Willmoore Kendall was a renowned conservative political philosopher and a Catholic convert.

In 1919 at a debate between the Cambridge Socialist Society and the Cambridge Independent Labour Party a group of ex-officers interrupted proceedings and made the three Socialist speakers sing 'God Save the King' while standing on a table and then heartily ducked them in the river. By 1933 Norman Angell, the author and founder of the Union of Democratic Control was only saved a similar fate by the timely intervention of the police. Where the first event had prompted letters of support in the *New Cambridge*, the latter attempted event sparked outraged responses in the same paper. (Howarth, 1978, pp. 20-21) By the thirties the Pacifist movement represented a legitimate alternative to what was widely perceived to be a government that was indifferent to war and its repercussions. The majority did not become Communist but the majority did become resistant to the hearty, Colonel Blimp style Conservatism that they equated with the status quo. Others were briefly caught up in the enthusiasm of Communist rebellion. Such was its intoxication that even Barbara Pym, the conservative, Anglo-Catholic novelist,[346]

[346] Pym's career as a novelist was influenced by Robert Liddell who was a critic and a minor novelist as well as a convert to Catholicism while studying at Oxford. Liddell himself seemed to be on friendly terms with a surprising number of minor female novelists, Iris Murdoch, Elizabeth Taylor, Ivy Compton Burnett, Olivia Manning, Honor

while a student at Oxford in 1934, found herself instinctively joining with the October Club who were processing with the hunger marchers, screaming, 'Down with the Ruling Classes!' (Harrison, 'Politics.' In B. Harisson (Ed.), 1994, p. 400)

More than pure enthusiasm, Communist activists seemed to be impressively in touch with contemporary events. Geoffrey de Freitas, the Labour politician, recalled his days at the Cambridge Union, 'These were the years of suffering for millions of our fellow citizens, and, although the union was for Jarrow or South Wales, as the terms passed we became more and more aware of what was happening in the world outside.' (Cradock, 1953, p. 137) Frank Singleton, another president of the Union, felt that the debates had more power because the students were so close to the events being debated. '[T]he left saw things clearly…young men like John Cornford said that Fascism must be opposed and then went out to Spain to fight and be killed opposing it.'(p. 151) In the midst of political, religious, social and economic instability that clarity of vision would attract countless conversions, of varying intensity and commitment, to Communism.

In 1936 the editor of Oxford's *The Isis*, Keith Briant, wrote about the progress towards Utopia and worried that his generation 'would assert that the world has rolled on for a million years in vain, that the past has left no painful heritage of experience.' (Briant, 'Our Elders and Ourselves.' in L. Ralphs (Ed.), 1936, p. 192) He was complaining about the hedonism of the students who refused to abandon their bacchanalian 'tinsel, champagne and tiring exoticism' and instead, maintained 'a terrifying absence of faith in anything – either in social idealism or any kind of religion.' (Briant, 1936, pp. 200, 201) As he explained, without the standard of behaviour provided by social or religious faith, 'our generation can make no progress when the ultimate power of decision is in its hands.'[347](Briant, 1936, pp. 201) Briant's understanding that

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Tracy and Mary Wesley – the last two being Catholic converts while Iris Murdoch was an atheist who, in the words of A. N. Wilson, 'could never entirely leave Christianity alone.' (Wilson, 2003, p. 151) In the same biography Wilson lays bare his own religious movements which almost rival Valentine Ackland's series of conversions. "I had blown hot and cold about religion ever since my confirmation, being now a Tolstoyan simple-lifer, then an unbeliever, then for a very brief period a Roman Catholic, then back to unbelief, then Anglican. (p. 205)

[347] When he left the University, Briant published a book entitled, *Oxford Limited* which was a slightly more censorious version of this essay. As one American reviewer wrote, 'Almost any college teacher who reads this book is likely to have an uneasy conscience for a while.' (Waller, 1938, p. 606) And yet, for some reason, the book attracted little attention, perhaps the legacy of the Bright Young Things was enough to make 'a Fresher Blind' old news, however much former students like Beverley Nichols might claimed to have been shocked by the book's revelations. (Nichols, 1938, p. 127)

a lack of political or religious faith was dangerous, gives a useful insight into the belief that conversion of some sort was necessary. Moreover, it also hints at the power many intellectuals associated with their political conversions, the growing sense that they could change the world; it was an assumption of their influential role as the newest generation of clerists.

Heaven Haven

Another poem that Gerard Manley Hopkins wrote while still a student at Balliol was 'Heaven Haven' about a woman taking the veil; desiring to go 'where springs not fail/to fields where flies no sharp and sided hail/… where no storms come/…. And out of the swing of the sea.' (Hopkins G. M., 1970, p. 19) During the interwar period one of the constant criticisms that political converts levelled at the relatively apolitical undergraduates was that they were escapist. This charge was most frequently leveled at students who underwent some kind of religious conversion. One prematurely dour student from Birmingham University summed up the criticism in an essay entitled, 'The Socialist Solution':

> It is a tragically tangled mess and a mess from which it is impossible to get away. So the escapism of the Bright Young People, and of the Back to Naturites, and of all those different defeatist cults which are united in their retreat into the past, has become impossible for most intelligent people. Its place has been taken by a determination to do something, a determination which is often comically self-conscious but which is real and sincere. It is not exclusively Socialist and it has found expression in beliefs which we consider to be dangerous; but in our various manifestations of this new attitude we will ignore those which are religious, or literary, or personal, and confine ourselves to those which are sociological and political. (R. D. Smith, 'The Socialist Solution.' In L. Ralphs (Ed.) 1936, pp. 4-5)

R.D. Smith eventually became a Communist and, according to MI5, a spy for the party during the Second World War and even into the fifties, though not a very good one.[348] In this brief quote

[348] More well-known as the husband of the novelist, Olivia Manning. Smith was actually part of a Communist cell that worked within the BBC, having being recruited into the party in 1938 by none other than Anthony Blunt. In a telling reflection of the period, Smith was entirely open about his Communist sympathies and his wife even used him as the inspiration for the character Guy Pringle in her wartime novels. His main role was 'getting party members on air or employed by the BBC.' In pursuit of this task he was paid handsomely by the Communist Party but, like so many secret members, his outlandish lifestyle and 'louche behaviour' caused concern among party

he gives a perceptive summary of the conflicting responses to the interwar narrative that he, very reasonably, describes as a ‘tangled mess’. Defeatism and escapism are clearly disparaging terms to describe responses that were more concerned with the individual than with the socio-economic system in which he was located. The search for the haven where ‘no storms come’, though dismissed by Communists as mere defeatism, was clearly insistent enough to spawn large-scale religious revivals like the Anglo-Catholic revival, the Oxford Group and, of course, the continued and rapid growth of the Catholic Church.

For most of their history, both Oxford and Cambridge were ostensibly religious institutions. Oxford was founded early in the twelfth century while the story of the foundation of Cambridge is less clear. It was either founded in the fourth century under the patronage of Prince Cantabar, as a direct off-shoot of Athens and under the chancellorship of St. Amphibalus; the converted executioner of St. Alban; or, as is drearily more likely, it was developed as an off-shoot of Oxford at some point in the thirteenth century. Both universities were largely staffed by clerics and largely concerned with the education of clerics, utilising a basic system of liberal education that centered upon on the study of theology. (Brooke, Highfield, & Swaan, 1988) By the twentieth century only the architecture and a handful of archaic traditions remained to remind students of the Universities’ monastic past. Of the sixty nine heads of college at Oxford, seventeen were in Orders. (Harrison, ‘College Life, 1918 – 1939.’ In B. Harisson (Ed.), 1994, p. 82) Many of the Dons were still unmarried, and some, like the newly married Dean of Queens left home at ten p.m. in order to sleep in the College each night. (Harrison, 1994, p. 86) Yet these charming reminders of a religious past merely served to mask the inevitable march of secularism. Throughout the interwar years when the celibate culture of Oxbridge was actively retained, most colleges in Oxbridge abandoned compulsory attendance at chapel. (V. H. Green, 1964, p. 339)

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operatives. Too often it is assumed that the Cambridge five were solo Communist operatives but, Smith gives us an insight into a period in which hundreds were involved in helping the party and hundreds of MI5 agents were busy trying to monitor their work. A classic anecdote from the period gives us a sense of the almost Wodehousian cat and mouse game that had developed. In a tapped call Olivia Manning told a friend that she has heard a technical fault on her line, and thus had "a pretty clear idea (that) her telephone was being tapped by MI5", assuming that her husband's Communist activities were known and would soon lead him to lose his job at the Beeb. A technician has added notes to the transcript insisting that it was ‘"impossible for his machines to cause interference". Annoyed to have been rumbled, he adds: "It is unfortunate that Mrs. Smith has come to the right conclusions for the wrong reasons."’ (Macintyre, 2007)

However, as most historians of the universities constantly point out, these anachronisms from a religious past were off-set by the increasing secularism of the dons. The Mathematician, G. H. Hardy[349] who taught at both universities inscribed the following New Year's wishes on a postcard: 'Prove the Riemann hypothesis, make 211 not out in the fourth innings of the last test at the Oval, find an argument that would convince the general public of the non-existence of God, be the first man to the top of Everest, be the first combined president of the USA, USSR and Germany and murder Mussolini.' (Howarth, 1978, p. 104) Hardy kept a picture of Lenin in his rooms at New College, considering the revolutionary the only man, besides Einstein, who could be said to belong to, 'the Bradman class'. (Howarth, 1978, p. 104) After losing his Christian faith at Winchester, he became an aggressive proponent of atheism for much of his career. He was by no means alone. Atheism had become common among philosophers like Moore and Russell as well as among the scientists working at Cambridge in the Cavendish Laboratory. (Snow, 'Rutherford & The Cavendish. In J. Raymond (Ed.),'1960, p. 242) These atheists were also surrounded by many Christians for whom, in the words of Bishop Barnes, 'traditional formulas had withered in the mental environment created by modern knowledge, and had been replaced by a wistful agnosticism.' (Barnes, 1979, p. 197)[350] Like much of the world outside, interwar Oxbridge witnessed the progress of secularism among the intellectual classes

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[349] A mathematical genius in his own right, Hardy's achievements in the field of number theory and mathematical analysis were among the significant mathematical breakthroughs of the twentieth century. However they have been somewhat overshadowed by his discovery of, and subsequent work with, the self-taught shipping clerk from Madras, Srinivasa Ramanujan. In his introduction to Hardy's *Mathematician's Apology* C. P. Snow tells the story that when Hardy was visiting Ramanujan in hospital and ventured the conversational gambit that his taxi number, 1729, was particularly dull. Ramanujan immediately exclaimed, 'No Hardy! No Hardy! It is a very interesting number. It is the smallest number expressible as the sum of two cubes in two different ways [$1729 = 1^3 + 12^3$ and $9^3 + 10^3$].' (Hardy, 1973, p. 37)

[350] Barnes was writing in an open letter to the Archbishop of Canterbury after being publically denounced for a string of sermons in which he derided the possibility of transubstantiation. Archbishop Davidson's reply was, according to George Bernard Shaw, 'a heartfelt plea for ambiguity.' (Barnes, 1979, pp. 198-199) Yet for all of Davidson's vacillations, Barnes was right when he argued that many educated men and women felt alienated from the Church and Christianised agnosticism had pervaded the common rooms of both universities. Even T. R. Glover, a Baptist cleric who wrote the historical-critical treatise *The Jesus of History*, was prompted to satirise the vaguely Christianised agnosticism that was then so prevalent at Cambridge:

> We know Thee not, nor guess Thee
> O vague beyond our dreams:
> We praise Thee not nor bless Thee
> Dim source of all that seems;
> Unconscious of our witness,
> The music beyond our heart
> O It beyond all Itness
> If aught indeed Thou art. (Cited in Howarth, 1978, p. 173)

and, like the world outside, it also witnessed the religious re-awakening that took place among the intellectual classes.

Despite the growing secularism among many of the dons, both Oxford and Cambridge were essentially Christian institutions marked by vestigial Christian traditions. As the poet John Wain wrote, 'It was impossible, at that time, to take in Oxford without taking in, if not exactly the Christian faith, at least a very considerable respect for Christianity.' (Cited in Turner, 'Religion.' In B. Harisson (Ed.),1994, p. 295) Wain, who came from Stoke-on-Trent and was educated at a very minor public school, Newcastle-under-Lyme School, found the religiosity of Oxford surprising. It should also be noted that he attended Oxford after the war when both universities had experienced something of a Christian revival. '...every figure who radiated intellectual glamour of any kind was in the Christian Camp. I knew more rationalists, atheists and people who were simply indifferent to religious questions in Stoke-on-Trent than I ever met at Oxford.' (Turner , 1994, p.295) Evelyn Waugh also complained of the religiosity of Oxford in letter to his friend Dudley Carew, which suggests that its Christian heritage was sufficiently ubiquitous even during the interwar eras. Contrastingly, Christopher Hollis and Ronald Knox, both sons of Bishops and both raised in almost exclusively ecclesiastical circles, found the University surprisingly secular. Hollis described Oxford society as 'entirely and complacently secular.' (Hollis, 1974, p. 58) The difference of opinion is fairly easily explained. Both Oxford and Cambridge were religious institutions that had been secularised. Thus to the irreligious they seemed particularly religious while to the religious, they seemed secularised.

Bearing out the reality of an essentially Christian culture, polls right up into the 1970s show that Church attendance at the university was often higher than attendance in the rest of the nation. (Hollis, 1974, p. 58) The religious historian, F. M. Turner (cited above) goes on to explain that the university was prone to several conversion movements. Throughout the period 'observers were amazed at the continued vitality of evangelical groups bent on actively converting students.' (Turner, 'Religion.' In B. Harisson (Ed.),1994, p. 295) Buchman's Oxford Group attracted a huge number of undergraduates and a number of dons as well; senior figures like Julian Thornton-Duesbury, the Chaplain of Corpus Christi, Cannon Streeter, Provost of Queens and Canon L. W. Grensted of Oriel. Another revival came with the 1931 Anglican mission, chiefly conducted by William Temple, then Archbishop of York. The mission was planned as a

means of confronting and challenging the assumption that religion was a spent force and would become a template for missions that Temple gave at other universities, including Cambridge.[351] The mission consciously avoided a sense of revivalism and, instead focused on daily Communion and direct instruction. Iremonger noted the way that Temple preferred straight apologetics rather than emotional appeals. 'Unfolding night after night the fundamental Christian world-view as a coherent philosophy of life, [Temple] startled his hearers by his obvious and profound belief in truths which many of them… had come to regard with contempt, and justified his convictions by rational appeal.' (Iremonger, 1948, p. 378) For many students Temple provided the rational defence of the faith that their schools had avoided and the effect was mesmerizing. According to F. R. Barry of Oxford, 'It stopped the rot on the Christian life in post-war Oxford.' (cited in Iremonger, p. 377) The short-term effect of this 'turning point in the religious life of Oxford' was the sudden increase in the public expression of Christianity. This soon developed into a long-term trend. 'It may be seen as the beginning of a significant increase in religious activity which was sustained through the 1930s and was to be followed by a major expansion in the fifteen years after the war.' (Turner, 'Religion.' In B. Harisson (Ed.), 1994, p. 314) By 1938 daily services at St Mary's, Mansfield College chapel and St. Aldate's were attracting 1,000 students per day. (Turner, 1994, p. 314)

As I have suggested throughout this chapter, liberal education is designed to force the students to consider and indeed, reconsider their root-realities. Consequently a liberal education, by its very nature, should inspire the students to consider also their religious beliefs or their absence.[352] This seemed particularly urgent among students who had abandoned their faith at school and were in

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[351] Iremonger gives an insight into Temple's methods. 'On May 4th, 1944, Temple was preaching without notes in Bournemouth on 'The Cross'. The talk had to be given twice, first to the 1,500 people who couldn't get into the Pavilion and then later to the 2,500 people who had gotten in. It was an address described by Bishop Mervyn Haigh of Winchester, as 'the finest I have ever heard anyone give.' Temple later explained the success in a letter to his wife, 'There was a very remarkable atmosphere. I took it on the plan of the Oxford Mission ─ an exposition, a hymn, an application.' (Iremonger, 1948, pp. 616-617)

[352] This stands in sharp contradistinction to the unformulated spiritualism common to the undergraduates of the postmodern age. From the early 1990s onwards the percentage of young people in America who described themselves as 'none' on religious surveys rose dramatically. A full twenty five percent of young people who reached adulthood in the 2000s say they have no religion. (Putnam & David, 2010, p. 123) Putnam and Cambell term members of this group, 'nones' and observe that few of them claimed to be atheists or agnostics. (p. 126) Clearly religion is a far more fluid concept, as Taylor has suggested, in the postmodern era. During the interwar years abandoning Anglicanism generally meant identifying as an atheist and returning to religion generally indicated a formal conversion movement.

the midst of formulating an alternative. It is not surprising that it was among these that the Communists made the most converts. Raphael Samuel wrote that:

> Like the City Missionaries of the 19th century, we were forever on the look-out for spiritual vagrants, those who were open to serious impressions or would heed a warning voice. Like the practitioners of vital religion, we cultivated a personal approach – 'planting the true word in the secret place', as the Communist poet Randall Swingler put it. (2006, p. 53)

Thus it was that the Communists often found themselves in competition with the 'vital religions'. Philip Toynbee, who was an active recruiter for the Communists during his time at Oxford in the late thirties, twice met 'a famous Roman Catholic proselytisor' coming out of a room that he was about to enter. 'The second time I was strongly tempted to ask: 'Any good in there, Father?' – for I'm convinced that his contact list must have overlapped with mine.' (Toynbee, 1954, p. 62) Whilst Toynbee only uses the derisory term, proselytisor, to describe his competition, probably Father Martin D'Arcy of Campion Hall, it seems reasonable to assume that the two men may have even made similar arguments to sway amenable undergraduates. Toynbee would tell students that 'all their problems would be solved by joining the party… that there was room in the party for everyone, and that everyone would find in it the necessary sustenance which we alone could provide.' (p. 63)[353] The claims Father Martin D'Arcy would have made on behalf of his religion, that it was One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic, seem relatively modest when compared to Toynbee's description of Communism as the solution to all problems.

Yet, despite the lack of self-awareness in Toynbee's account, he offers a useful insight into the fluid religious questing among undergraduates during that period. Just as many students would flirt with political religion while at Oxbridge,[354] so, many would flirt with Christianity. Aldous Huxley's *Eyeless in Gaza* was fittingly published on the same day that the Spanish Civil War began. The novel, known best for its recursive structure, is perhaps the most complex of the interwar *bildungsromane*. A key stage on Anthony Beavis's journey to pantheistic Pacificism is

[353] Writing in the nineteen fifties in the wake of Stalin's death and the admissions that the Communist Party was not quite as Catholic as Toynbee had suggested, he was forced to introduce his sales pitch with the caveat, 'certainly I was not aware that I was deceiving them....' (Toynbee, 1954, p. 63)

[354] Toynbee reports converting fifty students within a term and then loosing twenty over the course of the following term. (Toynbee, 1954,pp. 62-63)

his undergraduate interest in Catholicism. Huxley takes the undergraduate flirtation with religion as a recognizable cliché that needs no real explanation. While at Oxford, Beavis immerses himself in a liberal education of sorts, a crucial part of which is a study of Catholic 'Greats.' Thus, in chapter ten we find him dreamily reading St. Teresa's *The Way of Perfection* alongside the *Summa Contra Gentiles*, Byron's *Letters*, the works of St. John of the Cross and the plays of Wycherley. 'If only, Anthony thought as he came in from his walk, if only one had two sets of eyes... life was so short, and books so countlessly many.' (Huxley, 1949, p. 92) Beavis's approach to his reading is that of the dilettante and, in time, he develops his own vaguely mystical religion of freedom, yet all the while he admires, even envies the convictions of his friends and relatives, particularly his Uncle James who converts to Catholicism from atheism and Ekki the Communist activist who gives his life for the cause. (pp. 281-283, 492)[355]

The interwar undergraduates were frequently attracted to Catholicism, emerging from Protestant or secular schools and encountering unadulterated Catholic culture for the first time while at University. Malcolm Muggeridge was brought up as an agnostic but was hastily baptized in order to qualify for residency in Selwyn College Cambridge. Entering the college in 1920 he proceeded to study science, 'I had no interest in [chemistry, physics and zoology] and only the scantiest knowledge of them; in the case of zoology, none at all. Four years at Cambridge did little to alter this situation.' (Muggeridge, 2006, p. 75) Muggeridge was deeply unhappy at university, not least because he felt isolated by his lower middle class upbringing. One bright occurrence was the development of a close friendship with Alec Vidler, who was later a well-known Anglo-Catholic apologist, a frequent contributor to the Moot discussions and, still later, the Dean of King's College, Cambridge. It was through his friendship with Vidler that Muggeridge found himself living at the Oratory House with Wilfred Knox.

[355] The novel tells the story of Beavis's conversion, from his vague subjective religion to a more formalized pantheistic Pacifism that gives him the courage borne of contented convictions. By the end of the novel he prepares to give a pacifist speech knowing that nationalists were waiting to beat him up. However, where before he worried that 'To stand there, letting himself be struck, without hitting back, without giving ground ─ he should never be able to do that', he now reflects on the power of his message. 'Why not go back to doing what nature meant you to do ─ to looking on from your private box and making comments? ...suddenly he laughed aloud, "Unity," he said in an articulate whisper.... United in peace. In peace, he repeated, in peace, in peace. In the depth of every mind, peace. The same peace for all, continuous between mind and mind. At the surface, the separate waves, the whirlpools, the spray; but below them the continuous and undifferentiated expanse of sea, becoming calmer as it deepens, till at last there is an absolute stillness' (Huxley, 1949, pp. 610, 611, 618) Awakening from his reverie he begins his clerists's last supper happily eating bread and cheese. The final line summing up the satisfaction of the convert, 'He knew now that all would be well.' (p. 620)

> The offices were said during the day, periods of silence were enforced; in the afternoons I often worked in the garden with Wilfred Knox, a rare, sweet human being of whom I became very fond, and for whom I sometimes acted as server when he celebrated Holy Communion. I fell into this way of life with great contentment, enjoying its remoteness from the University, and its relative austerity as far as food and domestic comforts were concerned… Despite the agnosticism of my home and upbringing, I cannot recall a time when the notion of Christ and Christianity was not enormously appealing to me…passing Wilfred the wine to transform into blood, the wafers to become the body of Christ in the little Oratory House chapel, I felt perfectly at peace.' (Muggeridge, 2006, pp. 81-82)

When Christopher Hollis decided to convert to Catholicism the only vigorous protests came from Evelyn Waugh. (Hollis, 1974, p. 65) Waugh came up to Oxford belligerently irreligious. His letters to Dudley Carew and Tom Driberg, both still at Lancing, reveal an aversion to Christianity. To Carew he wrote, 'There is far too much religion in this University…and not enough brains.' And to Driberg he boasted, 'I do no work and never go to chapel'. (Amory, 2009, pp. 11,13) Yet for all of Waugh's militant atheism, he was fascinated by religion. As Hollis pointed out in his memoir, *Seven Ages*, Waugh always 'had always a natural hankering for talking about topics in religious terms.' (1974, p. 47) An example of his religious mania was the 1924 film *The Scarlet Woman* for which he wrote the screenplay and acted the part of Sligger Urqhart, the Catholic Dean of Balliol. The film portrayed the Pope's unsuccessful attempt to Convert England to Catholicism through the machinations of the Dean of Balliol. (Stannard, 1987, pp. 93-94)

In Evelyn Waugh's circle Christopher Hollis and Alastair Graham both converted to Catholicism in 1924 while still at University. Hollis, the son of an Anglican Bishop, left Eton an agnostic and was received into the Church by Mgr Barnes, the Catholic Chaplain to the University. Hollis later summed up his attractions to the Church by saying,

> The attraction to me was, as I say, predominantly that of a Society which had been, as it seemed to me, the sustainer of civilisation throughout the nations and throughout the ages, and, if the critic objects that that is a form of apologetic that is more concerned with

> allegiance to the Church than with allegiance to Christ, I will not quarrel with his criticism. (Hollis, 1958, p. 82)

Waugh and his generation are frequently represented as hedonistic aesthetes but this was not the complete picture. Most left the university with a sense of religious fascination. Waugh followed many of his drunken binges with attendance at Anglo-Catholic masses at Margret Street or Pusey House and even some Catholic Masses in the company of his recently converted friend, Alistair Graham. (Davie, 2009, pp. 189, 198, 208-9, 221, 229, 255) Waugh's interest in religion, particularly Catholicism, is evident in his diary. He attended Mass at Westminster Cathedral with Christopher Hollis to hear Ronald Knox preach and later, during a more secular phase, recorded several entries like the following, 'Claud [Cockburn] and I took Audrey [Lucas] to supper and sat up until 7 in the morning arguing about the Roman Church.' (Davie, 2009, 250) Or, 'Chris [Hollis] arrived... by an evening train. We got drunk... and argued about foreigners and absolution.' (Davie, 2009, 271) Two others of Waugh's circle, Richard Pares and Cyril Connolly also regularly attended Mass at Westminster Cathedral in London. (Brennan, 2013, p. 11)[356] In many ways the religious musings of the bright young inebriates bore out Hollis's theory that, having reacted to the official Anglicanism of their schools, many were propelled towards Catholicism. 'It was common enough to hear people say, "Of course it's all a load of rubbish. But if I were to become anything, I would become a Roman Catholic!" If any of it was true, they felt, it was logical to accept it all as true.' (Hollis, 1974, pp. 58-59)

Catholicism tended to attract much older converts than Communism and thus, as many joined the party or flirted with its politics while at Oxbridge, Catholicism seemed less successful there. However a number of students would encounter Catholicism for the first time while at the universities. Both had their own chaplaincies and communities. Oxford had Campion Hall and Cambridge had St. Edmunds House.[357] Dominican priories[358] were reestablished at both

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[356] It should be mentioned that two other members of Waugh's circle were Catholic converts. Harold Acton had converted to Catholicism while still at Eton and Alfred Duggan, who was raised a Catholic, left the faith as a young man, briefly flirted with Communism before eventually returning to Catholicism and becoming a writer of overtly Catholic historical fiction.

[357] St. Edmunds is now a constituent College

[358] In one of those curious but ultimately meaningless symmetries that history sometimes provides the Dominican priory at Cambridge was established in 1238, destroyed in the Reformation in 1538 and restored again in 1938. (Nichols, A. 'The Priory of the Dominicans of Cambridge.' In N. Rogers (Ed.), 2003, *Catholics in Cambridge*, pp. 277-286)

universities during the period and under the patronage of Fr Martindale, the Catholic societies at nearly every university in the nation were formed into a federation in order to produce 'a stronger Catholic corporate opinion and sentiment.' (Caraman, 1967, p. 149) These societies and chaplains, by and large, catered to the Catholic community without attempting to win too many converts. Their focus was on tending to their own flock and educating them in their faith. In this they were extraordinarily successful. In fact Turner calls the Catholic Chaplaincy 'the most successful religious institute of twentieth century Oxford.' ('Religion.' In B. Harisson (Ed.), 1994, p. 300)

It may well be argued that the Catholic figures at both universities missed converts by inordinately focusing on their own adherents but, in pursuit of their duties, both universities achieved a more lasting victory, the establishment of an intellectual reputation. Many Dons openly promoted their belief in atheism, but the Catholic communities of Oxbridge under the guidance of intellectual giants like Mgr Ronald Knox, Mgr 'Mugger' Barnes,[359] Mgr Alfred Gilbey, and the Jesuits, Fr C. C. Martindale and Fr Martin D'Arcy were able to publish and to preach and to promote the Catholic cause in such a way that in later years many former students would turn to them for their instruction. They made undergraduate converts but perhaps their greater achievement was making the case *for* Catholicism and the case *against* materialism extremely well known. In the *Times* obituary for Mgr. Gilbey of Cambridge,[360] his role as chaplain and his indirect role in England's Catholic revival was neatly summed up as his crowning achievement.

> Monsignor Alfred Gilbey…held beliefs with an absolute conviction, and the result was a grand and magnetic serenity which attracted many from a more uncertain era. Alfred Gilbey was highly influential… particularly among a generation of Cambridge undergraduates. During his thirty three years as chaplain to the university there he instructed 170 converts… (Wolff, 'Gown and Town, 1856-1965.' In N. Rogers (Ed.), 2003, p. 270)

[359] English students had little idea what the Mgr stood for and so the nickname was born.
[360] Gilbey had himself studied at a Trinity College immediately after World War One, indeed both he and Fr. George McGillivray who proceeded him had been Catholic students at the university during the chaplaincies of Mgr 'mugger' Arthur Barnes and Fr James Bernard Marshall.

It is worth taking the time to assess the particular influence of the most well known of these chaplains, Fr Martin D'Arcy and Mgr. Ronald Knox. Both were converts, both worked at Oxford and yet both were very different men. Where D'Arcy was Toynbee's direct rival, Knox almost avoided working with converts while at the university. Yet both combined to give fresh intellectual vigour to Catholic apologetics and influence successive generations of students searching for greater religious certainty.

When Martin D'Arcy arrived at Campion Hall, the Jesuit college at Oxford, he immediately threw himself into the life of the university. He joined the University Poetry Society, and the Christ Church Essay Society, and was later elected to the Standing Committee of the Oxford Union. He lectured publically on Thomas Aquinas in Balliol where young intellectuals like A. J. Ayer and Isaiah Berlin eagerly attended if only, as in the case of Ayer, to argue. (Sire, 1997, p. 74) In the poetry society he introduced W. H. Auden, Louis MacNeice, Stephen Spender and others to the poetry of Gerard Manley Hopkins. (Sire, 1997, p. 63) In *The Strings are False,* MacNeice wrote of him, 'I suspected his religion, of course, but it at least, I thought, has given him a *savoir faire* which you do not find in these wishy washy humanists; it was a treat to watch him carving a dish of game.'(Cited in Sire, 1997, p. 64) D'Arcy made a point of frequenting undergraduate lunches because he recognized the need for religion among the student population. '[H]is acute mind saw in post-war England vacuum which only Catholicism could fill. His lunchings-out gave him a web of imperceptible influence, so that when young men and women turned to him he could support them with the firmness they were looking for.' (Sire, 1997, p. 67) Understandably, given his powerful intellect and magnetic personality, D'Arcy soon began to attract converts. The actor and writer Robert Speight, Annie Jackson – a member of the poetry society and later the host of a literary salon in America, Douglas Carter the classicist and the novelist Jimmy Oliver all traced their conversions to interactions with Fr D'Arcy. (Sire, 1997, p. 70)

The effect Fr D'Arcy had on many undergraduates was that he rattled their complacent agnosticism by presenting a reasoned and logical account of Catholicism. Sire gives the example of two Etonians, Quentin Hogg (later Lord Hailsham) and his friend Richard Best, who were both invited to dine at Campion Hall. Hogg's conversation with D'Arcy changed everything. 'Not only did he discover the philosophical foundations of Christian belief, but he entered a

friendship of subtle and enduring influence…' (Sire, 1997, p. 66) Though he remained an Anglican, he returned to the practice of his faith while Best, outraging his Ulster Protestant family, went a step further and was received into the Church by Fr D'Arcy.

What D'Arcy would do on a personal level, his friend, Ronald Knox, would do on a national level. When Knox was appointed as the Catholic Chaplain to Oxford[361] his first task was to implement a three year program of apologetics that would fill an entire undergraduate career. Knox published two volumes of his lectures to the students and they reveal a robust engagement with contemporary controversies and controversialists. The first topic is the existence of God and, using Aquinas's fifth argument for the existence of God, Knox took on Bertrand Russell.

> As I wrote in a book[362] somewhere, 'if the police were to discover a human body in Lord Russell's Saratoga trunk, he would not be able to satisfy them with the explanation that, among all the innumerable articles of luggage in the world, it is only natural that there should be some few which are large enough to contain a body. They would want to know how it got there.' How did life arise just out of a particular lot of atoms happening to get jumbled together? (R. Knox, 1953, p. 7)

Added to these conferences were the books that Knox wrote in which he took on the popular atheists and their arguments. As Waugh pointed out in his biography of Knox, these 'may be treated as an essential part of his teaching vocation as chaplain.' ('Ronald Knox.' In E. Waugh, 2001, p. 324) The most notable of these were, *Caliban in Grub Street* in 1930 and *Broadcast Minds* and *Difficulties* in 1932, which gained a massive audience. Using 'disarming wit, along with unrelenting logic' he was able, to very publically 'expose the intellectual shoddiness of a variety of attacks on Catholic belief.' (Rooney, 2009, p. 147)

The intellectual fortification of undergraduate faith had far reaching effects. In the short term Catholics were able to provide a reasonable presentation of the faith to unbelieving students. The English philosopher, Peter Geach wrote of his own encounter with Catholic students at Balliol,

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[361] As an Anglican he had been the Chaplain to Trinity College from 1912-1917 before leaving both the College and the Anglican Church.
[362] *Caliban in Grub Street*.

‘increasingly, as time went on I found myself arguing with Catholics.’[363] Despite his intellectual ability he was confronted by their arguments. ‘I was certainly cleverer than they, but they had the immeasurable advantage, that they were right – an advantage that they did not throw away by resorting to the bad philosophy and apologetics then sometimes taught in Catholic Schools.’ It is this admission that reveals the work done by Knox and D’Arcy and others. Geach concludes by explaining, ‘one day my defences quite suddenly collapsed: I knew that if I were to remain an honest man I must seek instruction in the Catholic Religion. I was received into the Catholic Church on May 31, 1938.’ (Geach, 1991, p. 7) Peter Geach, along with his wife, Elizabeth Anscombe, who had converted to Catholicism before going up to Oxford, would go on to become two of the leading Catholic intellectuals in post-war England.

Another convert to Catholicism, though this time a Don, Edward Bullough, gives a similar proof of the contribution a single intellectual convert can make to his new religion. Bullough was a graduate of Trinity College, Cambridge who would later return to Caius College and take up a role in the faculty of medieval and modern languages. In 1923 he was received into the Church by Fr Martindale and was soon the joint-president of the British Foundation of University Catholic Societies. He directly contributed to the Thomistic revival in English intellectual life by translating Etienne Gilson’s *Le Thomisme*.[364] Both his son and his daughter became Dominican religious and, upon his death, his house on Mount Pleasant, Cambridge, was donated to become the new Dominican priory. This priory was established as a ‘domus scriptorum’ or house of writers, and has been the home of numerous English Dominicans, including Bullough’s son Sebastian,[365] as they made their own contributions to the intellectual revival of English Catholicism. (Nichols A. , 2003, pp. 281-282)

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[363] Despite his unorthodox upbringing, Geach did not arrive at Oxford as an atheist. His father was a philosopher who was prone to ‘about three’ religious conversions each year. He soon followed his father through a number of conversions. Though admitting the destabilising effects of these days, he credits his father with giving him McTaggart’s *Some Dogmas of Religion*. He described McTaggart as ‘my liberator from a miserable superstition, and my protector against the sort of [dogma-free] Christianity with which my public school sought to indoctrinate me.’ (Geach, 1991, p. 5)

[364] Gilson, É. H. (1929). *The Philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas.* (G. H. Elrington, Ed., & E. Bullough, Trans.) Cambridge: W. Heffer & Sons.

[365] Sebastian Bullough was a Dominican translator and Biblical scholar. He lectured in Theology at Blackfriars, Oxford and then the Faculty of Divinity at Cambridge. In an indication of the change in attitudes towards Catholics, he was chosen in 1967 to preach the Cambridge University Sermon in great St. Mary’s. (Fuller, 1968)

Many of the Catholics who had been fortified by the presentation of the faith they had encountered at Oxbridge would themselves go on to a lifetime of service to the Church. Where so many in the Communist party left or did their work in secret, the Catholic Church in the interwar period enjoyed the support of a growing coterie of intellectual Catholics, many of whom were converts and would prove influential in the conversions of other intellectuals during the nineteen forties and fifties. John Rothenstein, the longest serving director of the Tate Gallery wrote of the stream of Catholic intellectuals visiting Campion Hall in the late thirties:

> Were it rumoured that someone of outstanding interest was visiting Oxford, it was likely that he would be found to be dining at the high table of Campion Hall... During the ensuing years I was in the company there of Ronald Knox, David Cecil, Evelyn Waugh, Graham Greene, Isaiah Berlin, Donald MacKinnon, Frank Pakenham, Maurice Bowra, Christopher Hollis, C. S. Lewis, Douglas Woodruff, Robert Speight, David Jones and many others whom it was a delight to listen to. (Sire, 1997, p. 94)

To these names may, of course, be added those of the generation of priest-scholars that included David Knowles, Christopher Butler, Victor White, Gervase Matthew, and Frederick Copleston, who also emerged from Oxbridge and would spend their lives promoting an intellectual defence of their faith. (Hastings, 1977, p. 110) Thus a small group of Catholic chaplains was able to create an atmosphere of social and intellectual sophistication, an atmosphere in which half-formed undergraduate objections to Catholic teaching were often removed in the face of more nuanced and detailed reasoning.

J. E. Yates, studying for the Christian ministry, wrote about the search for religion among undergraduates.

> They want something that calls for adventure, romance, the heroic, sacrifice, something that will organize their whole life and give it real meaning and purpose. Enough has been said to show they know something is wrong with man, and they are mostly intelligent enough to realize it is not only the systems man makes but man's fundamental attitude that is awry. (Yates, 'Responses to Religion.' In Ralphs, L. (Ed.) 1936, p. 166)

Arguing that even Communism had its own '"religious" fervor' Yates traces a number of common religious responses among undergraduates including those of the the Oxford Group and Christian Socialism. Writing in the mid-thirties, Yates perceives what only a few historians have perceived since that period; that 'the religious young folk who keep outside the Churches' were often responding to a loosely connected web of pressures, both personal and societal. Their irreligiosity was often superficial and easily overthrown by a detailed and logically consistent presentation of beliefs. For the Communists, the logical consistency was often provided by national events, while for the Catholics the consistency was often provided by some of the sharpest minds in the Church. Both religions were of significant interest to the spiritually questing undergraduates of interwar Britain.

The Dour Old Things

Before leaving the study of the interwar universities, it is worthwhile pausing for a moment to examine the extraordinary case of two migrant intellectuals, namely Ludwig Wittgenstein[366] and D. S. Mirsky. Both men were academics who became dominant figures in English Universities. Both men influenced a generation of students in their particular field. And the lives of both men not only reveal the attractions that both Catholicism and Communism held for the interwar converts, but also place those attractions in a broader European context. Although impossible to quantify, it is interesting to note the extent to which their lives in England and their interactions with the English clerisy influenced their experiences of conversion.

D. S. Mirsky

Prince Dimitry Svyatopolk-Mirsky more commonly referred to as D. S. Mirsky must be considered the unlikeliest convert to Communism in interwar Britain and yet his commitment to the cause was startlingly complete. His family traced their roots back to a Varangian Prince Ryurik, often recognized as the founder of Russia. Mirsky's death in a Stalinist Gulag suggests that the name, Svyatopolk, in his surname, which means 'the accursed' and originates from the evil son of St. Vladimir of Kiev, was the most fitting part of his heritage. Mirsky's father was a liberal minister of the interior in the Tsarist government of 1904 and ordered the release of Maxim Gorky. (G. S. Smith, 2000, pp. 14, 27-28)

[366] Wittgenstein actually became a British Citizen in 1939 so that he could return to Vienna and help his family escape the clutches of the Nazis.

Mirsky, a Prince, a soldier and a poet, was born in 1890. Like his English contemporaries, he grew up in a literary generation that relished the fragmentation of the intellectual landscape and what they described as their own emancipation from religion. These were the post-symbolists who were most well known for what they didn't believe. As Mirsky wrote of them,

> On the eve of the revolution a second generation of 'modernists' was growing, more bohemian than bourgeois, less sophisticated and freer from the influence of Dostoevsky, free also from all *fin de siècle* aestheticism, and, for the most part, from all ideas and philosophies. This younger generation would only come to maturity after 1917. (G. S. Smith, 2000, p. 57)[367]

As Smith goes on to explain, Mirsky soon realized that the clearing away had left a space that was traditionally filled with 'some sort of comprehensive and integral world-view'. And, like his contemporaries in England, despite being a critic of adopting a new religion or returning to an old one, Mirsky would eventually fill the space with a new-found Marxism. (G. S. Smith, 2000, p. 58)

Before that monumental conversion, Mirsky would follow the promptings of his class and military profession. He fought with the White Army in the civil war and became Denikin's chief of staff at the battle of Orel.[368] This was the high-point of the effort to overthrow the Bolsheviks, immortalized in news reports originating from Denikin himself and spread around the world from London, announcing that as the White Army marched into the city the peasants fell to their knees exclaiming 'Christ is Risen!' (Orel Captured by Denikin, 1919) The response of the Bolsheviks was to place Moscow under martial law (Mawdsley, 2007, p. 196) Before long however, the white resistance had collapsed, Denikin had been abandoned by his British supporters as 'an opportunist', and Mirsky had been interned as a potential spy by anti-Bolshevik Poles before escaping and making his way to Greece, and on to London in 1921. Despite his role in the Civil War, Mirsky would return to Russia in 1932 as a convinced supporter of Stalin.

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[367] As a schoolboy Mirsky was a passionate aesthete, writing articles which envisaged 'an eternal unfading kingdom of unlimited and divine freedom' wherein the individuals might cast off their shackles and be led, by art, into the new morning. (G. S. Smith, 2000 p. 38) At this stage he was also something of a romantic royalist, standing to attention whenever the Tsar's name was mentioned. (P. 58)

[368] Mirsky generally spelt it Oryol.

It was Maurice Baring, the journalist and Catholic convert, who helped Mirsky move to London and got him started in his professional career, sometime in 1921. He was soon established at the University of London teaching Russian literature, and was a regular in the salons of Bloomsbury. He was one of the few successful Russian intellectuals living in London and by 1925 was still describing himself as anti-Communist. (G. S. Smith, 2000, p. 126) But his first political conversion took place at around this time, when he was becoming deeply interested in the Eurasian movement and contributing articles to its publications.

Eurasianism was a political movement among Russian émigrés living in Western Europe and its basic thesis was that the Eurasian 'continent' was a 'special world' with a unified historical development and ethno-psychological features, religious beliefs and languages shaped by a common environment. (Antoshchenko, 2000) The Eurasian movement was a curious mixture of religious revivalism, nationalistic politics and cultural reawakening but a key element was its rejection of the West as an influence, believing, like many British intellectuals, that it was in a state of terminal decline. Consequently adherents accepted the legitimacy of the 1917 revolution because it separated Russia from the West. But they refused to recognize the legitimacy of the Bolsheviks whom they viewed as the proponents of 'the most obnoxious of all the ideologies that had been foisted upon Russia from the West.' (G. S. Smith, 2000, p. 139) The Eurasian movement was dominated by officers from the defeated White Armies and they were convinced that Bolshevism could be overthrown by spiritual rather than martial means; promoting a return to 'bytovoe ispovednichestvo',[369] a Russian concept in which 'the mundane and the religious are synthesized in an inseparable unity.' (Beisswenger, 2010, p. 366) In other words, it was a return to an enchanted past in anticipation of a new 'era of faith'. (Beisswenger, 2010, p. 365) There are obvious similarities between the Eurasian movement and the English Distributist movement with their obviously mediaevalist strains. Both promoted a nationalist vision in which a return to a religious past and the reassertion of cultural traditions were mooted as the response to the interwar slough into which their nations had stumbled. A close friend of Mirsky's, Prince D. A. Shakovskoy, a fellow poet and officer in the White Army, suddenly converted to the Greek

[369] Literally translated as the confession of everyday life.

Orthodox religion in 1926, travelling to Mount Athos in order to study for the priesthood and finishing his life as Archbishop Ioann of San Francisco. (G. S. Smith, 2000, p. 135)[370]

Smith rightly questions the extent of Mirsky's intellectual commitment to the Eurasian movement and observes that his reservations stemmed from a refusal to turn his back on European culture, to 'consign St. Francis and Pascal to the outer darkness.'[371] When asked to contribute articles to the movement's publications he wrote, 'I'll be happy to write something for you later on, if you're willing to take on someone who's so lacking in seriousness that he's a Eurasian in even years and a European in odd ones.' (G. S. Smith, 2000, p. 142) Mirsky gradually rejected the mystical elements of the movement while wholly subscribing to its transformative goals. Slowly he began to redefine Eurasianism 'in the spirit of his nascent Marxism.'(G. S. Smith, 2000, p. 179) 'My materialist heart rebelled against this so called 'reason' which had held it prisoner for nearly a quarter of a century. The chains were worn; it needed only one last effort to break them. Pokrovsky[372] had already swept away a good deal of idealist refuse. I had made contact with Marx.' (G. S. Smith, 2000, p. 163) When Mirsky later repudiated Eurasianism he described it 'as a kind of Russian Gandhiism' and bracketed it with other movements that were defined as lacking 'the courage to be materialist'. These movements included, among others, Thomism and Anglo-Catholicism. (Mirsky, 1989, p. 360) Despite the ideological nature of his argument, Mirsky was right to notice these revivals as alternatives to Secularism.

Mirsky's actual conversion to Communism is difficult to trace because he was influenced by a number of figures and because he was not above embroidering his conversion with edifying tales of Lenin's posthumous influence. Between 1928 and 1929 Mirsky was clearly flirting with Communism. In 1928 he visited Gorky in Sorrento and described it as 'our first contact with the other side of the barricade and our first breath of pure materialist air from regions uninfected by the metaphysical miasma … ' (Mirsky, 1989, p. 364)[373] Mirsky published this insight as part of

[370] The conversion was so sudden that Mirsky had been complaining what a bad correspondent Shakhovskoy was before discovering that he had been in a monastery since their last exchange of letters. (G. S. Smith, 2000, p. 135)
[371] Later when he was repudiating his connections with Eurasianism, he claimed that the break came because he was too materialist.
[372] Mikhail Pokrovsky A leading Bolshevik historian whose, *Brief History of Russia* Mirsky had translated; later explaining that its Marxist historiography had proven influential. (G. S. Smith, 2000, pp. 115-116, 181)
[373] Also cited in Smith G. S., 2000, p. 166

‘The Story of a Liberation’ which was published in French, in 1931 as an apologia for Communist conversion. In that same article he had claimed that his life in interwar England had proven crucial to his development. ‘As for me, it was the English General Strike of 1926 that made me feel that I belonged “on the other side of the barricade” and made me understand that between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie my choice was absolutely made, the bourgeoisie was *my* enemy just as much as it was that of the worker.’ (Mirsky, 1989, p. 363) Maurice Dobb also had a major influence on Mirsky. He was a Cambridge economist and Communist, who, according to Mirsky, ‘above all’, opened his eyes to the true nature of the communist regime.’(Mirsky, 1989, p. 364) Yet, primarily, it was Mirsky’s research for his biography of Lenin that proved the most influential because, like so many of the British converts, his reading took place at a time when international events seemed to vindicate the theories he was encountering:

> The months I spent alone with Lenin were the most important and fruitful of my life. What Lenin gave me was above all clarity and reality. It so happened that the months when I was ‘discovering’ Lenin were decisive months in the history of the world, months that saw the triumphant completion of the first-year of the Five-Year Plan and the great agrarian revolution in the Russian countryside, months that slowly witnessed the end of American prosperity and the beginning of the world crisis of capitalism. Thus, as I advanced in my understanding of Leninism, history was proclaiming ever more persistently the truth of the communist prognosis and that the decisive hour was approaching. (Mirsky, 1989, pp. 366, 367)

The first explicit mention of his new Communist identity came in a letter he wrote to composer Pytor Suvchinsky in 13th of November, 1929. For many it came as a complete surprise. Anne Spalding, the granddaughter of the British Philanthropist H. N. Spalding, remembered a tea party being organized for Mirsky at the family home and a number of guests coming to hear him talk about the White Russian efforts, only to find that he had turned Communist on them. (G. S. Smith, 2000, p. 181)

It is unclear who commissioned Mirsky’s book on Lenin. Given that it was written with such naivety as to ‘verge on the surreal’, (G. S. Smith, 2000, p. 185) it is very likely that it was

commissioned by someone very sympathetic to the Communist State, if not the actual Communist Party of Great Britain. He began it in August 1929 and in doing so created a charming conversion story while going some way to sacrificing the reputation he had established by his *History of Russian Literature*, a seminal work which he published in 1926 and which established him as the greatest of the émigré intellectuals living in Britain. *Lenin* was published in 1931. In May of that year Mirsky joined the Communist Party of Great Britain and by June of that year he was speaking on 'Leninism: Theory and Practice' in Camden Town as an official Party speaker. (G. S. Smith, 2000, p. 196) Smith also argues that Mirsky began to work for the Soviet GPU[374] as a propagandist for the party, working in British Universities. His letters give a clear indication of the earnestness with which he would have approached that task. 'I insist that the cause of Communism has finally and unconditionally flowed into one, and there is neither humanity nor culture outside the Communist Revolution.' (G. S. Smith, 2000, p. 197) Hearing him speak at Cambridge, John Cornford wrote to his parents, 'Mirsky can't think much – but he looks like a Byzantine Saint and he believes in Communism like a B. S. [believes] in the Trinity – and his smile, when his ugly black bearded face lights up with belief and hope, is one of the best things I've seen for ages.'(Cited in G. S. Smith, 2000, p. 207) Soon after Mirsky's talk the Cambridge Communist cell was founded.

When Mirsky spoke on the Communist platform he was always introduced using the Gospel motif of the lost sheep, the Prince who had found Communism and invariably someone would yell out, 'if you think it's so marvellous, why don't you go there to your country?!' (G. S. Smith, 2000, p. 204) Upon hearing that his citizenship had been restored and a Soviet passport issued, Mirsky decided to return to Russia. Virginia Woolf wrote in her diary after dining with him, '[he] has been in England, in boarding houses, for 12 years; now returns to Russia 'for ever'. I thought as I watched his eye brighten and fade ─ soon there'll be a bullet through your head.'(p. 209) Mirsky survived in Stalinist Russia from 1932 to 1937. But, at the height of the Stalinist terror, he was arrested on the suspicion that he was a British Spy and sentenced to eight years in

[374] His letters reveal several visits to the continent in order to pursue party work involving the Comintern.

a Corrective Labour Camp in the Kolyma Mountains of Siberia. In 1939 Mirsky died; one among the three million who perished in the Kolyma camps between 1932 and 1953. (p. 317)[375]

In his satirical novel, *Winter in Moscow*, published in 1934, Malcolm Muggeridge paints a depressing portrait of Mirsky in Russia.[376] In his autobiography Muggeridge explained that at any official function, 'I usually gravitated to the side of D. S. Mirsky.' (Muggeridge, 2006, p. 236) He presents him, wheeled out at parties in order to talk to foreigners, as a decaying exhibit to fascinate zealous believers from England and America. 'A dark bearded man with a decaying mouth; savage and unhappy and lonely.' He burps in response to the visitors' 'school-girl' questions and they respond to his rudeness, 'How aristocratic he is! ...How interesting! How Russian!' (Muggeridge, 1987, p. 223) Muggeridge's insights into the Soviet State seem more perspicacious because of the overwhelming number of intellectuals who failed to see what he saw.[377] One thing Muggeridge saw straight away was the complex and misanthropic religiosity of Mirsky's Communism.

> The Dictatorship of the Proletariat was, to him, a principle; a law that he believed in because it was exact. He had come to it at last as some debauchees come at last to religion to join a religious order, or as some scientists and philosophers come at last to

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[375] It turns out Virginia Woolf was wrong but only just. According to Soviet files Mirsky died before he could be rearrested, reinterrogated in Moscow and executed by the State as part of a 1939 clean-up of all remaining citizens with connections to the Eurasian movement. (G. S. Smith, 2000, pp. 304-306) In an even grimmer irony, in 1933 he had written a gently complaining letter to his most loyal English friend, Dorothy Galton, 'I see a lot of people and drink a lot of vodka, and work a great deal. But I haven't yet been anywhere outside of Moscow, or even seen very much in Moscow...'(p. 220)

[376] In the novel he is called Prince Alexis and Muggeridge dismisses him as a parasite under three regimes; 'Aristocrat under Tzarism. Professor under capitalism. Proletarian man-of-letters under the Dictatorship of the Proletarian. (Muggeridge, 1987, p. 225)

[377] In 1936, Beatrice Webb, Muggeridge's Aunt by marriage unctuously removed the question mark from her travel memoir, *Soviet Communism: A New Civilisation?* for its second edition. Muggeridge himself took a very different view of the travelers who went to the Soviet Union credulously seeking utopia. 'We foreign journalists in Moscow used to amuse ourselves, as a matter of fact, by competing with one another as to who could wish upon one of these intelligentsia visitors to the USSR the most outrageous fantasy. We would tell them, for instance, that the shortage of milk in Moscow was entirely due to the fact that all milk was given nursing mothers - things like that. If they put it in the articles they subsequently wrote, then you'd score a point. One story I floated myself, for which I received considerable acclaim, was that the huge queues outside food shops came about because the Soviet workers were so ardent in building Socialism that they just wouldn't rest, and the only way the government could get them to rest for even two or three hours was organizing a queue for them to stand in. I laugh at it all now, but at the time you can imagine what a shock it was to someone like myself, who had been brought up to regard liberal intellectuals as the samurai, the absolute elite, of the human race, to find that they could be taken in by deceptions which a half-witted boy would see through in an instant. I never got over that … I could never henceforth regard the intelligentsia as other than credulous fools who nonetheless became the media's prophetic voices, their heirs and successors, remaining so still.' (Muggeridge, 2002)

> absorb themselves in the mathematics of the Old Testament. The more he had come to detest human beings the more attractive the Dictatorship of the Proletariat had seemed, because it alone opened out the possibility of clearing the world altogether of human beings and leaving only a principle existing, like electricity, in space…. "The inevitability of it all. …In the beginning was the Word, and in the end was the Word, too. [He wanted such an end.] (Muggeridge, 1987, pp. 223-224, 227)[378]

The novel concludes with Wraithby (Muggeridge) feeling compelled to choose between 'Good and Evil. Between Heaven and Hell.' This conversion moment is, in part, sparked by the decay of Prince [Alexis] Mirsky. The day after the prince pathetically asks if, instead of a drink in Wraithby's flat, he might have a bath because his own flat doesn't have a bathroom, Wraithby visits the mausoleum of Lenin and there begins a meditation between the living Christ and the dead Lenin. (Muggeridge, 1987, pp. 227-228) Muggeridge was one of the few to reject the lure of Soviet religion and, though it took most of his life, he eventually found religion in Catholicism. One can only wonder what role Mirsky played in helping Muggeridge, whom he saw 'a very good exhibit of the typical Radical intellectual from Oxford (although I do not think he is from Oxford)' to see beyond the speeches, guided tours and frightened loyalty that, for so many, characterized the Soviet trip. (G. S. Smith, 2000, p. 223)

Ludwig Wittgenstein

If Thomas was the doubting apostle then Ludwig Wittgenstein was the apostle of doubt. He once said to Elizabeth Anscombe that, if someone came to him with religious doubts he would probably 'raise doubts about the doubts.' (Anscombe, 2008, p. 58) Much of his career was concerned with the limitations of philosophy and his lectures at Cambridge gained notoriety for his ability to deconstruct established philosophical assumptions by introducing examples that revealed the assumptions and seemed to cripple the theory. At the end of *Tractatus*, the only major work published during his lifetime, he summed up the scope of philosophy:

> The right method of philosophy would be this. To say nothing except what can be said... and then always, when someone else wished to say something metaphysical, to

[378] Also cited in part by G. S. Smith, 2000, pp. 225-226, an account is also given by Muggeridge in *Chronicles of Wasted Time*, p. 236.

> demonstrate to him that he had given no meaning to certain signs in his propositions. This method would be unsatisfying to the other – he would not have the feeling that we were teaching him philosophy – but it would be the only strictly correct method. ...Whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent. (1960, pp. 187, 189)

When Wittgenstein moved to England in order to work at Cambridge in 1929, he was unable to take up a post because he didn't actually have a degree. Working as an advanced undergraduate, he presented *Tractatus*, which by this stage had been in print for seven years, as his thesis in order to gain a PhD. He was examined by George Moore and Bertrand Russell. During a pause in the conversation, Russell actually had to be reminded by Moore to ask some questions, Wittgenstein simply brought the discussion to a close by reassuring his examiners, 'Don't worry, I know you'll never understand it.' (Monk, 1990, p. 271) Despite the complexity of his thinking and his iconoclastic intellect,[379] Wittgenstein was susceptible to the interwar conversion movements. Though never formally converting to Communism or publically reverting to Catholicism, he was clearly attracted to the life of the faithful adherents of both religions.

Wittgenstein was baptized and raised as a Catholic; both his mother and father were the products of Jewish families that had converted to Catholicism and Protestantism respectively. Wittgenstein lost his faith as a schoolboy studying at the Realschule in Linz. In a statement similar to that made by Evelyn Waugh he simply recognized the absence of any belief rather than listing the reasons for repudiating existing beliefs. 'It was not so much that he lost his faith as that he now felt obliged to acknowledge that he had none, to confess that he could not believe the things a Christian was supposed to believe.'(Monk, 1990, p. 18) His battle with doubt would last a lifetime.

His father, Karl, was one of the wealthiest industrialists in the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and as such was often cited as an example of capitalist excess by local Marxists. Somewhat ironically, his son would develop deep sympathies with Communism during the thirties while working at Cambridge. While he never joined the party, Wittgenstein was seen as a fellow traveller by

[379] In *Tractatus* he defined the purpose of his work as being to disabuse people of certain notions that hold them back. 'My propositions are elucidatory in this way: he who understands me finally recognizes them as senseless, when he has climbed out through them, on them, over them. (He must so to speak throw away the ladder, after he has climbed up on it.) He must surmount these propositions; then he sees the world rightly.' (Wittgenstein, Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus, 1960, p. 189)

members of the Cambridge Communist Party like John Cornford, David Hayden-Guest and Maurice Cornforth, all of whom attended his lectures. (Monk, 1990, p. 348)

In 1935, the same year as did many of Britain's Communist intellectuals, including Anthony Blunt and Michael Straight, Wittgenstein visited the Soviet Union. Monk speculates that, like his friend Keynes, Wittgenstein was attracted by the secular religion that could be found in Russia. He actually wrote to Keynes, 'I am sure that you partly understand my reasons for wanting to go to Russia and I admit that they are partly bad and even childish reasons but it is true also that behind all that there are deep and even good reasons.' (Monk, 1990, p. 348) His letters reveal a desire to live in the Soviet Union and work as a manual labourer or a doctor. However these were not necessarily aspirations inspired by a political creed. Wittgenstein sought Russian language lessons from Fania Pascal and she would later explain his attractions for the Soviet Union in religious terms, 'To my mind, his feelings for Russia would have had at all times more to do with Tolstoy's moral teachings, with Dostoevsky's spiritual insights, than with any political or social matters.'(p. 342) Given the spiritual nature of his quest, it is entirely unsurprising that his trip to the Soviet Union cured him of the desire to live in the Soviet Union. Upon returning to England, he rarely discussed what he had seen but always expressed sympathy for the regime because it had cured unemployment. However, when discussing Stalinist Russia with his friend Rush Rhees, he once tellingly qualified his support with the caveat, 'tyranny does not make me feel indignant.' (p. 353)

At the time of writing *Tractatus*, religion for Wittgenstein was something that was in the realm of the 'unaussprechliches', the inexpressible. (Wittgenstein, Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus, 1960, p. 187) Often these early writings are cited as evidence of an abiding atheism in Wittgenstein's thought but, in a posthumously published *Lecture on Ethics*, we see more clearly what Wittgenstein means by 'inexpressible.' He writes:

> My whole tendency and I believe the tendency of all men who ever tried to write or talk Ethics or Religion was to run against the boundaries of language. This running against the walls of our cage is perfectly, absolutely hopeless… But it is a document of a tendency in the human mind which I personally cannot help respecting deeply and I would not for my life ridicule it. (Wittgenstein, 1965, pp. 11-12)

The recognition that religious responses were difficult but unavoidable points to the great tension in Wittgenstein's life, the desire to find religion but the inability to convert. During World War One, while serving in the Ukraine, Wittgenstein's atheism was briefly suspended in favour of Tolstoyan Unitarianism. Finding a copy of Tolstoy's *Gospels in Brief*, Wittgenstein abandoned his suicidal ideation and began to recommend the book to anyone in distress, later claiming that it saved his life. (Monk, 1990, p. 116) Twice he attempted to enter a monastery. First in 1926 when his career as a teacher had failed and secondly in 1950, the year before his death. (pp. 234, 575)

Both of these events are often dismissed by his biographers as escapism but they might just as easily be viewed as surrenders to the challenge of faith. Wittgenstein was not happy with his atheism. In 1937 while travelling from Norway to Vienna he wrote of Christ's resurrection. He reasoned that if Christ had not risen he was merely a teacher, in which case, 'once more we are orphaned and alone…we are in a sort of hell where we can do nothing but dream, roofed in, as it were, and cut off from heaven.'(Monk, 1990, p. 383) The problem was that Wittgenstein was caught in an immanentist trap. He believed that if he could overcome himself and his whole nature, 'bowed down in the dust' then God would come to him and he would be saved. (p. 410) However he also believed that to do anything he needed God's help. 'Again and again I want to say: "God if you do not help me, what can I do?"'(p. 382) Convinced by his own weakness and, in particular, as his diaries reveal, his sexual weakness, Wittgenstein came closer and closer to conversion. But he struggled for belief and in his writings he frequently presented religious faith as desirable but as being disconnected from knowledge. In that same diary entry in 1937 he wrote, 'and faith is faith in what is needed by my heart, my soul, not my speculative intelligence. For it is my soul with its passions, as it were with its flesh and blood, that has to be saved, not my abstract mind.' Here again faith was presented as a gift from God: 'we might say: Redeeming love believes in the Resurrection; holds fast even to the Resurrection.' (p. 383)

Towards the end of his life he became more frustrated with the limitations of pure reason, writing in the notes that comprise, *Culture and Value*:

> "Wisdom is grey." Life on the other hand and religion are full of colour… I believe that one of the things Christianity says is that sound doctrines are all useless. That you have to

> change your *life*. (Or the *direction* of your life.) It says that wisdom is all cold; and that you can no more use it for setting your life to rights than you can forge iron when it is cold.(Cited in Monk, 1990, p. 490)

It is clear enough that in the latter years Wittgenstein was far more open to Christianity and even to the mystical. When writing about Jarrow's duck-rabbit diagram in what became *Remarks on the Philosophy of Psychology* Wittgenstein summed up the process of arriving at a completely new perspective:

> What is incomprehensible is that *nothing*, yet *everything*, has changed after all. That is the only way to put it. Surely *this* way is wrong: it has not changed in *one* respect, but it has in another… Although I have no right to change my report about what I saw, since I see the same things now as before – still, I am incomprehensibly compelled to report completely different things one after the other. (Cited in Tyler, 2011, pp. xiii-xiv)

Though he was discussing an amusing parlour game, his description of this shift in perspective might well be applied to his religious thinking. One interesting side-effect of his newfound openness to the inexpressible is that, as with Edmund Husserl in Frieburg, Wittgenstein's circle at Cambridge included a number of Catholic converts, the most notable being Peter Geach, Elizabeth Anscombe[380] and Yorrick Smythies. It was through these students that, before his death he found 'a non-philosophical' priest. A Dominican, Fr Conrad, came to Anscombe's house and twice talked to Wittgenstein 'as a priest'. (Monk, 1990, p. 573) Fr Conrad wrote, 'he knew that Wittgenstein was very ill and wanted to talk about God, I think with a view to coming back fully to his religion, but in fact we only had, I think, two conversations on God and the soul in rather general terms.' (p. 573) On his death-bed Wittgenstein was given conditional absolution by Fr Conrad and later buried according to the Catholic rite. (pp. 579-580) There is no evidence that Wittgenstein ever returned to Catholicism, much less ever converted to Communism, but his life reveals the pull of those two destinations. His growing openness to Catholicism was a clear feature of the latter stages of his life and in this openness, even attraction, we see a powerful

[380] Wittgenstein actually took the time to tutor Geach and Anscombe's young daughter in elementary mathematics. (Geach, 1991, p. 14)

example of the fascination that the enchanted life still held for even the most materialist of academics.

Chapter Six: The End of Laissez-Faire

It is impossible to be just to the Catholic Church. The moment men cease to pull against it they feel a tug towards it. The moment they cease to shout it down they begin to listen to it with pleasure. The moment they try to be fair to it they begin to be fond of it. But when that affection has passed a certain point it begins to take on the tragic and menacing grandeur of a great love affair. The man has exactly the same sense of having committed or compromised himself; of having been in a sense entrapped, even if he is glad to be entrapped. But for a considerable time he is not so much glad as simply terrified.

G. K. Chesterton, *The Catholic Church and Conversion* (1926)

Like many people, Lady Nellie[381] *throughout this period had many a crise of conscience about whether or not she should join the Party. Joining a party seems to us now a not particularly important decision. But joining the Communist Party was something different. It was the spiritual equivalent of changing one's religion. It was an act of Faith. The Party, like the Catholics, demanded absolute obedience. If you joined the Party, you had to renounce the freedom of thinking for yourself. You thought what you were told to think. The Party, like the Pope, was infallible. So it was an Act of Renunciation as well as an Act of Faith, and in return for what you gave up, you received Absolute Certainty; and in this critical time, when most people were worried sick by not knowing what to believe about a world running dangerously down hill, certainty was a great comfort.*

T. C. Worsley *Fellow Travelers: A Memoir of the Thirties*. (1971)

[381] Lady Nellie was Lady Esmeralda Griffiths and her conversion lasted ten days.

In this chapter we look at the actual process of conversion. This prosopographical account of the conversion experience teases out a number of similarities in the conversions of Catholics and Communists. Chesterton's quote reveals the radical nature of the conversion step, one that was rarely entered into lightly. Worsley focuses on the similarities between conversion to Communism and Catholicism. It is noteworthy that for Worsely the chief similarity was the radical nature of the conversion. As we explore the process of conversion we will notice the specific role that crises, both personal and national, played in the somersault.

Due to the limited nature of this work our attention is restricted to converts who wrote about their experiences and whose lives were most obviously changed by the conversion. This means that only a handful of conversions can be discussed in detail. For the most part the remainder of this chapter will be concerned with the Communist conversion experiences of the loose collection of writers commonly known as the Auden group and the notorious group of Cambridge alumni known as the Cambridge five. The Catholics are represented by Catholic writers G. K. Chesterton, Roy Campbell, Graham Greene, David Jones and Evelyn Waugh. To these are added a number of less well known converts such as the Communists Eric Hobsbawm, David Haden Guest, John Cornford and Margot Heinemann and the Catholic Apologists Alfred Noyes and Arnold Lunn. By comparing these figures several experiential patterns emerge. It becomes clear that national and personal crises were hugely influential in the majority of conversions. Of particular interest is the way that while the national crises were more likely to inspire a Communist conversion, they were also able to inspire a Catholic conversion. Another connection between the Catholic and Communist conversions was the common experience of the long conversion in which the convert moves through a number of destinations as they move towards a final conversion destination.

Introduction

It is an irony, the sort frequently thrown up by the interwar era, that the man who might be described as the most influential English intellectual of the day was not attracted to formal conversion. John Maynard Keynes and his economic theories, particularly that of deficit finance, developed into a political orthodoxy which outlasted Communism. The title of this chapter is borrowed from an essay Keynes wrote in 1926 and published as part of his *Essays in Persuasion* in 1931. This collection of essays and talks is made up of several parts, but it is in 'Section IV,

Politics' where Keynes's response to the interwar narrative and his solutions to the crises of that period are most candidly revealed.

In the essay, 'The End of Laissez-Faire',[382] Kyenes naturally locates the genesis of laissez-faire in the enlightenment and in the emergent doctrine of individualism, which centered on a belief in the harmony between social and individual interests, for which he credits Locke and Hume, Rousseau and even Darwin. (Keynes, 2010, pp. 272-276) According to Keynes the theory of disinterested natural selection leading to progress produced both suffering and waste and, though it did also produce wealth, this was not always to the deserving. (p. 285) During the interwar era Keynes argued that these social ailments were characterised by 'great inequalities of wealth… the unemployment of labour…the disappointment of reasonable business expectations, and of the impairment of efficiency and production.' (p. 291) In a subsequent essay, 'Am I a Liberal' Keynes cited John R. Commons' theory of the three economic epochs. The first period was that of scarcity, followed by 'a period of extreme abundance,' culminating in the 19th century, when all the ugly coercion of the first period is replaced with 'maximum individual liberty'. (p. 304) For Commons and for Keynes the interwar years saw first-world economies transitioning into the third epoch, the stabilizing period in which there is:

> 'a diminution of individual liberty, enforced in part by governmental sanctions, but mainly by economic sanctions through concerted action, whether secret, semi-open, open or arbitrational, of associations, corporations, unions, and other collective movements of manufacturers, merchants, labourers, farmers, and bankers.'(Keynes, 2010, p.304)

Keynes describes Communism and Fascism as abuses 'in the realms of government' but agrees with the need for intervention and for reform. In common with the interwar converts, Keynes believed that 'the centre could not hold' and that collective reform underpinned by a common belief system had to take place to ensure 'social justice and social stability' in order 'to build up a true Social Republic.'(Keynes, 2010, pp. 300, 305)

[382] References are from the 2010 edition of the Essays, commissioned by the Royal Economic Society includes the full texts of each talk and essay rather than the excerpts which characterized the 1931 edition. In the 1931 edition only chapters four and five were included from the essay.

In 1925 Keynes married Lydia Lopokova and they honeymooned in her native Russia. When discussing his reactions to Russia Keynes defines a religion as being either ‘mystic union’ or, ‘the pursuit of an ideal life for the whole community of men.’ (Keynes, 2010, p. 254) Whilst he doesn’t admit it, the solutions that Keynes outlines for the interwar crises, would, by his own definition, constitute a religion, albeit a particularly ecumenical brand of political religion. And whilst he rejected the religion of Communism he noted that it was a model of what modern religions would become.

> In one respect Communism but follows other famous religions. It exalts the common man and makes him everything. Here there is nothing new. But there is another factor in it which also is not new but which may, nevertheless, in a changed form and a new setting, contribute something to the true religion of the future, if there be any true religion. *Leninism is absolutely, defiantly non-supernatural, and its emotional and ethical essence centers about the individual's and the community's attitude towards the Love of Money*. (Keynes, 2010, p. 259)

In these essays, most notably, ‘Am I a Liberal?’ Keynes’s rejects other political creeds and their responses to the crises. Tellingly his assessment of Conservatism, for instance, is couched in particularly religious language. ‘How could I bring myself to be a Conservative? They offer me neither food nor drink – neither intellectual nor spiritual consolation. I should not be amused or excited or edified.’ (Keynes, 2010, p. 296) He then goes on to outline a new ‘non-supernatural’ religion that, like Communism, also devalues the profit motive. Like Communism and Fascism ‘the republic of [Keynes’] imagination’ places more power in the hands of bureaucracies or ‘semi-autonomous bodies within the State – bodies whose criterion of action within their own field is solely the public good as they understand it’ but who, until the ambit of men's altruism grows wider’ will be subject in the last resort to the sovereignty of the democracy expressed through Parliament.’ (pp. 288-289) Keynes’s confidence in the good-intentions of his class, the educated bourgeoisie, is not enough for him to completely abandon democracy but it is enough to connect his political religion with the other profoundly optimistic political religions of the day.

Keynes’s own, highly idiosyncratic response was, in essence, reformed and progressive liberalism that was not opposed to Socialism but simply more efficient and intellectual than the

‘Catastrophists’ of the left who favoured radicalism and even violent intrigue to achieve ends that might have been achieved far more completely through logical deliberation. ‘The next step forward must come, not from political agitation or premature experiments, but from thought. We need by an effort of the mind to elucidate our own feelings.’ (Keynes, 2010, p. 294) In keeping with his particularly Bloomsburyian approach to politics, Keynes incorporated gentler versions of both Pacifism and Eugenicism into his own political creed.[383] He advocated taking ‘risks in the interests of peace’ and pursuing both arbitration and disarmament.(p. 301) As for Eugenics, Keynes insisted that it must be part of a government’s intervention to ensure efficiency and justice. ‘The time has already come when each country needs a considered national policy about what size of Population…[and] The time may arrive a little later when the community as a whole must pay attention to the innate quality as well as to the mere numbers of its future members.’(p. 292) Keyne’s own political religion, like Communism and Fascism included policies on

[383] Keynes was an important contributor to the eugenics movement and it is unsurprising that it plays an key role in the republic of his imagination. By 1922 he was an official patron of the New Generation League and a Vice President of the Society for Constructive Birth Control and Racial Progress. He was an important participant in the 1922 Neo-Malthusian and Birth Control Conference and the following year he stood surety for the New Generation League’s obscenity case after they published Margaret Sanger’s pamphlet on *Family Limitation*. Keynes also served on the Eugenics dSociety’s council and acted as director from 1937-1944. The two major contributions that Keynes made to the debate were the Cambridge lectures he delivered on population and economics at Cambridge of which a 1912 manuscript survives and his 1937 Galton lecture. Historians generally focus on the theoretical about-face represented in the two speeches. In 1912 he bemoaned overpopulation as the scourge of prosperity while in 1937 he worried that a declining birth-rate would decimate demand and increase unemployment. The logical consistency that animates both speeches is that population can be controlled and that to ignore the opportunities inherent within that control is to court danger. Keynes’s real religion was progress and his faith was not shaken by the fact that, according to his 1937 speech, if he had gotten his way in 1912 he would have orchestrated an economic disaster. Another important and frequently overlooked element to his thinking was his radical social Darwinism when it came to ‘the barbarous races’. He lamented the inoculations against the plague that would save millions of lives in India and laws that would diminish the infant mortality rate in Egypt, both would ‘destroy in the next decade the benefits of a generation of engineers and administrators.’ (Toye, 2000, pp. 64-65) He concluded that ‘almost any measures seem to me to be justified in order to protect our standard of life from injury at the hands of more prolific races.’ (p. 71) Among the measures that he supported were immigration restrictions and the limitation of trading food supplies with certain ‘prolific races’. (p.71) By 1924 his book outlines reveal that population control and eugenic measures were still ‘legitimate objects of state policy.’ (p. 181) Despite his substantially unique economic theories, Keynes was very much a child of his age and adopted many common tenets of the liberal progressive faith. His Pacifism was also more radical than is commonly understood. In his 1957 memoir, Clive Bell asserted that Keynes was a conscientious objector in the First World War. His letter to the tribunal bears him out, ‘I do not say that there are not conceivable circumstances in which I should voluntarily offer myself, and I solemnly assert to the Tribunal that my objection to submit to authority in this matter is truly conscientious.’ (Cited in Skidelskey, 2003, p. 192) Though not actually called up the letter was an important gesture, while private letters reveal that he also considered resigning from the treasury rather than contributing in any way to the war effort. During the same period he began making financial contributions to the National Council against Conscription. (pp. 193-195) Skidelsky argued that ‘Keynes was 90 per cent pacifist. Like most pacifists he regarded peace as an almost overriding good.’ (p. 572) Unsurprisingly therefore he supported the Munich agreement believing that Eastern Europe was not sufficiant cause to abandon proffered peace.

population for the sake of efficiency and increased production. Keyne's reformed Liberalism was very much a product of the interwar period.

Laissez-faire is an economic term indicating free markets but is often literally translated as 'let them do', as in let (people) do (as they please) In other words it is a term denoting inaction. Perhaps the most obvious quality of the interwar period was that for its intellectuals, it was the end of laissez-faire; the end of inaction. As the darkening clouds of the twenties became the storms of the thirties and Europe geared for war, more and more intellectuals made a choice and took a side. For Keynes, as for so many, new solutions were needed and, where he proposed a more progressive Liberal party, other proposed new parties that were completely progressive.

One of the most influential converts of the era was G. K. Chesterton. Raised a Unitarian and intermittently involved in Spiritualism and the Fabian Society during its earlier days, Chesterton ended up converting to Catholicism in 1922. Though he was of an older generation than many of the interwar converts, he was doubtlessly the convert whose writings most influenced other converts. For Chesterton, Keynes' New Liberal party was one of a range of conversion movements responding to the crises of the period. 'Nobody in his five wits will deny that at this moment conversion is a reality. Everybody knows that his own social circle, which fifty years ago would into rationalism or indifference has just lately shown a curious disposition to collapse softly and suddenly…' (Chesterton, 1990a, pp. 135-136) Having been a part of older conversion movements Chesterton was not surprised by their existence; for him what was truly amazing was the fact that the Catholic Church was one of the 'new religions'. 'The worthy merchant of the middle class, the worthy farmer of the Middle West, when he sends his son to college, does now feel a faint alarm lest the boy should fall among thieves, in the sense of Communists; but he has the same sort of fear lest he should fall among Catholics.' (pp. 23-24) Catholicism was now an alternative to laissez-faire.

The question then needs to be asked, why did Keynes's very sensible, dare I say, rationalist political religion end up inspiring government policies rather than converts? Keynes urged his hearers to rebel, 'We have to invent new wisdom for a new age. And in the meantime we must, if we are to do any good, appear unorthodox, troublesome, dangerous, disobedient to them that begat us.' (Keynes, 2010, p. 306) The Liberal Party never really recovered its Gladstonian glory

and the republic of Keynes's imagination somehow failed to fire anyone else's imagination. Catholicism, on the other hand, despite centuries of unpopularity and volumes of calumnious criticism, was a religion that could not be ignored. As Chesterton argued, Catholicism could never be merely interesting.

> All that people fear in the Church, all that they hate in her, all against which they most harden their hearts and sometimes (one is tempted to say) thicken their heads, all that has made people consciously and unconsciously treat the Catholic Church as a peril, is the evidence that there is something here that we cannot look on at languidly and with detachment, as we might look on at Hottentots dancing at the new moon or Chinamen burning paper in porcelain temples. (Chesterton, 1990a, pp. 85-86)

Many Communists would have made similar arguments about their religion; it was not one that could be looked at languidly. Keynes knew that 'a new wisdom' was needed but was capable of providing only a reformed wisdom. Reform was not enough. The interwar crises demanded 'a new religion, that is, a revolution.' (Chesterton, 1990a, p. 22) and Catholicism and Communism provided such a revolution.

Chesterton argued that in Catholicism the convert finds a surprising completeness. 'Only, when he has entered the Church, he finds that the Church is much larger inside than it is outside. ...he is under vast domes as open as the Renaissance and as universal as the Republic of the world.'(Chesterton, 1990a, pp. 81-82) For Chesterton the Catholic Church contained within it all the good that might be found in the Protestant sects or the new religions. 'He knows there is something in everything. But he is moved by the more impressive fact that he finds everything in something. ...experience has taught him that he will find nearly everything somewhere inside that estate and that a very large number of people are finding next to nothing outside it.'(Chesterton, 1990a, pp. 104-105) Chesterton's bold claim for Catholicism was also made by many Communists for their new faith. It provides an accurate reflection of the convert's mindset and, when compared with the sober bureaucratic planning required by Keynes's 'new wisdom', gives an insight into the religious questing of the interwar years. Clearly the crises of the period, both national and personal, demanded solutions that were radically complete and completely radical.

The Conversion Process

In his study of conversion in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, *Understanding Conversion*, Karl Morrison explained that the historian really had to distinguish between the actual experience of conversion and the literary works that contain the information regarding the conversions. The problem is that the numerous texts on the subject do not communicate a clear and cohesive account of conversion and one is simply left with 'an ill-matched repertory of [conversion] patterns.' (Morrison, 1992, pp.xii-xiii) Such a caution is even more relevant in the case of twentieth century conversions than it was for those of the twelfth century. For one thing the common understanding of conversion has been lost in a more fragmented landscape. Thus, many of the biographies of converts are written by historians who have little understanding of the conversion impulse, and are apt to dismiss the experiences of the individual with glib assumptions and simplistic explanations. Another factor that the historian must take into account is the bias inherent in much of the primary source material. Many of the conversion accounts were either written while the glow of conversion still lingered, or in the wake of the convert's death, and were frequently written for the express purpose of garnering more conversions from among the hobbledehoy; as such the singularities, the difficulties, doubts and misconceptions of the process are often obscured or simply ignored.

In this thesis Morrison's caution holds true, namely that what we are forced to study is a literary record of conversion which is distinct from the varied processes of conversion undergone by the intellectuals. Understandably the accounts of conversion, many written years later from a position of apostasy, are limited to a description of events before and after and an attempted summation of reasoning behind the conversion. And yet it is still a very valuable exercise in that from these literary works various patterns do emerge, patterns which reveal surprising commonalities between the Catholic and Communist experiences. The patterns that emerge reveal three distinct conversion movements. The first were those converts, principally the Communists, who were directly impelled toward their conversion destinations by the social crises of the era. The second groups were the Catholic converts who were frequently driven to conversion through personal crises which they frequently viewed as symptomatic of the broader interwar crises. The final group includes those who experienced what might be termed a long conversion. Two long conversions of the period were that of G. K. Chesterton and W. H. Auden

both moved through a number of alternate conversion experiences before arriving at their final destination. Central to most of the conversions, but deserving of its own section, was the very specific experience of encapsulation, a process whereby the convert encounters and becomes convinced by the teachings of the particular religion that they seek to join. While it might be said that this is, to some extent, part of every conversion, we are discussing encapsulation as explicitly described by the convert. In this final section a very clear pattern emerges in which the experience of encapsulation belongs to those conversions that were most likely to last.

During the forties in Eastern Europe's predominantly Catholic countries, Communists Party propaganda was generally shaped by a desire to downplay the differences between Catholicism and Communism and present 'the two belief systems as ideologically complementary.' (Felak, 2009, p. 53) Pravda frequently ran stories like the one entitled, 'I am a Catholic and a Communist' written by a local Slovak woman who joined the party because it was a means of living her Catholicism. '...if I want, in accordance with my faith, to live to help people, as my mother taught me, it would be good to join the Communists who are helping people... I am therefore a Catholic and a Communist and thus, I can best serve my family, the working people and God.' (p. 54)[384] This fairly cynical propaganda worked on the assumption, long-held in both the East and the West, that there were significant commonalities between Catholicism and Communism. Among the accounts of conversion to Catholicism and to Communism were several common features. Both groups contained converts who felt as though they were being 'hounded' by exterior forces and moved towards their destination. More broadly all converts was motivated to write extensively about their experiences and quickly became active in the promulgation of their new faith and its salvific mission. Indeed, as we shall see in the ensuing chapters, conversion frequently provided the converts a new sense of vocation, a clearer mission in the great work of salvation.

[384] Robert Royal argued that this fairly naked propaganda was unsuccessful, 'though the Catholic press and Church schools were curtailed and silenced, most believers understood and rejected the onslaught.' (2000, p. 223) Indeed the synthesis between Catholicism and Communism broke down almost immediately. In Czechoslovakia, for instance, priests who opposed the Communist-founded Catholic Action movement were arrested. After the arrest and imprisonment of the Catholic Archbishop, Josef Beran who had only recently been released from Dachau, the Minister of Justice Alexej Cepicka explained that the ruthless crackdown was for the benefit of believers. 'We shall not permit that the personal or the religious freedoms be restricted in any way by the Church hierarchy. Everyone who should feel threatened by the Church dignitaries will be fully protected and supported.' (Royal, 2000, pp. 223-224)

Interwar Crises

The Catholic Church and the various Communist governments both promote revolution or radical transformation. The aims of Catholic and Communist revolution differ fundamentally. The Catholic Church is engineered towards the radical transformation of the individual through the workings of supernatural grace. The Communist regime is engineered towards the radical transformation of society through the violent uprising of the people carried forth by the dialectic of history. Moreover, the Communist sees the world as falling towards the conditions in which revolution becomes inevitable and from whence the world will rise. The Catholic simply sees the world as fallen.[385] A falling world means that individual salvation becomes somewhat irrelevant; the focus is the salvation of society. However a fallen world demands the salvation of the individual because it repositions the crises as products of human sinfulness rather than inevitable societal collapse.

When Margot Heinemann died in 1992, she was remembered by *The Times* as 'one of the most remarkable of a generation of idealists now passing away, a race of men and women convinced that they had in their hands the key to a new world, a new existence for humanity if only they could find the keyhole.' (*Margot Heinemann: Obituary*, 1992) The writer assumed that Heinemann's conversion was a natural product of 'the exciting Cambridge of the early 1930s.' (1992) It was her friend and fellow convert, Eric Hobsbawm, who pointed out that Heinemann's conversion to Communism was a product of witnessing the hunger-marchers' slow and dignified procession through Cambridge. (Hobsbawm, 1992, p. 30) She later told Simon Freeman, 'the hunger marchers were older men and very fragile. Their faces had fallen in and they had ill-fitting boots. After seeing them it was only a matter of time before I joined the party.' (Penrose & Freeman, 1986, p. 98) From then on it was commonly said that 'Margot is either at death's

[385] In *Orthodoxy*, Chesterton claimed that his conversion to Christianity, (rather than his later conversion to Catholicism) was primarily because of the doctrine of original sin. That doctrine alone could resolve the tension that emerged from his instinctual love of a crisis-ridden world and the constant question of his contribution to that world. 'It was as if I had been blundering about since my birth with two huge and unmanageable machines, of different shapes and without apparent connection — the world and the Christian tradition. I had found this hole in the world: the fact that one must somehow find a way of loving the world without trusting it; somehow one must love the world without being worldly. I found this projecting feature of Christian theology, like a sort of hard spike, the dogmatic insistence that God was personal, and had made a world separate from Himself. The spike of dogma fitted exactly into the hole in the world — it had evidently been meant to go there — and then the strange thing began to happen. When once these two parts of the two machines had come together, one after another, all the other parts fitted and fell in with an eerie exactitude. … My sense that happiness hung on the crazy thread of a condition did mean something when all was said: it meant the whole doctrine of the Fall.' (Chesterton, 1909, pp. 144-145)

door [her health was always a problem] or writing a pamphlet.' (Hobsbawm, 1992) Heinemann delayed her postgraduate studies 'for half a lifetime' and soon took up full time party work. The 1956 uprising put an end to this vocation but she remained committed to the party throughout her life.[386] Heinemann's edifying asceticism on behalf of the Party reflects the intensity of her conversion and the transformative power that she found in Communism. For her, Communism answered the question, 'How can I devote myself to creating a society without poverty and exploitation?' (Beckett, 1995, p. 67) She found in Communism cogent answers to the questions thrown up by the interwar experience while also feeling a clear sense of vocation.

The assumption that witnessing the suffering of the working classes was enough to inspire a conversion to Communism was a common explanation during the interwar years. Indeed it was generally believed among left wing intellectuals that the interwar narrative inevitably demanded a Communist response. Whether it was witnessing the sufferings of the hunger marchers in England, the unchecked rise of Fascism on the continent or the worker's paradise in Russia, the Communist intellectuals often glibly explained their conversion as a product of having encountered the interwar crises, rather than having gone through the experience of encapsulation. Such was the power of the interwar narrative that it was often cited by the Cambridge spies as a means of exculpating their treason. Communism seemed to fight the injustices that existing leftwing governments seemed powerless to confront. Thanks to the policies of the common-front period, many of the converts posited their conversion as a response to the rise of Fascism and made little mention of their desire for revolution.

In 1920 Ralph Fox briefly abandoned his studies at Oxford in order to travel to the Soviet Union. He returned the following year and got a first in modern languages only to return to the Soviet Union once more and go to work for the cause of Communism, which included a brief stint in the Central Asian Republics. An article on Ralph Fox, written nearly a decade after his death in the American Communist magazine, *The New Masses*, explains Fox's conversion as though it were an inevitable product of the period. 'It was because Lenin and the Soviet state he founded had fought the ferocity of human society that Ralph Fox became an ardent Communist. And it was because Fascism sought to erect ferocity into the sole principle of human society that he

[386] Heinemann's is more well known role as the lover and muse of the Communist enfant terrible, John Cornford.

gave his life in the fight against Fascism [in Spain].' (Sillen, 1945, p. 23) An obituary in the *Daily Worker* put things even more succinctly, 'His experiences brought him into contact with Communism, and a stay in Moscow confirmed him in a decision to join the Communist Party.' (Jackson, 1937, p. 1) The logic of contemporary events leading to Communism became so prevalent that, as seen above, no further explanation of the conversion is deemed necessary; it is self-explanatory. Not only did converts believe that Communism represented hope in the midst of chaos, this sense of hope sometimes lasted a lifetime. As Sillen put it, 'In 1920 Fox went to the Soviet Union, visiting the areas hardest hit by famine. And there, under the most adverse circumstances, he saw the future and he saw it work.... [This experience] was to sustain him until the day of his death in Spain.' (Sillen, 1945, p. 22) While it is highly likely that these accounts were used as propaganda, they were only considered effective because they bought into the dramatic narrative of conversion. It was a drama that would even appear in the memoirs of the most disillusioned of ex-Communists.

When Ralph Fox fell in the disastrous attempt to take Lopera,[387] on December 28th, 1936, near him lay the Communist convert par excellence, John Cornford. Cornford had converted to Communism at a young age. Yet from the beginning the interwar narrative featured in his conversion. Whilst still a student at Stowe, Cornford wrote to his mother convincingly pleading the cause of the hunger marchers. Citing the studies of Seebohm Rowntree and popular examples of the iniquitous Means Test he concluded, 'I think the Hunger Marchers really were hungry.' (Cornford, 1986, p. 160) His brother Christopher suggested that Cornford's engagement with interwar Britain was enough to provoke a Communist conversion. 'He came to consider society, and so politics, and so Communism.'(Sloan, 1978, p. 31) Between early 1931 and late 1932 there is a clear transition in priorities as Cornford abandons poetry for Communist activism. References to Tennyson, Keats and Shelly in his letters are gradually replaced by references to Marx, Lenin and Harold Laski. Discussions of his mother's poetry are replaced by discussions of G. D. H. Cole's attitude to dialectical materialism. By the autumn of 1932, 'in his thinking if not in actual fact, he had become a Communist.' (Štanský & Abrahams, 1966, p. 185) His parents

[387] Three hundred volunteers from nineteen nations were killed in the attack while a further six hundred were injured. The French commander of one battalion was charged with treason following one of Andre Marty's investigations, and found guilty of treason and shot. The evidence that convicted the Frenchman was provided by the man who would then take his command. (Baxell, 2012, pp. 116-118)

were worried enough by his conversion to persuade him to consult with Godwin Baynes (the psychoanalyst who introduced Jung's psychology to Britain). Bayne's verdict was: 'Although there are obvious signs of nervous stress, I am very much impressed with the central steadiness of his mind. The discipline of every function to the ruling idea [Communism] is apparently complete and I must say it is a very extraordinary discipline.' (Delany, 1987, p. 221) For Cornford, as for Heinemann, Communism offered solutions to the disaster that was unfolding. In an essay on the intellectual left, Cornford admiringly quoted Louis Aragon, 'I am a witness to the crushing of a world out of date'. His growing understanding of the world had convinced him, like Aragon, that they were watching civilisation crumble and that consequently the future was with the 'revolutionary participator, not the 'impartial' observer...' (Cornford, 1986, p. 62) Cornford became something of a 'romantic puritan'when it came to spreading the Communist faith. '[He] believed that the bourgeoise were damned, but that individual bourgeois could be saved if they were prepared to give up everything for the Party and throw in their lot with the working class...' (Rycroft, 1985, p. 209) Cornford required converts to 'renounce their private incomes or give their capital to the Party' and if that were impossible to at least look and sound like proletarians. Having made the sacrifice himself, 'he never quite believed that anyone else had done so sincerely.'(Rycroft, 1985, p.209)

When the Australian journalist, Murray Sayle tracked Kim Philby down in Moscow in 1967, he interviewed him and came away convinced that his Communism was superficial at best. 'I doubt that Kim is a committed Marxist. He doesn't use Marxist language, doesn't think like a Marxist. In fact…he sounded for all the world like a transplanted British civil servant.' (Knightley, 1988, p. 10) It could be argued that, in many ways Philby *was* a transplanted British civil servant and that he had spent most of his life hiding his Communism. Indeed, such was his ability to wear the mask that his KGB superiors in Moscow worried that he had defected because he was in fact a British Triple Agent, loyally working for MI6 and penetrating the KGB's Moscow's offices.[388] It was his friend, Graham Greene, who saw the depths of Philby's conversion. In a forward to

[388] It was Nicholas Elliott, a member of MI6 who had elicited an informal confession from a drunken Philby in 1963, who had suggested to his superiors that Philby awarded a posthumous CMG with a single obituary note, 'my lips have hitherto been sealed but I can now reveal that Philby was one of the bravest men I have ever known.' (Macintyre, 2014, p. 286) The aim of Elliott's plan was simply to put the wind up the Russian secret services by clearly implying that Philby was in fact a triple agent. However MI6, doubtless chastened by so much bumbling incompetence and elitist complacency, rejected the proposal.

Philby's exculpatory memoir, Greene wrote, 'who among us has not committed treason to something or someone more important than a country? In Philby's own eyes he was working for a shape of things to come from which his country would benefit.' (Philby, 2002, p.xvii)[389] However, according to Anthony Cave Brown, another Philby biographer, Greene spent his last hours on earth combing through his correspondence with Philby in order to ascertain whether or not he too had been duped by this peerless mole. (Cave Brown, 1994, p. 605)[390]

Ron Rosenbaum, responding to the Cave Brown allegations, saw the confusion of further evidence of Philby's incredible ability to hide the truth about himself.

> Philby pushed the permutations of doubleness -- double identities, double meanings and double crosses -- into triply complex territory, into the bewilderment of mirrors we're still lost within. He's the high priest of the Age of Paranoia, the original disinformation virus, and we're still only beginning to learn how much of the secret history of the century bears Philbian fingerprints. (Rosenbaum, 1994.)

Such a description might just as easily be applied to Blunt, Maclean and possibly even Burgess. These are elusive men with flexible identities and personal histories that defy traditional interpretations. Once discovered, the Cambridge spies always claimed that they were genuine

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[389] Sherry once reminded Greene of the figure of Wheeler who had betrayed Greene at school (see Watson in Greene's 1971 memoir, *A Sort of Life*). Greene had maintained an intense hatred of Wheeler who had been his friend only to then join forces with Carter, Greene's enemy. When Sherry suggested that Philby's preparedness to send his own agents into Albania, knowing that they were to be shot when they got off the boat was akin to Wheeler's betrayal, perhaps worse, Greene lost his temper. 'They were going into their country armed to do damage to that country. They were killed instead of killing.... In Philby's case it wasn't for personal gain' (Sherry, 1994, pp. 488-489) For Greene, Philby's sincere Communism seemed to validate his treachery, whatever the consequences.

[390] Interestingly Norman Sherry, Greene's authorised biographer, failed to mention this final flurry of research. Rosenbaum claims that Sherry had sent Green letters containing questions on the Philby Case. In his third volume of the biography Sherry admitted the letters but ignored their content and his account focuses on the spiritual nature of Greene's death following the administration of the last sacraments. 'Greene had twenty hours left, but to his family he seemed far from death. He could not know that the countdown had begun. They suggested he stop using morphia so that he could speak with Father Durán [his spiritual director and friend] and answer final questions I'd sent him, still lying on his table (I was told his three green Pentel pens lay to the right of my letters). Graham gave his agreement with a nod of the head and the sudden vivid brightness of those speculative eyes – perhaps he could just start to see that light invisible to living eyes, but inviting dying eyes to walk into it. He was at peace, the 'peace that passes all understanding'. The next morning found him in a coma.' (Sherry, 2004, p. 794) Incidentally, the suspicion surrounding Philby's allegiance came because he was not at peace. Michael Lyubimov, a KGB colleague who had much to do with Philby described him as being 'a man who would have liked to have made peace with his country. Whether he actually sought to redeem himself in the West I cannot say, for I was not in charge of his case at this time. But I can say that there was a correspondence with persons in the West; it was intercepted by the KGB, and this made the KGB very uneasy, very suspicious about him. It was one of the reasons why he slipped back into disfavour with the KGB toward the end.' (Brown, 1994, p. 605)

converts. On the surface it might seem that these claims are undermined by the fact that they had spent years denying their conversions, or, as in the case of Philby and Burgess, had pretended to convert to proto-Fascist movements. It is impossible to quantify the sincerity of any conversion, least of all that of the Cambridge spies, but it is fairly clear that the Cambridge spies lied about their Communist convictions because they were working for the party. Moreover, it is worthwhile to note how their personal accounts fit in with the accounts of the other interwar converts to Communism. If they were unconvinced Marxists, the lies they chose to peddle tell us much about the conversions that were genuine.

Philby, like the other converts, always maintained that his conversion was at least partly inspired by the interwar narrative. In the introduction to his exculpatory memoir, *My Silent War*,[391] he explained that 'It was the Labour disaster of 1931 which first set me seriously to thinking about possible alternatives to the Labour Party. I began to take a more active part in the proceedings of the CUSS.'[392] (Philby, 2002, p.xxx) He began travelling through Europe and realized that their problems were as extensive as Britain's. He also realized that just as Labour had folded in England, the Social Democrats had folded in Germany. Something more powerful was needed. Perhaps inevitably he began to contrast the decay of the west with what seemed like the stability of the Soviet Union. As he told his biographer, Philip Knightley, 'It was clear to me that other countries were just as bad as Britain … In Germany unemployment was rife, Fascism was on the rise, and the working class fared equally badly… but all the time there was this solid base of the Left, the Soviet Union.' (Knightley, 1988, p. 34)

Philby would ultimately claim to have been encapsulated by the logical arguments of Communist theory rather than simply moved by the plight of the suffering poor but it is important to note that he, like Burgess, also developed a personal connection with the interwar narrative in the form of friendships with working-class students from mining villages. These were the Cantabrigian beneficiaries of the Worker's Educational Association and they provided a conduit to working-class concerns and, in particular, the plight of mining communities throughout the previous

[391] According to Yuri Modin, the book was commissioned by the KGB and constituted 'an official KGB version of his life,' written for distribution throughout the USSR. It was written in strict consultation with Modin and a number of KGB officials. Modin described the end-result as having much to recommend it 'even though it has major gaps and is not always truthful.' (Modin, 1994, pp. 257, 259)
[392] Cambridge Union of Socialist Societies

decade. Philby knew Harry Dawes[393] who had suffered through the general strike and ended up at Cambridge advocating the nationalization of agriculture and the coal fields. (Seale & McConville, 1973, pp. 23-24) Both Philby and Burgess were good friends with Jim Lees a miner who also had horrific stories to tell about the General Strike. For Burgess the relationship introduced him to the sufferings of the working classes and awakened his social conscience. Burgess later said to Tom Driberg, '[Lees] knew a great deal more than I did... he was interested in truth, I in brilliance. I made epigrams: he got the right answers.' (Driberg, 1956, p. 18) Through his friendship with Lees Burgess 'spent more and more time in the less elegant society of the politically conscious undergraduates.' (Driberg, 1956, p. 18)

One might well argue that the presence of coal miners at Cambridge University during the early thirties represented a victory in the Class War. Instead they served to validate the interwar narrative. Their experiences both as miners and later as students came to represent the failures of officially sanctioned labour movements and the need for more radical action.

> In a nutshell they were campaigning for a militant alternative to the feeble, gradualist, incrementally constitutionalist policies of their own leaders... the Labour movement seemed on its knees. Such men as Dawes and Lees despised the leadership of the movement as defeatists who had never believed in the success of the [general] strike... who had shied away from challenging their enemies with an assertion of working-class strength outside parliament on the streets. (Seale & McConville, 1973, pp. 25-26)

These working class students embodied the political narrative and possessed a credibility founded on their experience of poverty and hardship that an economics don simply couldn't match. Harry Dawes was one of the founders of the Cambridge University Socialist Society, which served to provide Philby with a political education. Lees introduced Burgess to David Haden Guest, the founder of the Communist Study group, it was a meeting which would prove crucial to Burgess's conversion. Lees also helped Philby during the period when he was wavering between his loyalty to the CUSS and the need for the more radical Communist Party. Lees helped Philby spend the 1932-1933 Christmas vacation in 'a lonely exploration of the

[393] Dawes was famous at the university for constantly wearing his cloth cap but was generally mistaken for an eccentric member of the Pitt Club rather than an impoverished student. (Seale & McConville, 1973, p. 24)

unemployment stricken provinces.' (Seale & McConville, 1973 p. 42) He provided him with a flat to rent in working class Nottingham and then found him lodgings with 'a real coalminer' in his wife's village of Huthwaite. (Seale & McConville, 1973, p.42) Philby was a student of economics but the theories he had learned were contradicted by his repeated exposure to the interwar crises. As the 1932 North East contingent of hunger marchers came through Cambridge they provided a powerful rebuttal of the traditional economic principles that had created the Means Test, and had been continually championed in Philby's lectures.

Another of the interwar spies, Goronwy Rees, grew up in Wales and, was consequently a witness of the interwar crises from the beginning.[394] As one might expect, his consequent understanding of the miners' fate led him to a vague form of Communism that was only later formalized into Communism through his friendship with Guy Burgess. In 1926 he had been exposed to 'industrial and civil strife' when he had watched mounted police charge the striking miners in St. John's Square, Cardiff. Unsurprisingly his 'particular brand of socialism' was based on Marx, William Morris and George Bernard Shaw but emotionally it was 'based upon an intense admiration for the South Wales Miners and an acute sense of what seemed to me the injustices which they suffered in their lives and in their work.' (G. Rees, 1972, pp. 42, 81-82) It is the predominance of these emotional factors that separate this conversion from the encapsulation experience. After leaving Oxford, Rees visited the town of Merthyr Tydfil and was immediately shaken by the devastation wrought by wholesale unemployment. In a letter written to a friend from Oxford, Douglas Jay (later Lord Jay), Rees explained: 'I can't stop thinking about this incredible town. To talk about goodness and beauty and truth when such things exist seems to me complete hypocrisy. All this worries and saddens me, I think, more than my mother's death.' (Cited in J. Rees, 1994, p. 55) Later, in a review[395] that prompted Burgess to recruit him to Comintern, Rees explained the way that conditions in the distressed areas drove people to Communism.

> The distressed area is being evacuated. It is a curious answer; if you tell men and women, already inclined by temperament and tradition to revolutionary opinions, that their

[394] Though Rees always denied accepting Burgess's offer that he join him in his work for Comintern, the existence of a file for Goronwy Rees in the KGB archives which reveals the unimpressive extent of his work from his base at All Souls, Oxford, suggests that Rees had been lying. (Andrew & Mitrokhin, 1999, p. 80)
[395] The review was of James Hanley's *Grey Children: A Study in Humbug and Misery in South Wales*.

> sufferings are caused by an impersonal economic system, you leave them but one choice. Lenin could not do it better... It is because their lives and their sufferings are so closely related to the working of modern society that they are a condemnation of it. (G. Rees, 'In The Valley.' 1937, p. 806)

Such was the power of the interwar narrative that only five months previously Rees had published an article on the case of the Eight Generals, executed in Stalin's Great Purge. 'By now it is accepted that M. Stalin governs like an Asiatic despot, who strikes suddenly and swiftly where he will.' (Rees, 1937, p. 1132) There is nothing written by the other spies that can rival this kind of claim. Rees continued in the same vein,

> Judicial forms are little more than a convenience. No one who read with an impartial eye the verbatim reports of last year's sensational political trials, in which Kameneff and Zinovieff, Radek and Pyatakov were involved, is convinced that the accused were guilty of all the crimes for which they were executed, or indeed that any 'crimes beyond the murder of Kirov had been committed.' (Rees, 1937, p. 1132)

In the same article Rees points out the likelihood of Stalin 'seeking that accommodation with Germany which was never wholly out of the question.' (Rees, 1937, p. 1132) Such a willingness to spell out Soviet tyranny, gives an indication of the anger Rees felt when he contemplated the depressed areas of Wales; an anger that allowed him to forgive any shortcomings in the Soviet regime.

Rees argued that the savage beauty of the depressed valleys did not arouse a sense of pity but of conflict. (Rees, 1937, p. 807) It was this response that prompted Burgess to praise the review, explaining, 'it shows that you have the heart of the matter in you.' (G. Rees, 1972, p. 134) It was during this same conversation that Rees asked Burgess about joining the party and was told by Burgess, 'Oh, no, don't do that, stay outside, you can do more outside.' (J. Rees, 1994, p. 274)[396] Even though Rees proved to be a very ineffectual spy, his motivation was clearly ideological –

[396] This revelation came from a conversation Rees's daughter had with the Russian historian of Soviet Intelligence, Oleg Tsarev. Tsarev was himself a KGB operative in working undercover in London as a journalist during the seventies. (J. Rees, 1994, p. 269)

this was reflected in the fact that he refused to continue cooperating with the NKVD after the 1939 non-aggression pact. (J. Rees, 1994, p. 276)[397]

Of the Cambridge Spies, Donald Maclean did perhaps the least to cover his Communist past. When he was being interviewed for a job with the Foreign Office he was asked about his Communist sympathies and brazenly explained that he 'hadn't entirely shaken them off.' (Cecil, 1988, p. 40)[398] Possibly because his past was the least murky, Maclean never felt the need, once in Russia, to write a memoir explaining his conversion to Communism. However, his biographers are quick to note that, having become convinced of Communism, he began to appear at demonstrations reacting to the plight of the unemployed or the threat of Fascism. In late 1931, he joined a demonstration of the unemployed and was arrested as they clashed with police near Hyde Park. (p. 23) His mother, Lady Maclean, the widow of Sir Donald Maclean, the Liberal politician and former leader of the opposition, had to go and to bail him out. His biographer and fellow Cantabrigian, Robert Cecil, saw him marching with hunger marchers en route to a Congress of Action in 1934. 'His face wore a look of dedication that I could not hope to emulate.' (p. 31) This was no hagiographic detail. Of the Cambridge Five the NKVD/KGB only ever considered Maclean to be entirely trustworthy in terms of his Communist faith. (Cave Brown, 1994, p. 536)

The sense of civilisational collapse was not restricted to experiences in England. Some intellectuals such as David Haden Guest, Stephen Spender and Eric Hobsbawm witnessed the rise of Fascism in Germany and were inspired by the ensuing Communist resistance. Eric Hobsbawm was a schoolboy living in Berlin for some months during 1932 before moving to England. He was irrevocably marked by his experience of the final days of the Weimar Republic.

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[397] An interesting insight into Rees's discontinuance of spy-work comes in Blunt's autobiography written for the KGB where he reveals that Rees was told that the whole ring was stopping. 'Goronwy Rees with whom I was put in touch at the time of Munich when Guy Burgess thought we might all be scattered, and should therefore be in a position to make direct contract if necessary, when we were out of contact with you at the time. Goronwy thinks that I stopped working at the time of the Russo-German treaty at the say time as Guy Burgess.' (West & Tsarev, 1998, p. 131) What is perhaps even more interesting is the fact that Burgess panicked when Rees tried to quit the movement and requested that Comintern assassinate his old friend. They didn't, largely because it soon became clear, ironically enough, that Rees wouldn't betray them due to his sense of loyalty to Burgess. (Andrew & Mitrokhin, 1999, p. 85)

[398] Cecil cites Macmillan's testimony to the House of Commons as proof that Communist enthusiasm was so common among students, particularly Trinity Scholars where the rate was around one in seven, that it couldn't possibly be seen as an indication that the individual wasn't sound. As Macmillan himself put it, perhaps disingenuously, 'His college authorities gave him an exceptionally good report in which no mention was made of leftwing views. (Cecil, 1988, p. 31)

His account of German Communists, eighty five per cent of whom were unemployed, portrays them as victimized defenders of freedom. The solidarity of the party in the face of vicious Nazi repression hardened his resolve to fight the Communist fight. Writing in the twenty first century, Hobsbawm defends his Communism because of the context in which it was born.

> 'The months in Berlin made me a lifelong Communist, or at least a man whose life would lose its nature and significance without the political project to which he committed himself as a schoolboy, even though that project has demonstrably failed, and, as I now know, was bound to fail.' (Hobsbawm, 2003, p. 55)

Hobsbawm's memoirs utilise the common logic of European disaster: '…in the crisis saturated atmosphere of the Berlin of 1931-33… We were on the Titanic and everyone knew it was hitting the iceberg… ' (2003, p. 57) '[B]y the time I came to Berlin it was patent that the major political issue in Germany was how to stop Hitler's rise to power.'(Hobsbawm, 2003,p. 68) This sense of emergency gave the cause a powerful sense of purpose that would often serve to eradicate the more technical doubts that any catechumen might have retained. During those heady days of conversion, Hobsbawm, for instance, had only been able to engage in a 'short-lived attempt' to read and understand Marxian theory. (p. 62) Although his Communism, like that of so many was heartfelt and, more rare, lifelong, there is no denying that it was, like Philby's, a product of a simple Petrine logic. Contemplating unchecked Fascist power he posed the question that so many would answer, 'what was there left but the Communists...?'(p. 58)

In 1929 Stephen Spender first went to Hamburg, whereupon he began a journal, 'I do everything my friends do, and have no opinions of my own… I must live and mature in my writing.' (Spender, 1977, pp. 104-105) He had been inspired to make the journey by Christopher Isherwood who had adopted a psychoanalytic creed and wanted Spender to free his desires from the constraints and complexities amassed in the course of an English middle class life. 'He spoke of being Cured and Saved with as much intensity as any Salvationist.' (p. 104) For Isherwood and for many intellectuals life in Weimar Germany was a hedonistic paradise in which English intellectuals vaguely formulated a sexual antinomianism. 'To these young Germans, who had little money and who spent what they had immediately, the life of the senses was a sunlit garden from which sin was excluded... their aims were simply to live from day to day, and to enjoy to

the utmost everything that was free: sun, water, friendship, their bodies.' (p. 107) The threat of Fascism soon disturbed this prelapsarian life in the sun as the crises of inflation, unemployment and socio-political disintegration spawned the inescapable feeling that 'this life would be swept away.' (p. 131) Revolted by Fascism and intrigued by their friend Edward Upward's decision to join the party, both Spender and Isherwood were forced to consider Communism. They began to watch Russian films which 'conveyed a message of hope like an answer to *The Waste Land*.' (p. 132)

When discussing Upward's influence on himself and Auden, Spender fittingly likened Upward to the young Comsomol hero who saves the two boys in the film, *The Way into Life*. When Spender walked through the streets of Berlin with Edward Upward and contemplated the fate of the world he found that his 'vaguely distressed consciousness now began to formulate itself along lines laid down by Marxist arguments.'(Spender, 1977, p. 133)

> I was impressed by the overwhelming accusation made by Communism against bourgeois society, an accusation not only against all its institutions but also reaching deep into the individual soul. When I considered the existing injustices and the future destruction which were involved in the system in which I lived, I longed to be on the side of the accusers, the setters-up of world socialism.' (p. 135)

Ultimately Spender only formally joined the party in 1936 upon the promptings of Harry Pollitt. Though his conversion was an intellectual one, it was grounded in the destruction of Weimar Germany and the events of the interwar narrative which hounded him and his conscience.[399] As he later wrote, 'the sense of political doom pending in unemployment, Fascism, and the

[399] Spender also developed intimate friendships among the working classes. He pursued a homosexual relationship with Tony Hyndman, an unemployed Welshman, referred to as 'Jimmy' in his memoir. 'For the differences of class and interest between Jimmy and me certainly did provide some element of mystery which corresponded almost to a difference of sex. I was in love, as it were, with his background, his soldiering, his working-class home. Nothing moved me more than to hear him tell stories of the Cardiff streets of Tiger Bay, … At such moments, too, I was very close to certain emotions awakened in childhood by the workers, who to us seemed at the same time coarse, unclean, and yet with something about them of forbidden fruit, and also of warm-heartedness which suddenly flashed across the cold gulf of class, secret and unspoken.' (Spender, 1977, p. 184) Interestingly not all the left-wing intellectuals were enamoured with the working classes. Spender recalls Lady Ottelline Morrell telling him that while she had sympathy for the workers and was even prepared to love them, 'they would stare so' which made things difficult. (p. 161)

overwhelming threat of war, was by now so universal that even to ignore these things was in itself a political attitude.' (Spender, 1977, p. 249)

Like Spender, David Haden Guest returned from Germany with a clear conviction that only Communism could tackle the threat of Fascism. However unlike Spender, Haden Guest's conversion to Communism was more in the manner of an Anglo-Catholic crossing the Tiber. Following his death in Spain, Haden Guest was the subject of the usual memoir compiled by friends. It is the level of unabashed hagiography that separates *David Guest: A Scientist Fights for Freedom* from the memorials put together for Cornford and even Ralph Fox. His father Leslie Haden Guest was a Socialist MP and his childhood was one of Vegetarian Summer Schools and playground fights on behalf of the working-classes. Perhaps the most edifying tale, told by his mother, was of young Haden Guest running off from his nurse in Kensington Gardens (during the coal strikes), only to be found going about his father's business, 'perched on a rail surrounded by a gaping audience of nursemaids and small children and a few canine pets thrown in. He was holding forth with passionate eloquence, "How would you like to work underground for twelve hours a day for twopence-halfpenny?"' (Haden Guest, 1939, p. 24) At prep-school he was bullied for his beliefs but continued to stand up for his Socialism. 'My Darling Mother, thank you very much for the books and the cherries. I thought somebody said economics was 'dry' I find it full of life and interest... Have you anything else of interest you could send along? I mean a handy book on speaking (rhetoric).' (Cited in Haden Guest, 1939, p. 28) His delicate constitution necessitated his removal to a Swiss sanatorium where he wrote that he was happy 'but for the fact of the scorching blinding sun...' (Cited in Haden Guest. p. 43) His letters home also reveal a growing attraction to Communism, 'Another Pole has come. He is very revolutionary!!! He comes of a revolutionary family who were in Russia till 1918 and is very fond of Russia… He had Communist friends who are at present imprisoned in Warsaw... We have very interesting talks.' (Cited in Haden Guest, 1939, p. 46) Later at Oundle he was described as a 'danger to the school' by 'an industrial magnate from the midlands' but he largely restricted himself to debating and intense academic work. (Ogden, 1939, p. 55)

The change for Haden Guest came when he was studying mathematical philosophy at the University of Gottingen from 1930-1931. His letters reveal an intellectual dissatisfaction with

life in that fragmented and crisis-wrought socio-political landscape. Interestingly, Haden Guest described this dissatisfaction in terms of a world-weary religious search.

> I have no desire whatever to think about politics but I cannot get it out of my head… I am haunted by the ugliness and vulgarity of our modern civilisation, discouraged from work by a sense of futility and wretchedness and a fear utterly damping to creative work, that whatever I do will be destroyed… I only wish I was not troubled by ethics or religion, call it what you will But I cannot help feeling that the ordinary agnostic position is a very unsatisfactory one. And yet by no stroke of imagination can I think myself as being brought to believe any traditional religion. (Cited in Black, 1939, pp. 59-61)

In a sense his agnosticism was soon replaced by the more certain atheism of the Communist religion. As he witnessed the growth of Fascism in Germany he instinctively moved leftwards in his thinking, though still restrained by his pacifism. 'If I were not a consistent pacifist, I should certainly have joined the Communist Party. For I am sure that the economic problems of the world – and all other problems too – can only be solved by drastic change along Communist lines.' (Cited in Black, 1939, p. 65) He repeatedly 'wished [he] could be completely Communist' but was reduced to the role of an interested on-looker by his 'lily-livered pacifist' convictions. (Cited in Black, 1939, p. 67) It was only when he was personally forced into the struggle that his 'virgin pacifism' wore off and he converted to Communism.

On Easter Sunday, 1931 he was arrested at a youth demonstration (his memoirists were coy about whether or not it was an explicitly Communist demonstration). After a hasty mock-trial in which the investigating judge (untersuchungsrichter) 'plainly a Nazi', conveniently doctoring evidence convicted him as the leader and instigator of the protest, he was placed in solitary confinement. (Max Black, 'Göttingen.' In C. Haden Guest, 1939, p. 68) Initially told that he might be jailed for six months, Haden Guest was imprisoned for a fortnight. He was only given a lawyer when he began a hunger-strike and this threat of a diplomatic incident became enough to ensure Haden Guest's release. He returned to Cambridge a changed man. As Maurice Cornforth explained it in his contribution to the memoir, 'David came back from Germany a convinced Communist. He had not only learned mathematics there, but had seen the working-class struggle in Germany. He marched into "Hall" [Trinity College] with a hammer and sickle emblem

prominently displayed in his coat.' (Maurice Cornforth 'Cambridge.' In C. Haden Guest, 1939, p. 97) Haden Guest's conversion required the least amount of change and yet it had still required a personal interaction with the interwar narrative to replace his vestigial pacifism with a confirmed Communist faith.

Hobsbawm summed up the relationship between the interwar narrative and Communist conversions when he discussed his own time at Cambridge:

> Whatever happened in Cambridge in those years was coloured by the knowledge that we lived in a time of Crisis. Before Hitler came to power, the modest student radicalisation of the time was almost certainly precipitated by the world economic crisis, the miserable collapse of the 1929-31 Labour government, and such dramatic demonstrations of what mass unemployment and poverty meant as the Hunger Marches from the smokeless and silent industrial areas. After 1933 it was increasingly a movement to resist the advance of Fascist dictatorships and...British governments that did nothing to stop the drift to Fascism and war. In the second half of the 1930s, and especially after the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War, this was certainly the main force behind the remarkable growth of the Socialist club: the effect of Munich in Cambridge was that the Cambridge University Socialist Club recruited 300 new members in a week.'

Yet as many intellectuals moved leftwards towards political religion, there were some who, prompted by the same crises, moved towards Catholicism. Antony Bulwer-Lytton was a conservative politician who was elected to parliament as part of the overwhelming Conservative majority in the 1931 National government. Provided with fresh evidence of the dire situation Bulwer-Lytton wrote to a friend, 'the whole world is sitting on a bomb. It is even chances if it goes off or not... the capitalist system has temporarily failed. If it is patched up in the next five years all may be well. If not, the world is for it.' (Lytton, 1936, pp. 323-324) Viscount Knebworth was not attracted to Communism but admitted, 'if the world wants [Socialists, Bolshevists and Communists] to try it, they will have their chance as we have had ours.'(p. 324) Bulwer-Lytton's increasing sense that 'the thing has grown too big, too complicated and too perplexing for our simple groping minds to understand,' led him to consider the attractions of

Fascism and later and more insistently, the attractions of the Catholic Church. (p. 328) He, like the Communists, hoped that 'the great National government was the last of the ancien régime.'(p. 334) Initially he empathised with those who were turning in desperation to Nazis and tyrants but soon saw that the moral and religious aspects of these problems were more serious. In the same year that Heinemann joined the Communist Party, Bulwer Lytton was writing to friends explaining his attraction to the Roman Catholic Church.

> The Catholic Church says to me 'The whole thing is too big for you. You can't know & you don't understand, & and when you think you can do both, the odds, from what evidence we have, are strongly in favour of your being wrong. The Church is blessed with the power to interpret God's will.[400] …Therefore you take it from the Church, which knows. It won't make you good. It won't save you, but it will help you. It will give you understanding & guidance, and it will help you to live this none too easy life in the best way possible.' (Lytton, 1936, p. 338)

At the time of writing Bulwer-Lytton had had very little contact with Catholics but in his ruminations on that religion it is possible to get a sense of how it was viewed among the elite during that period. More to the point however, Viscount Knebworth's letters reveal an interesting example of someone turning increasingly to the Catholic Church as a result of civilisational crisis and while he died before a conversion was possible he certainly saw the Church as an antidote to a fragmented world that seemed on the verge of collapse.[401] These sentiments were supported by

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[400] Part of Bulwer-Lytton's attraction to Catholicism was that it had authority and certainty. He repeatedly blamed his own religious education at Eton for his confusion. Writing to his school-friend Windham Baldwin in October, 1932, he said, 'I have looked up 'eclectic'. It is the one thing which religious education should not be. It is because it is *too* eclectic that we are in a mess. People should be taught one thing, taught it definitely & convincingly, & told that if they don't believe they are fools... I am in a rage with life, and I shouldn't be if my religious education hadn't been eclectic.' (Lytton, 1936, pp. 347-348)

[401] His father wrote that his religious views, 'in spite of his talks with Arnold Lunn and Mary Erskine, and his resultant sympathy with the Roman Catholic Church, at the moment, [they] were still those of a healthy schoolboy.' (Lytton, 1936, p. 351) However in his growing religiosity he formed a friendship with one of the Cowley Fathers who encouraged him to try his own religion first before coming to the Catholic faith. This priest took him to St Edward's Retreat House in Westminster, run by the Anglican religious order known as the Society of St. John the Evangelist. Bulwer-Lytton wrote to the priest, 'I don't know but things look good, and I am perfectly certain that that visit to St Edward's Home has more than a little to do with it. You helped me to be less bad, and I am convinced that God understood and was pleased. I have a tremendous sense of thankfulness.' (Lytton, 1936, p. 356) That letter was written in January of 1933. He died in a plane crash in April of that year while practising manouvers with his RAF squadron.

a number of converts, that the Church was a bulwark against collapse.[402] The poet Alfred Noyes, writing some years after his own conversion to Catholicism explained:

> The moral and spiritual catastrophe in which the whole of our civilisation is involved is sometimes glibly described as a revolution, one of those changes to which we must surrender as a normal process of history. It is rather to be described as an insurrection of the lower faculties of man against the higher. In art and literature there has been a reversion to animalism, a triumph of brutality over the finer influences of the spirit… there is only one remedy. Without it the human race is lost beyond recovery and the future holds nothing for mankind but evil heaped on evil. Either we must rediscover those absolute values of which the only source and foundation is the Supreme Being, or we go down in universal ruin. (Cited in Allitt, 1997, pp. 235-236)

One convert who found himself in the midst of animalism and the triumph of brutality over the finer influences of the spirit was the poet David Jones. Although he was an Anglo-Catholic, almost by instinct, it was whilst serving on the Western Front that he came in contact with Roman Catholicism and therein discovered the 'one remedy'.

Jones was preternaturally religious. As a child he instinctively knelt during the *Incarnatus est* of the creed even though he was attending an Anglican church of the Evangelical variety. (Blissett, 1981, p. 126) By the time he was a teenager Jones was a practising member of the High Church ranks. However in France he was introduced to the chaos of war, being wounded during the raid on Mametz Wood. During his time on the Western Front, he was 'without a lively faith. A Catholic chaplain, Fr Hughes, impressed him, as the Catholic chaplains impressed so many of his contemporaries. 'I'm here to minister to the dead and the dying and have no other reason for existing.' (Blissett, 1981, p. 126) It was also during the war that Jones encountered the Catholic Mass and found that it had a unique enchantment. One night when he was out collecting wood he came across a barn 'somewhere between the support trenches an the reserve lines.'

> I found a crack against which I put my eye expecting to see either empty darkness that I should have to go round to the other side of the little building to find an entrance. But

[402] As we saw in the previous chapter Christopher Hollis saw the Catholic Church as 'the sustainer of civilisation.' (Hollis, 1958, p. 82)

> what I saw through the small gap in the wall was not the dim emptiness I had expected but the back of a sacerdos in gilt-hued planeta, two points of flickering candle-light no doubt lent an extra sense of goldness to the vestment & a golden warmth seemed, by the same agency, to lend the white altar-cloths and the white linen of the celebrant's alb & amice & maniple... I can't recall at what part of the Mass it was as I looked through that squint-hole and I didn't think I ought to stay long as it seemed rather like an uninitiated bloke prying on the Mysteries of a Cult. But it made a big impression on me ... I felt immediately that oneness between the Offerant and those toughs that clustered round him in the dim-lit byre – a thing I had never felt remotely as a Protestant at the office of Holy Communion. (Ward, 1983, pp. 19-20)

Though written more than fifty years later, this letter that he wrote to Rene Hague, a fellow Catholic, identifies the moving experience of discovering the transcendent when all that was expected was 'empty darkness'. Jones also emphasises the enchanted unity of the liturgy, imbuing the entire barn, in the midst of the chaos of the Western Front, with a golden warmth, as well as uniting the offerant with the faithful. As he explained years later, 'I was "inside" a Catholic in the trenches in 1917 though not so formally until 1921. William Blissett summed it up when he wrote, 'what made him a Catholic in the first place was plenitude and universality, every church fully Catholic in rite and doctrine.' (Blissett, 1981, p. 71) Once he returned to England after the war he he began attending Catholic Mass. He was received into the church in 1921 by Father O'Connor, the same priest that would receive Chesterton the following year. Some time after this he tried to join the community at Caldey but was advised to 'find some nice Catholic girl.' (Blissett, 1981, p. 22)

As we shall see in greater detail in the next chapter, often the converts were attracted to the very things that Protestants had spent so long deriding. What her opponents saw as the immutable authoritarianism of Rome, the converts saw as creating the only sort of Church that could withstand the chaos of civilisation. As James Hitchcock succinctly put it, 'what most of these converts appear to have seen in Catholicism... is precisely some reality or vision which is not modern.' (Cited in Schwartz, 2005, p. 7) It is intriguing that as many converts sought the ultra modernity of Communism, others from much the same backgrounds and same educational experiences, were seeking the Church of their ancestors.

Interior Crises

In *The Coming Struggle for Power*, John Strachey once argued that the novels of both William Faulkner and Evelyn Waugh were concerned with violent social disintegration without diagnosing it as 'the prolegomena to Communism.' Strachey then made the interesting observation that after writing books like *Decline and Fall* and *Vile Bodies* 'Mr. Waugh had clearly only three alternatives open to him. He could either commit suicide, become a Communist, or immure himself within the Catholic Church. He chose this last (and easiest) alternative.' (Strachey, 1932, p. 223)[403] Strachey dismisses Waugh's early satires as being like Faulkner's; apolitical and guilty of being 'merely obsessed by the intolerable horror of what is.' (Strachey, 1932, p. 223) But, quite reasonably, he notes that Waugh's conversion to Catholicism, like a conversion to Communism, is a response to the decay of society which, according to Strachey, is the decay of capitalism. As we shall see, Waugh himself would have supported this view, in the sense that his conversion was a response to a fragmented and disenchanted society. As he put it in a subsequent article, 'Ten years of that world sufficed to show me that life there, or anywhere, was unintelligible without God.' ('Come Inside.' In E. Waugh, 1983, p. 367) Yet what makes Waugh's conversion different was the way in which it was personal crises, rather than societal crises, that led him to his conversion. Stephen Spender claimed that the crisis of Fascist power consumed his focus to the point where Fascist crimes 'usurped my own deepest personal life, so that my inner world became dependent on an outer one, and if that outer one failed to provide me with its daily stimulus of crime and indignation I felt a kind of emptiness.' (Spender, 1977, pp. 190-191) Moreover the outer-world became the sole focus of his conscience: 'however bad I was, Fascism was worse; by being anti-Fascist I created a rightness for myself besides which personal guilt seemed unimportant.' (Spender, 1977, p. 191) Waugh was unable to separate his personal conscience and his personal crises from the societal decay which he believed had inspired them. Consequently he turned to a traditional religion he believed could save his soul, as opposed to a political religion that Spender believed could save society.

Leaving his 'bitterest curse on Lancing' Waugh went up to Oxford on a modern history scholarship.(Amory, 2009, p. 4) His letters written to friends still at school are particularly

[403] Also cited in Valentine Cunningham, 1988, *British Writers of the Thirties*, Oxford University Press: Oxford, p. 32.

revealing. One of the first letters was addressed to Dudley Carew claiming, 'I feel I am going to be immoderately happy.' (Amory, 2009, p. 4) This was followed by a letter to Tom Driberg in which he explained that the 'greatest thing Oxford has to teach', was the pleasure of drunkenness and the means of avoiding a hangover.(Amory, 2009, p. 10) Perhaps predictably, Waugh's high expectations for happiness, and reliance on alcohol as a means of finding it, soon led to disaster. Carew would later write that Waugh 'went at the bottle as though he was engaged in a desperate, murderous struggle with one who was at the same time deadly enemy and devoted friend... Evelyn's drinking was not, then the sort of part-time vice in which most of us indulged; it was a serious, not to say deadly business.' (Cited in Hastings, 1994, p. 142)[404]

Waugh left Oxford with a poor degree and no career prospects. He was eventually forced to accept the indignity of teaching in a remote school but saw daylight when his brother found him a job in Pisa as a secretary for Charles Scott Moncrieff, the translator of Proust.[405] Having given notice he received word that the job had fallen through. This blow, coming as it did almost

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[404] Diary entries at the time give an insight into Waugh's self-destructive drinking. One entry that many Waugh biographers quote, concerns his return to Oxford during his period as a dandified though penniless unemployed dilettante in London. 'I went up to Oxford on Monday and contrary to my intentions stayed the night. After luncheon, which was hot lobster, partridges and plum pudding, sherry mulled claret and a strange rum-like liqueur, I left Hugh and John drinking and went to call on a number of people all of whom were out... [at] the New Reform Club...I found Terrence and Elmley drinking beer. I drank with them and went to dinner with Robert Byron in Merton Hall. ...after dinner we went up to the rooms of a charming hunting man called Reynolds and drank Beer.' After drinking with other friends at the Nags Head 'we went to see Mrs. Heritage and then to the old Hypocrites rooms for the drinking of whiskey and the performance of the Elsa film. After about this stage of the evening my recollections became somewhat blurred. I got a sword from somewhere and got into Balliol somehow... Next morning I drank beer with Hugh, drank gin with Gyles Isham... and was seen off at the station by Harold and Billy feeling woefully tired.' (Davie, 2009, pp. 196-197) Unsurprisingly Waugh dated this bender as the beginning of the end of his life as an art student.

[405] Moncrieff was also a convert to Catholicism, finding his way Romewards from the Episcopal Church of Scotland, while serving on the Western Front in 1915. He explained his conversion in a series of letters to his parents written in 1915. Writing on the 22nd of July he recounted how he had taken a group of men 'to a drab little R. C. chapel at Portland, in a long dull road flanking the convict quarries, with an old priest who suffered from aphasia so that he could not speak the words he wanted to, but brought them out in little rushes with omissions and repetitions.' There in the church he saw many other soldiers whom he had admired for some time. 'I suddenly discovered that these people were Catholics, and one or two others who seemed to have been driven across my path about the same time... I found sooner or later that I *was* a Roman Catholic. It wasn't anything to do with the sensuous appeal of music, flowers, lights, vestments, etc., as at Portland we had not a note of music, nor anything else except that ragged old man in his frayed chasuble. But finally at Rouen Cathedral at Pentecost (the last service I have attended in Church) I felt quite sure that I was at home, while in Winchester Cathedral on Easter morning I realised – in spite of my love an knowledge of it – that my place was not here...' (Moncrief & Lunn, 1931, pp. 92-93) For Moncrief the war had exposed him to Catholic life among the peasant classes in both Belgium and France and he consequently felt himself drawn to the Catholic Church. 'The humility, piety and devotion here, as it was in Rouen, and I believe all over France, is very moving. Rouen Cathedral, the last church I was in, is a wonderful place nowadays, with its great assembly of men and women all day long, praying for the armies.' (p. 94)

immediately after Waugh had consigned his first attempt at a novel, *The Temple at Thatch*, to the school's boiler, was too much. He went to the beach, his 'thoughts full of death' and swam out to his oblivion until the sharp stings of jelly fish, forced him back 'to all the years ahead.' (E. Waugh, 1964, pp. 229, 230) Waugh used these experiences of profligacy, penury, depression and despair, as the basis for his first commercially published fiction, a short story entitled, *The Balance*, published soon after he emerged from the Irish Sea. (Stannard, 1986, p. 116) In the story all the hallmarks of his own depression are attributed to the protagonist. Unrequited love, debts, exclusion from Oxford, dissatisfying intoxication and a drunken car-crash are all combined into a metafictive film while a bored audience analyse the story. Ultimately, the story ends with a failed suicide attempt from which Adam concludes that there is no reason *not* to die and only circumstance keeps life going. ('The Balance.' In E. Waugh, 2000, p. 36)

Waugh's marriage to Evelyn Gardner, a society beauty, and the undreamt success of *Decline and Fall* temporarily alleviated this gloomy outlook. However while he was away writing his second novel, *Vile Bodies*, his wife wrote to him explaining that she had fallen in love with a mutual acquaintance, John Heygate; 'a spotty announcer from the BBC' to borrow a phrase that soon appeared from *Vile Bodies*. (E. Waugh, 2003a, p. 277) Once again Waugh's life was thrown into disarray, in a letter to his good friend, Harold Acton, he wrote, 'I have absolutely no plans for the future... I did not know it was possible to be so miserable & live...' (Amory, 2009, p. 49) Waugh would emerge from this second crisis as a profoundly successful writer, a fashionable socialite and, a year after writing to Acton, a Catholic.

A close study of Waugh's diary reveals that, while his conversion to Catholicism had caught many by surprise, it was not wholly unpredictable. Stannard summed up Waugh's Oxonian religiosity by saying that he 'had, even during this phase of muscular agnosticism, a profoundly religious temperament and would spend hours analyzing the arguments of believers if only, ultimately to dismiss them.' (1986, p. 79) What is also interesting is that consistently during the period of the two crises Waugh's diary is full of censorious views concerning people like Dudley Carew, 'who is still committing adulteries too much' and later a Greek boy who was, among other things, 'blasphemous.' (Davie, 2009, pp. 227, 288) These criticisms are punctuated with sporadic resolutions concerning his own wantonness. Declarations like 'a rather vigorous ten days but they are to be my last of this sort of life', occur frequently. (Davie, 2009, p. 280) In an

article that he wrote in 1929, Waugh explained that the freedom from prudery of any kind enjoyed by the Bright Young Things was combined with ‘a disposition to regard very seriously mystical experience and the more disciplined forms of religion.’ (‘Too Young at Forty.’In E. Waugh, 1983, p. 47)

Following his reception into the Church, Waugh published an explanation in the *Daily Express*, explaining that the choice was between Christianity and chaos. What is interesting is that he explained chaos not merely as the personal chaos that had intermittently engulfed his life, but as the social chaos that had engulfed Europe; the chaos of which his life was merely a symptom.

> It seems to me that in the present phase of European history the essential issue is no longer between Catholicism, on one side, and Protestantism, on the other, but between Christianity and chaos… Civilisation – and by this I do not mean talking cinemas and tinned food, nor even surgery and hygienic houses, but the whole moral and artistic organization of Europe -- has not in itself the power of survival. It came into being through Christianity, and without it has no significance or power to command allegiance. (‘Converted to Rome: Why it has Happened to Me.’In E. Waugh, 1983, pp. 103-104)

Of his own chaotic life among the Bright Young People, he wrote, ‘ten years of that world sufficed to show me that life there, or anywhere, was unintelligible and unendurable without God.’ (‘Come Inside.’ In E. Waugh, 1983, p. 367)

Once he made up his mind to seek instruction from a Catholic priest, Waugh was a very willing catechumen. As he explained: ‘they (the priests) explain their doctrine, and the proselyte decides for himself whether it is true.’ (‘Converted to Rome: Why it has Happened to Me.’In E. Waugh, 1983, p. 103) In a letter to Waugh’s friend, and sympathetic biographer, Christopher Sykes, the priest chosen for Waugh, Fr Martin D’Arcy, wrote that Waugh had been convinced, encapsulated by the doctrine he had learnt about. ‘He had convinced himself very unsentimentally – with only an intellectual passion, of the truth of the Catholic faith, and that in it he must save his soul.’ (Sykes, 1975, p. 107)

Graham Greene described Waugh as one of his best friends and the two exchanged a lively correspondence for a number of years, in which they generally gossiped about the minutiae

involved in being leading Catholic authors. It has been this shared role that has also linked them in the minds of historians and literary critics. Yet biographically their real similarities emerge in their lives prior to conversion. For Greene, like Waugh, had to negotiate a series of crises that would frequently result in a suicidal despair. Greene's crisis revolved around his lifelong battle with what was probably a bipolar disorder, a mental illness that he termed boredom.

His biographer, Norman Sherry, explained that 'Graham was a manic-depressive (now called bipolar disorder) and after his deep depressions down into a disabling night, surrounded by hopelessness, there often followed severe mood swings, almost to a manic peak.' Initially he would treat his 'boredom' with varied solutions such as Russian roulette and drinking. However, just as many of his crises would emerge during the manic phase. '…Greene would plunge himself into socializing. At such times he would abuse alcohol and drugs, but then just as suddenly he would long for peace and order, and come to hate noise and company.' (Sherry, 2004, p. 252) Greene's letters to his fiancée, Vivien Dayrell-Browning, reveal a haphazard understanding of his illness with relatively clear strains of suicidal ideation: 'my mind's like a bubble & it's getting bigger & bigger, & if it bursts I feel I shall simply shriek & shriek & not be able to stop. ...oh God, how I want to be dead, or asleep or blind drunk or anything so that I can't think.' (Cited in Sherry, 1989, p. 221)

In the lead up to his conversion another letter that he wrote to his fiancée indicates a suspicion that religion cannot help him with his bipolar disorder. 'Don't you ever wonder, in moods now & again, what the use of going on is? Religion doesn't answer it. One can believe in every point of the Catholic faith, & yet at times like this hate the initiator of it all, of life I mean.'(Cited in Sherry, 1989, p. 260) Like Waugh's, Greene's conversion could not prevent crises from dogging him for the remainder of his life. In the fifties he attempted suicide using half a pint of whiskey and 'some two dozen aspirin' (Allain, 1983, p. 50) In that same decade Greene sought to organise his own shock-treatment but was discouraged by his psychiatrist, Dr. Eric Strauss. (Sherry, 1994, p. 332) Yet also like Waugh, Greene remained a Catholic. Whilst his heterodoxy has become as familiar as Waugh's orthodoxy, Greene never left the Church, somewhat facetiously admitting in the early eighties that '[t]he foot I keep in that door is even bigger, though I fear this may be due to gout.' (Allain, 1983, p. 87) In a sense Greene's refusal to

abandon his faith despite his complicated and ever changing objections, indicates the solidity of his conversion experience.

Greene's 'boredom' was never entirely separate from his experience of conversion. In 1923 he began playing Russian roulette with his brother's revolver 'when the burden of boredom and despair became too great.' (Greene, 1971, p. 129) The breathless excitement of oscillating between suicide and life soon palled. Greene played his last game at the end of that year and then slipped off to Paris for the excitement of the Communist headquarters there. (Greene, 1971, p. 132) Greene's superficial conversion to Communism was his next battle 'in the lifelong war against boredom.'(Greene, 1971, p. 133) Whilst he was studying at Oxford he and Claud Cockburn joined the party, 'only with the farfetched idea of gaining control and perhaps winning a free trip to Moscow and Leningrad, cities which six years after the Revolution still had a romantic appeal.' (Greene, 1971, p. 134) Whilst a member, he glibly parroted the party line, telling a shocked friend that 'I think it's the only future.' (Sherry, 1989, p. 161) His conversion was clearly a means of alleviating boredom but, as he later admitted to Marie-Françoise Allain, in 1923 when he flirted with the Communist Party, 'one could still believe in the October Revolution.' (1983, p. 33) The following year saw another escapade that was rooted in his boredom. This time he and Claud Cockburn ventured into the Palitanate where they engaged in some fairly ham-fisted spying on behalf of the German government. In his memoir, Greene claimed he would have served any cause so long as he was 'repaid with excitement and a little risk.' (Greene, 1971, p. 143) Yet he would later defend his conduct as a political act on behalf of an oppressed nation, striking out at the French who were trying to set up a separatist government in the region. 'I was working in a just cause. 'Moral sense' I certainly had. ...my motives were quite unimpeachable.' (Allain, 1983, pp. 39-40)

In his wide-ranging and not entirely consistent interview with Marie-Françoise Allain, Greene linked his 'political awakening' with the interwar narrative.

> 'I think that in the thirties one couldn't help being aware of what was going on, much more so than in the fifties and sixties or perhaps even during the last decade [seventies]. One felt war quite obviously looming in Germany with the sinister prospects taking shape there. In England there were hunger marchers, thousands of people were out of work.

> Fascism appeared with Mosley. When the Blackshirts paraded the police were there – to protect them. They tended to lay into the counter-demonstrators which boded no good.' (1983, p. 90)

Whilst Greene doesn't go so far as to say that he became a political convert, using the term, 'politically aware', he admits, in another part of the interview that a key part of his political attitude was 'a strong pull towards the Communist Party...' (Allain, 1983, pp. 19-20) Greene also admitted in his memoir that his experiences at Oxford were perhaps 'closer to Maclean's and Kim Philby's at Cambridge...' (Greene, 1971, p. 139) And this is borne out by his conception of a left-leaning political consciousness founded on the interwar narrative. In some ways he was a lifelong fellow traveller, albeit one who was largely untroubled by the doctrines of Marx and Lenin and therefore able to sympathise without any sense of political commitment. As Allain described it, 'he is fascinated by the Communists, those believers constantly on the edge of losing their faith, but he appears to be deeply disappointed at not having been able to find Communism with a human face.'(Allain, 1983, p. 74)

Like the political conversions of the Cambridge spies, Greene's religious conversion has often been questioned. The fact that he converted to Catholicism prior to marrying a Catholic ensured that, from the beginning, his motives would be questioned. Greene met Vivien Dayrell-Browning after she wrote to him criticising a film review he had written for the *Oxford Outlook* in which he had claimed that Catholics worshipped the Virgin Mary. Dayrell-Browning was herself a convert to Catholicism.[406] Their courtship was torturous and their letters reveal Greene's desperation and her fears about marrying a non-Catholic and whether or not she could ever consummate their marriage. At one point Greene was prepared to undergo a sexually continent marriage. 'What I

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[406] Vivien Dayrell-Browning converted at the age of seventeen. 'I woke up one morning and knew I must be a Catholic. My mother and other members of the family were horrified. They were low church but my mother had no religion particularly herself.' Already a published poet, soon made Catholicism the focus of her work and in doing so revealed a powerful love of enchanted religion:

> Like acolytes the candles stood
> Ranged with their flames of restless gold,
> Above them hung the glimmering Rood,
> Below, the Body and the Blood,
> O Mystery no words have told!
> Nor have men's hearts yet understood -
> (O strange and still Beatitude!)
> The Holy Thing their hearts may hold.
> (Pearce, 1999, pp. 140-141)

long for is a quite original marriage with you, companionship & companionship only. … There'd be no domestic tying down, & you'd always keep your ideal of celibacy, & you could help me to keep that same idea.' He completed the letter by wondering whether or not God was bringing them together that they might 'strike out together across new country which might turn out to be a promised land.' (Greene R., 2007, p. 19) This offer of 'monastic marriage', as he termed it, was intriguing to Vivien which provides a clear insight into their relationship and the level of infatuation that Greene had reached, not to mention his religious questing.

However it would be simplistic to say that Greene's conversion was the final step in his campaign to convince her to marry him. An important point to consider is the violence of Greene's atheism whilst he was a student at Oxford. Lord Tranmire, who was at Balliol with Greene, later said of him, 'It was not like Graham to argue for argument's sake. Careful thinking led him to it and he would propound his own strong atheism. I think in my life I've never heard atheism put forward better than by Graham... ' (Sherry, 1989, p. 127) Also, years after an embittering divorce, and after he had abandoned the regular practice of his faith, Greene continued to insist on the sincerity of his conversion.

Initially he was very reluctant to seek conversion. Claud Cockburn argued that he didn't convert as soon as Vivien asked him it was because he was already half-convinced. 'If you worry about becoming a Catholic it means you take it seriously, and you think there is something there.' (Sherry, 1989, p. 193) Greene received instruction from Father Trollope, himself a convert, and was quickly edified by seeing his interlocutor as personifying 'the challenge of an inexplicable goodness.' (Greene G., 1971, p. 166) In his memoir Greene explained that he 'had no intention of being received' and was merely trying to work out what his fiancée believed; 'besides, I thought it would kill the time.' (Greene G., 1971, pp. 164-165) But Greene clearly had an experience of encapsulation, explaining that '...after a few weeks of serious argument the "if" was becoming less and less improbable... It was on the ground of dogmatic atheism that I fought and fought hard. It was like a fight for personal survival.' (Greene G., 1971, p. 167) In his travel book, *Journey without Maps* Greene actually denied that it was a conversion to Catholicism in the sense that it was purely intellectual, 'I had not been converted to a religious faith. I had been convinced by specific arguments in the probability of its creed.' (Greene G., 1976, p. 213) In

February 1926, Greene was received into the Church and, such was his conviction, he genuinely worried that he might discover within himself the desire to be a priest. (Greene G., 1971, p. 170)

The dramas that Waugh and Greene endured in adolescence seem minor compared to the crises that perpetually afflicted the life of Roy Campbell. Though South African born, Campbell was educated at Oxford and was a major intellectual figure in English circles for most of his life, despite living mostly in Europe. Laurens van der Post said of him, 'Born on fire, it was as if his whole being had already irrevocably accepted that he could only live by burning himself out.' (Alexander, 1982, pp. 120 – 121) Edith Sitwell wrote of him in an obituary '[H]e lived – in a whirlwind alway – from the moment when he fought, as a child, with octopuses, and with sharks.' (Sitwell, 1958, p. 43)

In 1919 Campbell arrived at Oxford from Durban. Like most of the interwar converts, he seems to have quickly shed the earnest Protestantism of his parents, in his case Presbyterianism. According to Augustus John, he soon took to drink 'as a means of counteracting the almost pathological condition of moral discomfort.' (Cited in Pearce, 2004, p. 35) From the beginning, he found everything at Oxford bar formal education. He came under the influence of T. W. Earp who 'temporarily converted him to a Marxist hatred of the 'bourgeois'' convincing him that Capitalist excess had killed off the flower of his generation in the mud at Flanders. (Alexander, 1982, p. 23) This brush with Marxism was matched with equally brief brushes with Freud, Nietzsche and Darwin. The intellectual ferment in which he found himself spawned a confused morass of progressive ideologies which became self-defeating by virtue of their strange complexity.

> The plethora of progressive "isms" which he adopted as a result of the endless reading and discussions during his first year in England led to an information overload where conflicting concepts, imbibed thirstily but largely undigested, fought for supremacy. The contradictions and mental contortions created doubts which set in motion further contradictions and contortions. (Pearce, 2004, p. 39)

He left Oxford after less than a year of very informal education and confused formation. His beliefs were confused and seem mostly to have been in the negative but he was determined to write poetry. In 1924 he would suddenly emerge into the limelight by publishing *The Flaming*

Terrapin a poem in which he claimed to have set out a 'symbolic vision of the salvation of civilisation'. (Cited Voss, 2006) By this time he was married to Mary Garman and living in the archaic squalor of a dilapidated stable outside a remote Welsh village.[407] The poem was marked by a view of man who survives the anarchy of modernity only by being grounded in the traditions of the past. Weaving together a plethora of mythological traditions, Campbell tells the story of Noah and his sons sailing through the modern world, rent by a 'plethora of progressive "isms",' and finding new life on a promised shore where heaven and earth are once more joined.

While the publication of *The Flaming Terrapin* hinted at Campbell's instinctive Judeo-Christianity, it also spawned its own complex array of fresh crises. At the centre of these new crises was the volatility of his marriage. Mary Garman was a bisexual bohemian. Campbell knew of her lesbian affairs though they made him intensely jealous; early on in their marriage he held her out of a window over a busy London street when she reminisced about the beauty of a former lover. (Pearce, 2004, p. 116) Campbell's new literary fame placed the young couple in a new world of writers and academics.[408] A friendship with Vita Sackville West and her husband, Harold Nicolson ripened quickly and they were soon living in the 'gardener's cottage' at Long Barn. This was an arrangement complicated by the fact that Mary had begun an affair with Vita Sackville West.

Roy's response was typical of their marriage. He went on drinking binges, he chased his wife with a knife, he had an affair himself, and he ended up in hospital with appendicitis. (Alexander, 1982, p. 84) The situation soon drove Campbell to Provençe. But, as the relationship with Sackville West petered out, Mary soon followed.

Campbell and his wife had, by this time two children to whom they paid sporadic attention. Anna, the younger, later said of her father that '[these] deep psychological disturbances

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[407] Campbell's process of writing the poem that would ensure his reputation is itself the stuff of legend. Pearce writes, 'Night after night, while Mary slept below, he wrote lying on his back on a mattress, a notebook propped on his knees, in a tiny loft with rafters just above his head and two or three candles flickering in a saucer by his side. He would emerge in the morning to read what he had written to the newly awakened Mary and then would crawl into the bed she had recently vacated, sleeping for the remainder of the morning.' (Pearce, 2004, p. 60)

[408] Though they briefly returned to South Africa where Campbell edited a radical periodical entitled, *Voorslag* (Whiplash). The paper was soon mired in controversy over Campbell's criticism of white South Africa's treatment of the natives. He resigned after two issues. Poverty and ill-health soon drove him back to London where the publication of more poems, in particular *Tristan Da Cunha* ensured that he remained impoverished but something of a pet-curiosity among the intellectual aristocracy.

engendered in his unconsciousness by Mary's revelations made him grow up.' (Pearce, 2004, p. 135) In Provençe he supported his poetry by working with local fishermen. Mary resumed the practice of her Anglo-Catholic faith while Roy began to imbibe the local Catholicism of the peasant fishermen. It was from this period that he began to write the *Mithraic Emblems*. Once again a synthesis of pagan and Christian elements are blended to create a sense of continuity. Catholic reviewers were quick to praise the poems, and Campbell's achievement of having 'welded the emblems of Mithras as a prophecy of Christ.' (Trappes-Lomax, 1936, p. 710)

Financial problems soon drove the family into exile once more with only the possessions that they could carry. Arriving in Spain, Campbell had to publish a volume of highly fictitious memoirs in order to settle their debts. They arrived in Barcelona to the sounds of anarchist bombs. Roy concluded that 'the disorder of the world at large seemed to be reflected in all aspects of his own life.' (Alexander, 1982, p. 129) The couple fought wildly after another move, this time to Valencia and Mary briefly left Roy once more. However a reconciliation must have been quickly broached because the family were soon settled in Altea on the Costa Blanca. Once more, their crises were forgotten as they lived what seemed the peasant life of the Aboriginal Europeans. Mary Campbell later recalled that she had been reading the memoirs of Teresa of Avila and this, combined with the memory of her marital turmoil prompted her to announce 'I'm going to become a Catholic' to which Roy replied, 'Well, kid, if you're going to I will too.' (Alexander, 1982, p. 150) They were received into the Church on June 24th, 1935. The next day Campbell wrote to Enslin du Plessis, 'I don't know much about Communism but I have seen that many valiant and generous men take up that form of imitation Christianity. But they are not happy. Yesterday I had the good fortune to be baptised and married in the Catholic Church. I wish you the same luck.' (Cited in Alexander, 1982, p. 156) For many critics and biographers Campbell represented a typical 'reactionary' that escaped into the past from the challenges of the modern world. He countered this argument by explaining the richness of traditional Spain. 'A body without reaction is a corpse: so is any social body without tradition. 'Reactionary' Spain has, during this century, produced better poetry than any other country; and this is chiefly due to her preoccupation with spiritual necessities rather than immediate physical conveniences.' (Campbell, 1952, p. 12)

Campbell's poetry had consistently contrasted the intellectual and resultant political chaos of Europe with the stability of traditional Europe which was a curious mixture of peasant paganism and Christendom. However, in a poem he wrote around the time of his conversion, he adopts the mechanised imagery that he had often used to symbolise modernity, in order to write his own version of Francis Thompson's *The Hound of Heaven*. Unsurprisingly called 'The Fight' Campbell tells the story of his struggle against God in the form of an air battle. The poet fights with God for the 'ultimate regime' over the land, described in terms of rural Europe. As the poet is defeated, he falls in his flaming plane and from the fall rises 'as silver in the solitude'. Suddenly the landscape is transformed into a religious landscape that combines to praise Christ for his triumph over this unruly soul.

> The towers and trees were lifted hymns of praise,
> The city was a prayer, the land a nun:
> The noonday azure strumming all its rays
> Sang that a famous battle had been won,
> As signing his white Cross, the very Sun
> The Solar Christ and captain of my days
> Zoomed to the zenith; and his will was done. (Campbell, 1949, p. 156)

Laurie Lee's memoir, *As I Walked Out One Midsummer Morning* tells the story of his vagabond wanderings through England and then Spain in 1934-35. He walks to London 'with a confident belief in good fortune' and begins to live hand to mouth as a busker seeing the world. (Lee, 2011, p. 2) While busking his way across Spain, a country he chose almost at random, Lee encountered the recently converted Campbell family. For Lee they came to embody the allure of Catholicism. He described himself as a heretic, 'jaunty with my lack of belief' but, as Mary Campbell spoke to him of the faith and told him of 'the utter peace' he began feel himself drawn to conversion. (Lee, 2011, pp. 114, 115)

> I saw the banked up voluptuousness of a young and beautiful convert, holding this single passion in which all hungers were answered and all doubts quietly put away. Here romantic love was kept on ice, sealed by an unfaltering spiritual flame, and accompanied

> by a vocabulary of torment, physical denial and ecstasy which promised an eternity of sensuous reward.
>
> It may also have been the first, and most dangerous time – as I sat with the poet's wife through that hushed afternoon, watching her finger her beads in the airless shade – that I felt the pull of that seductive faith.' (Lee, 2011, p. 115)[409]

Lee's portrait of the Campbell family gives a revealing insight into the lure of conversion that will be studied in-depth in the next chapter. Escaping from the confusion of fragmented unbelief the convert found the peace of a convincing weltanschauung that was able to make sense of even the most torrid lives lived in the midst of a torrid period of history.

The Long Search

Francis Thompson first published his acclaimed poem, *The Hound of Heaven* in 1893. *The Times* rapturously declared: 'people will still be learning it by heart two hundred years hence, for it has about it the unique thing that makes for immortality. It is the return of the nineteen century to Thomas à Kempis.' (Cited in O'Connor, 1912, p. 3) Thompson's classic piece of *fin de siècle* literature[410] traces the speaker's attempt to elude Christ's insistent offer of love, as represented by the pursuing Hound of heaven. Ultimately the speaker accepts love but only after attempting to find solace in the love of adults, the love of children, the love of nature; these being, in a sense, conversions to pseudo-religions that take the place of Christianity. The speaker runs, predominantly because 'for though I knew His love, Who followed, / Yet was I sore adread / Lest, having Him, I must have naught beside.' (Thompson, 1908, p. 51)

In an introduction that he wrote for a 1936 edition of Thompson's poetry, Chesterton described *The Hound of Heaven* as 'the greatest religious poem of modern times and one of the greatest of all times.' (Chesterton G. K., 1950, p. 132) Chesterton argued that Thompson, usually described as a minor poet was actually a major prophet. Writing in the age of impersonal religions, both

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[409] Lee was moved by the effect that Catholic life had on the family, he noted that when Mary and Anna (her eldest daughter) returned from daily Mass, 'they would come back transformed, light footed and chirpy with gossip, their early silence now swept away, and their eyes sparkling, as though they'd been to a party.' (Lee, 2011, p. 116)

[410] It was lauded by Coventry Patmore and Edward Burne-Jones, two very different intellectuals from the period, who themselves were not strangers to the conversion impulse.

political and pantheistic, Thompson marked a sudden, even miraculous literary return to traditional Christianity, so denigrated in the 19th century.

> In any case, it was an event of history, as much as an event of literature, when personal religion returned suddenly with something of the power of Dante or the Dies Irae, after a century in which such religion had seemed to grow more weak and provincial, and more and more impersonal religions appeared to possess the future. (Chesterton G. K., 1950, p. 136)

Chesterton's own life was one which gave him a particular appreciation for Thompson. He too had assumed that religion was dead. He too had sought after the new impersonal religions of humanity only to gradually find himself returning to the religion of his ancestors. His life links the *fin de siècle* conversions of the nineteenth century with the interwar converts of the twentieth Century. He was involved in the socialist and spiritualist movements only to discover that, 'the awakening of the Domini canes, the Hounds of The Lord, meant that the hunt was up once more; the hunt for the souls of men; and that religion of that realistic sort was anything but dead. (Chesterton G. K., 1950, p. 136) He converted to Catholicism in 1922 having become a practising member of the Church of England at the turn of the century, under the influence of his wife and his good friend, Conrad Noel (the Red Vicar of Thaxted), Chesterton only made the movement into the Church of Rome after a lifelong process of conversion.

Chesterton grew up in a Unitarian household and his parents irregularly took him and his brother, Cecil,[411] to listen to Stopford Augustus Brooke, a vicar who had abandoned the Church of England because he no longer believed in miracles. (Ker, 2011, p. 13) Thus from the beginning Chesterton was a member of that skeptical community which would yield up so many of the converts to the new religions in the *fin de siècle* era. As he explained, following his eventual conversion to Catholicism, his Unitarian upbringing made him fairer to Catholics. '[T]he liberal and Universalist atmosphere of my family, of Stopford Brooke and the Unitarian preachers that followed, [meant] that I was always just sufficiently enlightened to be out of the reach of Maria

[411] Also a convert to Catholicism, Cecil Chesterton became a Catholic in 1912 before dying in France from complications in December 1918. Cecil Chesterton will always be associated with his part in the Marconi scandal in which he was sued for libel after accusing a number of the members of the Liberal government of insider trading. Ironically, Cecil Chesterton's main adversary in this matter, Godfrey Isaacs would also later become a Catholic. (Pearce, 1999, pp. 67-68)

Monk.'[412] (Chesterton, 1990a, p. 35) Yet at the same time, the very liberalism that spurned nonsensical prejudice also admitted any number of religious impulses, even those more mystical than the Christianity that was deemed too unrealistic. 'I had all the difficulties that a heathen would have had in becoming a Catholic in the fourth century. I had very few of the difficulties that a Protestant had, from the seventeenth to the nineteenth.' (Chesterton, 1990a, pp. 49-52)

In his autobiography he admits that throughout his period of youthful development his mind was somewhat chaotically wrestling with the ultimate concerns. 'All this time very queer things were groping and wrestling inside my own undeveloped mind…' (Chesterton G. K., 1936, p. 79) Ironically the agnostic creeds of Unitarianism would lead him into the world of spiritualism where he 'blundered into rather queer and uncomfortable corners' of the movement. (p. 86) While studying at the Slade School, part of London's University College, Chesterton's atheism took him through a period of 'moral anarchy' in which, dissatisfied with the third-rate materialists, he moved closer to 'the luxurious horrors of paganism.' It was there that he 'dug low enough to discover the devil.' (p. 93)[413] In a curious twist the liberality of his Unitarianism allowed him to discover the possibility of mysticism.[414] These discoveries led him to the optimistic conclusion that even the nightmare of existence was exciting and worthy of

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[412] Monk published the *Awful Disclosures of Maria Monk* which set down the abuses she had suffered in a Canadian convent. The book was a hoax but was greedily enjoyed by 19th century no-popery groups. Written in a simple style, the author frequently demurs telling everything because of her sense of propriety. 'I shall not tell what was transacted at such times, under the pretence of confessing, and receiving absolution from sin; far more sin was often incurred than pardoned; and crimes of a deep dye were committed, while trifling irregularities in childish ceremonies, were treated as serious offences. I cannot persuade myself to speak plainly on such a subject, as I must offend the virtuous ear. I can only say that suspicion cannot do any injustice to the priests, because their sins cannot be exaggerated.' (Monk, 1836, p. 89) However she plucks up necessary courage to reveal some impressive scandals such as nuns living as sex slaves for the priests and any infant offspring being baptised and then buried in lime and some of the nuns being killed in order that the convent might secure their family fortunes. It was later revealed that during the period under question, Monk had been in the Magdalene Asylum and that many of the other figures in the story were in the asylum with her. (Reese, 1836, p. 647) Investigators at the time concluded that she had been convinced that she had been in a convent and manipulated into writing the account of her time there. Indeed it becomes clear that many of the events she details were probably half-remembered events from her time in the asylum. For instance she speaks of gags and restraints. 'I was once much shocked, on entering the room for the examination of conscience, at seeing a nun hanging by a cord from a ring in the ceiling, with her head downward. Her clothes had been tied round with a leathern strap, to keep them in their place, and then she had been fastened in that situation, with her head at some distance from the floor. … This nun [had] for some fault had been condemned to this punishment.' (Monk, 1836, p. 26)

[413] He would later argue that the problem with spiritualism is that it is so vulnerable to the diabolical. 'The real objection to Spiritualism is that it calls entirely upon unknown Gods ─ that is, upon any spirits that may be strolling about... Spiritualists do not worship gods; they advertise for gods. They lay themselves open to evil.' (Cited in Ker, 2011, pp. 26-27)

[414] This is not an entirely unusual movement see ft.11, chapter one.

thanksgiving when compared to *nothing*. (p. 94) It might well be argued that this discovery contained the seeds of his later conversion to Christianity; it was in Christianity that he discovered to whom the thanks were owed. Certainly in the light of his conversion, Chesterton claimed that his early sense of mysticism was a foreshadowing of his later conversion.

> I was all groping and groaning and travailing with an inchoate and half-baked philosophy of my own, which was very nearly the reverse of the remark that where there is nothing there is God. The truth presented itself to me, rather, in the form that where there is anything there is God. Neither statement is adequate in philosophy; but I should have been amazed to know how near in some ways was my Anything to the *Ens* of St. Thomas Aquinas. (Chesterton G. K., 1936, p. 150)

Chesterton's brief encounter with Socialism was also a product of his liberalism. He was the ultimate democrat. He once argued that democracy should ensure that communities 'keep the politicians near enough to kick them. The villagers who met under the village tree could also hang their politicians to the tree. It's terrible to contemplate how few politicians are hung today.' (Cited in Ker, 2011, p. 444)[415] A crucial influence on Chesterton's Socialism came in the form of Robert Blatchford's *Merrie England* which was published while Chesterton was still at school. Perhaps what appealed to him was that Blatchford[416] rejected theoretical disputations, preferring a didactic form of fiction that applied everyday examples and parables. It was lauded as 'horse sense in tinker's English.' (Cited in Mutch, 2005, p. 83) In other words, it utilised a form of polemicism that can be found in Chesterton's own novels. The book was written as a series of letters addressed to a working-class liberal named John Smith, a man of sturdy good sense, a man after Chesterton's own heart, while its rejection of party politics supported his own instinctual defence of individualism; 'under socialism people would have peace and time to be individuals instead of clerks.' Yet for Chesterton his instinctual liberalism made him wary of socialism. As he later explained:

[415] His wife Francis described the day Chesterton preached at St Paul's Covent Garden for the Christian Social Union, as 'one of the proudest days of my life.' (Ker, 2011, p. 144)
[416] A disciple of William Morris and, briefly a member of the Fabians and a number of other *fin de siècle* Socialist groups including the ILP of which he was a founding member in Manchester. (See Mutch, 2005, pp. 85-86)

> I called myself a Socialist; because the only alternative to being a Socialist was not being a Socialist. And not being a Socialist was a perfectly ghastly thing. It meant being a small-headed and sneering snob, who grumbled at the rates and the working classes; or some hoary horrible old Darwinian who said the weakest must got to the wall. But in my heart I was a reluctant Socialist. (1936, p. 111)

Chesterton was undoubtedly attracted to the intensely social nature of Blatchford's Clarion Socialism. Blatchford once wrote: 'The people will meet - that is the main thing. We shall see each other face to face, feel each other shoulder to shoulder, hear each other voice to voice, trust each other soul to soul, and we shall go away open eyed and conscious of a change.' (Cited in Wright, 1990, p. 75) However, he was soon wary of Socialism's devotion to the state and its need to rely on authority. As he later wrote, socialism 'is the very reverse of anarchy; it is an extreme enthusiasm for authority... For [in the Socialist state] the Government provides everything; and it is absurd to ask a Government to provide an opposition.'[417] (1926, p. 8)

As with his brush with Spiritualism, Chesterton's response was to create his own version of this new religion. This time his Socialism led him not to the Socialist state, it led him to take on the capitalist excesses of the ruling classes. He was pro-Boer during the Boer War for the simple reason that he deplored British bullying of smaller nations for the sake of its trade interests. This perception would, to some degree, shape his sympathies with the Irish nationalist cause. However, in the years before the Great War, Chesterton had noticed that many of the virtues that attracted him to Spiritualism and Socialism were actually the virtues of Christianity. That those progressives who joined him in criticizing the government over the Boers and the Irish were actively 'defending against the new ethic of Nietzsche the old ethic of Naboth.' (Chesterton G.

[417] The full quote is worthy of study. 'Socialism is a system which makes the corporate unity of society responsible for all its economic processes, or all those affecting life and essential living. If anything important is sold, the Government has sold it; if anything important is given, the Government has given it; if anything important is even tolerated, the Government is responsible for tolerating it. This is the very reverse of anarchy; it is an extreme enthusiasm for authority. It is in many ways worthy of the moral dignity of the mind; it is a collective acceptance of very complete responsibility. But it is silly of Socialists to complain of our saying that it must be a destruction of liberty. It is almost equally silly of Anti-Socialists to complain of the unnatural and unbalanced brutality of the Bolshevist Government in crushing a political opposition. A Socialist Government is one which in its nature does not tolerate any true and real opposition. For there the Government provides everything; and it is absurd to ask a Government to provide an opposition.' (Chesterton G. K., 1926, p. 8)

K., 1936, p. 45) Later he came to the conclusion that what he admired among the new creeds were the Christian virtues developed, generally to the exclusion of others.

> ‘And I saw pretty much what it all really meant. There was no Theistic Church; there was no Theosophical Brotherhood; there were not Ethical Societies; there were no New Religions. But I saw Israel scattered on the hills as sheep that have not a shepherd; and I saw a large number of the sheep run about bleating eagerly in whatever neighbourhood it was supposed that a shepherded might be found.’ (Chesterton G. K., 1936, p. 175)

Chesterton’s growing acceptance of the Church and its historical claims was essentially reached via his judgment of the limitations of the ‘new religions’. ‘It was the secularists who drove me to theological ethics, by themselves destroying any sane or rational possibility of secular ethics.’ (Chesterton G. K., 1936, p. 181) The more he pondered the Christian virtues the more he became convinced that Sacramental Christianity was necessary in order to practice them. In his autobiography he explained that he became Catholic ‘to get rid of my sins.’ (p. 329) He also sought the Catholic Church because of its unity and authority. Where, to Chesterton the New Religions often focused on one truth, or where Anglicanism seemed to offer truths as alternatives; to him the Catholic Church presented a cohesive and structured system of truth. ‘I have only found one creed that could not be satisfied with a truth, but only with the Truth, which is made of a million such truths and yet is one.’(p. 338)

Chesterton was received into the Church on July 30th, 1922. Perhaps fittingly it was next to a pub; a small tin-shed that stood among the outhouses of the Railway hotel in Beaconsfield and served as a church for the Catholic population on Sundays. (Ker, 2011, p. 473) Writing to his mother on the day of his conversion Chesterton explained that he had come to the same conclusion as his brother; that the modern crises could only be dealt with from the church. ‘The fight for the family and the free citizen and everything decent must now be waged by [the] one fighting form of Christianity.’ (Cited in Ker, 2011, p. 476) He had very slowly found in Catholicism the adamantine expression of all his instinctual beliefs regarding justice and the proper ordering of society in relation to the individual. On the day of his reception he composed a poem to celebrate his conversion. It neatly sums his attitude to his long conversion.

After one moment when I bowed my head
And the whole world turned over and came upright,
And I came out where the old road shone white,
I walked the ways and heard what all men said,
Forests of tongues, like autumn leaves unshed,
Being not unlovable but strange and light;
Old riddles and new creeds, not in despite
But softly, as men smile about the dead.
The sages have a hundred maps to give
That trace their crawling cosmos like a tree,
They rattle reason out through many a sieve
That stores the sand and lets the gold go free:
And all these things are less than dust to me
Because my name is Lazarus and I live.
(Cited in Ker, 2011, p. 475)

Forty five years after Thompson published his poem, Edward Upward published his first novel, *Journey to the Border*. Though shamelessly didactic, the novel is interesting in that it employs the same understanding of a conversion as can be found in Thompson's poem, that is, the idea that there is really only one conversion destination and that all other possible destinations are merely weak imitations: 'Ah! Fondest, blindest, weakest, / I am He whom thou seekest! / Thou dravest love from thee, who dravest Me.' (Thompson, 1908, p. 56) Interestingly, when Upward was at Corpus Christi, Cambridge he wrote poetry that was heavily influenced by the *fin de siècle* Symbolist and Decadent poets as well as the more non-conformist novels like Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* and Hale White's *The Autobiography of Mark Rutherford*. Upward had joined the Communist Party in 1932 following his gradual encapsulation by Leninist doctrines over the previous two years. (Kohlmann, 2013, pp. 2, 3) In his contribution to Crossman's *The God that Failed*, Spender suggested that, in another age, Upward would probably have been a country parson, such was his vaguely mystical attitude. However his faith in Communism was

absolute. ‘Chalmers[418] had a simple and clear point of view. Unemployment, war and nearly all the evils of the time, including sexual jealousy and the problems of writers, were due to the capitalist system. The cure was to abolish capitalism and establish Communism.’ (Crossman, 2001, p. 234) Upward was one of the last to leave the party but, such was the depth of his conversion, he only did so because he believed that ‘it was becoming another Social Democratic organisation.’ Outside the party he described himself as a Marxist-Leninist and believed that while perhaps revolution wouldn’t come the general question of state power ‘is going to come up.’ (Munton & Young, 1981, p. 43)

Upward’s *Journey to the Border* was ultimately another of those bildungsroman in which the protagonist works his way towards a conversion. The novel begins with a young intellectual finding himself in a ‘faked and isolated world incompletely retrieved from the eighteenth century.’ (Upward, 1994, p. 11) In other words, he is a tutor working for an over-bearing aristocratic wastrel named Mr. Parkin and the crisis of the moment is that he doesn’t want to be taken to the local races with the family. Standing on the threshold of adulthood, the protagonist, known throughout as ‘the tutor’, fears that his cowardice has transformed him into a lackey who perpetuates this aristocratic world. ‘[H]e had deliberately chosen to be a lackey, had been active, not passive, had almost fallen over himself in his shy hurry to comply with what he assumed the Parkins wanted.’ (p. 19) The tutor’s guilt at his own complicity in perpetuating this world is manifested in the desire to develop some form of purification ritual, ‘he would symbolically wash off all the dismal servilities if the past three months… it would be the beginning of a new technique, a first step towards solving the problem of how to live in this house.’ (p. 12)

The central tension of the novel emerges from the problem of how to live in ‘this house’, a thinly disguised metaphor for the challenge facing leftist intellectuals beginning life in an overwhelmingly conservative England. As the novel progresses ‘the tutor’ adopts various techniques that will allow him to live ‘in this house’ and, with each technique, the landscape changes and he sees everything in a completely new light. Initially he resists the lure of conversion by wondering, ‘wasn’t it possible that the tutor had become a social

[418] This was Isherwood’s name for Upward in his memoir *Lions and shadows: An Education in the Twenties* (1938). Spender uses it both in *World Within World* and his essay in *The God that Failed.*

hypochondriac…? Was anything that happened in this house worth going to extremes about?' (p. 25)

His first technique or conversion destination is basic escapism into delusion which is described in terms of a vaguely mystical immanentist religion. 'He would change his so-called surroundings, he would not only think and feel differently, he would see and touch and hear differently, as he wanted to, happily.' (Upward, 1994, p. 32) A steam-roller that they pass en-route to the race-course seems to threaten Mr. Parkin and the tutor's imagination transforms it from a symbol of his will into a source of what theologians might call actual grace. 'Its boldness, its simplicity, its power were what the tutor had wanted to see… the steam roller would still be there animating him from the outside with its boldness, simplicity and power.' (p. 37) Upward develops the idea that escapism is essentially religious throughout the novel. Initially he worries that he lacks faith in its vision. His conscience accuses him of being 'rather strained and saintly' and upon seeing the steam roller he becomes convinced that his serenity 'would last. It would last for ever. For ever and ever.' (p. 43) Rather pointedly, delusional serenity is also practised by the Anglo-Catholic curate who also seems to unnerve Mr. Parkin. At the end of the novel, having himself converted to the worker's cause, the tutor seems to mock, with his own stern reality, the 'bemused intensity' of the curate's gaze, which delighted in spiritual consolations despite existing in a vale of tears. (pp. 130-131)

Arriving at the racecourse the mysterious M.F.H. (Master of Fox Hounds), having been discussed by Parkin and his neighbour on the trip, is slowly revealed as the mysterious Fascist leader who is seeking to control the nation with his violent reactionism. The malevolence of M.F. H. is so great that the tutor, though repeatedly attempting to escape the racecourse and society in general, feels forced to acknowledge the cunning duplicity of the local capitalist. He suddenly interrupts the friendly nattering of a wealthy neighbor by declaring: 'The M.F.H. provides nothing. His father stole a fortune from the miners and now his agents are using the money as a means of stealing another fortune from them. The only people who really provide anything are the miners themselves.' (Upward, 1994, p. 48)

As he wanders around the racecourse the tutor's vision constantly changes and he worries that he is going mad. These hallucinations represent the delusions of escapism. They occur most

frequently in the refreshment marquee, accessible only to the more privileged classes. Yet no matter how mad he fears he is becoming, the iron logic of justice, demanding that the workers control the means of production and rejecting the barbarous Fascism, becomes like the hound following the tutor with unhurrying chase. Such is its power that it interrupts his meditations on capitalist excess and involuntarily spills out into conversation.

> Interesting people. In other words moneyed people. Twisters… Wearing bishop's gaiters and delivering an oily oration in memory of a titled murderer of Indian tribesmen. All that such people said and thought and were and did owed its existence to the poverty and suffering of the working class… he became aware that while he had been thinking he also had been speaking. He had felt so angry that he hadn't clearly realised it before. How much he had said aloud he didn't know. (Upward, 1994, p. 51)

After naked self-delusion, the next technique for living in 'this house' is an imprecise form of Freudian psychology which is proposed by a chance acquaintance in the refreshment marquee. The Marquee is central to the story as a symbol for upper-class privilege; it acts as a meeting place for the Fascists, it is the point of entrance for the M.F.H. and it is a constant refuge from the working classes who mill about the rest of the course. A young man, known as Gregory Mavors, explains to the tutor that 'from childhood up we are taught that our natural desires are evil, that we must control them, deny them room to grow. But they will not be denied… There is only one sin, and that is disobedience to our desires… they are God.' (Upward, 1994, pp. 79,80) The trick then is to give in to one's desires which, in the case of the tutor, are to earn popularity among the upper middle classes and to simply enjoy a privileged life. However the hounding crises are not far away and Mavors warns the tutor about science and reason which invariably lead to Communist conclusions. 'You will examine social conditions and discover that they are morbid. You will diagnose poverty, malnutrition, overcrowding, injustice and crime.' (p. 83) The trick is to focus on unreason and pursue personal desires rather than trying to cure the world 'with further doses of reason and control, the result will be universal death.' (p. 84)

The Tutor's desires lead him to consider a life of sexual liberation which is presented as another form of escape. He finds a beautiful woman offering him a life of Dionysian pleasure. 'We will go away together. We will live together. In a golden land. Among the pergolas and the fountains.

You will come with me, won't you, my sweet?' (Upward, 1994, p. 97) When she kisses him he finds that 'he was in her power, wholly dependent on her, humbled with abject longing.' (Upward, 1994, p. 97) As soon as the tutor decides upon a life of the senses, his beloved capriciously reveals that she is engaged to one of the unthinking Fascists and his attempts to woo her are broken up by the entrance of M.F.H. and the commencement of a Fascist meeting in the tent. The hounding crises have interrupted again. The ugly passion of the meeting convinces the tutor of the coming Fascist reality and the impossibility of his plan of escape.

> Darkness pressed in upon him once again, lifted him. Horror of the future alone supported him, kept his consciousness alive. He would be gassed, bayoneted in the groin, slowly burned, his eyeballs punctured by wire barbs… the horror of isolation among a drilled herd of dehumanized murderers. The death of all poetry, of all love, of all happiness. (Upward, 1994, p. 105)

His initial desire is to become a secular hermit, 'life would begin – day after day after day. Innocent walks, reading contemplation, poetic dreaming. What about food? Don't consider that now.'(Upward, 1994, p. 108) In the face of the Fascist threat his escapism has become nakedly impractical and transforms into a type of madness. As he vacillates between joining the Fascists and suicide he literally undergoes an experience of paralysis. In the midst of this experience the mystical voice of Communism speaks to him. 'Now nothing existed. But out of nothing something was born. A noise, a voice. Ghostly and distinct, it came from high among the fir trees. It spoke into his ear.' (p. 111) This voice, in a mysterious Socratic dialogue, helps Upward face up to reality, to abandon escapism and accept what is presented as being the only possible solution.

> 'There is no way out.'
> '… there is a way.'
> 'Where?'
> '…you know where.'
> 'Yes, I know where.'
> '… the way of the Internationalist Movement for Working Class Power. You should get in touch with the British Section of the Internationalists. …Your best hope of becoming

> as sane as you are capable of being will be by putting your political work first always instead of preoccupying yourself continually with improving your state of mind.' (Upward, 1994, pp. 116-117)

It's not quite like the voice from Thompson's poem 'round me like the bursting sea' declaring 'all things fly, for thou fliest me!' (Thompson, 1908, p. 56) but it performs much the same function. It becomes the insistent voice of reason leading the individuals towards the only conversion destination capable of saving their soul; leading them towards reality. The mystical voice, at this point becomes very practical, telling the tutor, 'you could go to the nearest newsagent who stocks their daily paper, and you could discover from this the address of their Headquarters, and then ask to be put in touch with their nearest Branch.' (p. 119) The novel ends with the tutor walking down the hill on a road that has earlier been described as taking one out of the village and towards the sea. (. p. 135) Thus he ends the novel moving into the world with his new convictions and his overwhelming sense of vocation, ready to work for the Workers.[419]

According to Humphrey Carpenter, W. H. Auden's Communism 'was distinctly second-hand', with many of his ideas coming from Edward Upward. (Carpenter, 1981, p. 150) Whilst this is true in the sense that much of the Communism that can be found in his poetry was learnt from Upward, it does not mean that it was insincere. A more useful connection between the two can be found in similarities between Auden's progress to Communism and that of the tutor in Upward's novel, *Journey to the Border*. Carpenter traces Auden's journey to Communism in his biography, identifying two preceding conversions. He went through a stage in which Freud was his main influence and this was followed by a stage in which he was influenced by D. H. Lawrence. This period culminated in the publication of *The Orators*, of which Auden later said, 'It is meant to be a critique of the Fascist outlook [I.e. Lawrence's outlook which amounted to something like Fascism] but from its reception among my contemporaries and on rereading it myself, I see that it can, most of it, be interpreted as a favourable exposition.' (pp. 129-130) All the while that Auden was going through these phases he was developing a political

[419] His sense of vocation is so powerful that all other considerations are subservient to it. Though he returns to his true-love who had earlier left him because he refuse to commit to the worker's cause; it is with a changed attitude. 'He would go and speak to her. He would tell her he had at last decided to act up to his opinions. Perhaps he and she would be able to work for socialism together. Then they could become lovers, though Love in itself could never be sufficient for them. If they wanted their love to survive they must always make the socialist cause their first concern.' (Upward, 1994, p. 125)

consciousness and, hounded by the events in Europe, was becoming increasingly sympathetic towards the Communist faith.[420]

In 1926 while he was in his first summer term at Oxford he supported the strikers out of sheer contrariness. Working for the T.U.C he met and befriended Tom Driberg who subsequently introduced Auden to T. S. Eliot and *The Waste Land*. Auden saw the poem as the definitive expression of the period. Writing in the *Southern Review* in 1940 he opined, 'Whatever its character the provincial England of 1907, when I was born, was Tennysonian in outlook; whatever its outlook the England of 1925 when I went up to Oxford was *The Waste Land* in character.'(Cited in Carpenter, 1981, p. 57) Following Oxford, Auden went to Germany where a sense of the Waste Land was formalized into a political understanding of a decaying Europe. In Berlin, despite the attractions of a pederastic underworld, the 'seriousness of the political situation' hardened his 'vague and rather sentimental sympathy with the Communist aims' into something more akin to belief. (Carpenter, 1981, p. 101) Witnessing street fighting on May Day of 1929, '[he] suddenly realized that the whole foundations of life were shaking.'(Carpenter, 1981, p. 102) His Communist sympathies were hardened still further when he took up a teaching post in Scotland and witnessed the poverty of the Glaswegian slums.

Writing on Easter Sunday 1930 he began a new poem that he originally entitled 'Locksley Hall' after its Tennysonian model. Eventually it was published in *Poems* as poem XXXI. 'Get there if you can and see the land you once were proud to own / though the roads have almost vanished and the expresses never run: / smokeless chimneys, damaged bridges, rotting wharves and choked canals…' (Auden, 'XXXI.' In E. Mendelson, (Ed.), 1977, p. 47) Auden contrasts the decay of the depressed areas with the privileged life of 'theatre, playing tennis, driving motor cars' and 'in our continental villas, mixing cocktails for a cad.' (Auden, 1977, p. 48) Like Upward he posits this life as being delusional and the wisdom upon which it was built as dangerously seductive.

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[420] Given his constantly shifting root-realities, it is somewhat unsurprising that his readers found his writing during this period particularly difficult. Reviewing *Poems,* Naomi Mitchison (the Scottish novelist, Socialist and Eugenecist) wrote, 'I must...advise people to read this book and not to get angry at once with the unintelligibility, but to re-read and accept it as beautiful and a sign of the times, and hope that Auden will go on and keep un-muddled – for I am almost sure his ideas are clear, though he chooses to express them at present in unexplained symbols, perhaps too economically. If this is really only the beginning we have perhaps a master to look forward to.' (Carpenter, 1981, p. 117)

> These were boon companions who devised the legends of our tombs,
> These who have betrayed us nicely while we took them to our rooms.
> Newman, Ciddy, Plato, Fronny, Pascal, Bowdler, Baudelaire,
> Doctor Frommer, Mrs. Allom Freud, the Baron, and Flaubert.
> Lured with their compelling logic, charmed with beauty of their
> verse,
> With their loaded sideboards whispered 'Better join us, life is worse.'
> (Auden, 1977, p. 48)

Like many of the intellectuals, Auden was embarrassed by what he saw as the frivolity of intellectual speculation which he likened to 'Lecturing on navigation while the ship is going down.' (Auden, 1977, p. 48) The poem was, in essence a warning that the interwar narrative had reached a climacteric and that it demanded action, a concept that Auden came to equate with the act of living itself. It was the end of laissez-faire**.**

Like the tutor in *Journey to the Border,* Auden was also attracted to the idea of escapism, finding the constant political crises overwhelming. In Upward's novel, the femme fatale, with the 'deliberately yearning face' and the 'silk-covered bosom' suggests that she and the tutor escape together to Iceland. 'Anywhere. Everywhere. Honolulu. London. Now. Just as we are. Cape Wrath. Better Still – Reykjavik.' (Upward, 1994, p. 98) This reminds the tutor that he made a similar offer to, Ann, the girl he loves but she was too committed to the worker's cause to go. (Upward, 1994, 60) The novel was written in 1938 and one wonders if Upward had in mind Auden's trip to Iceland with MacNeice in 1936, before briefly dabbling in the Spanish Civil War the following year. There is little doubt that Upward would have considered it as a gross form of escapism. Such a view is not entirely unfounded. As Humphrey Carpenter put it,

> Auden had several motives for the journey. One was sheer curiosity to see Iceland, which had been, as he put it, 'holy ground' in his imagination since childhood, thanks to his father's enthusiasm for all things Icelandic. But he seems to have hoped that by distancing himself a little, both geographically and culturally, from his own life and from European society and its crises he might obtain a better view of himself and his

> environment. There was too, an element of sheer fun in the project; it was to be a holiday, a temporary escape. (1981, p. 196)

And yet Auden's Letter to R. H. S. Crossman reveals a complex reaction to the crises. Even from the vantage point of remote Iceland they begin to seem both unreal and yet inevitable; romanticised and yet inescapable.

> Until indeed the Markafljōt I see
> Wasting these fields, is no glacial flood
> But history, hostile, Time the destroyer
> Everywhere washing our will, winding through Europe
> An attack, a division, shifting its fords.
>
> Flowing through Oxford too, past dons of good will,
> Stroking their truths away like a headache
> Till only the Unicorn and the fabulous bogey
> Are real, and distinctly human only
> The anarchist's loony refusing cry:─
>
> "Harden the heart as the might lessens.
> Fame shall be ours of a noble defence
> In a narrow place. No choices are good.
> And the word of fate can never be altered
> Though it be spoken to our own destruction."
> (Auden & MacNeice, 1996, p. 245)

Like Upward he also worried that his bourgeoisie upbringing precluded him from involvement in the movement. Where Upward's tutor worried 'my upbringing, my education, my social origin – won't these tell against me?' (1994, p. 117) Auden simply assumed that the revolution was not for him.

> Remember you're no old soldier
> Remember that you are afraid
> Remember that you'd be no use at all

Behind the barricade
You belong to your world that has had its day
('September 1932.' In W. H. Auden, 1977, p. 125)

Auden's poetry during the early and mid-thirties reveals a growing acceptance of the Communist explanation for the interwar crises and the Communist predictions as to how these crises could be resolved. Communism gave him an interpretative framework when it seemed to be most needed. Indeed, in the 1935 play, *The Dog Beneath the Skin*, that Auden wrote with Christopher Isherwood, the confident attitude of the convinced convert is clearly discernible in the chorus's exhortations at the end of the play. Instead, given that Auden wrote all the verse lines in the play, it is safe to assume that the attitudes expressed are very much his attitudes. (Valgemae, 1968, p. 375)

Mourn rather for yourselves; and your inability to
make up your minds
Whose hours of self-hatred and contempt were all
your majesty and crisis
Choose therefore that you may recover: both your
charity and your place
Determining not this that we have lately witnessed:
but another country
Where grace may grow outward and be given praise
Beauty and virtue be vivid there.
(Auden & Isherwood, 1935, pp. 179-180)[421]

Stan Smith argued that the dominant theme in Auden's poetry during the thirties was 'the need for an existential leap of faith' that would liberate him from the establishment whose credibility had been destroyed by the popularly accepted interwar narrative. (S. Smith, 2013, p. 42) The Chorus, while urging the audience to take the leap and choose this other utopian country, explains with one line from the *Communist Manifesto* how this utopia is to be achieved. 'To each his need: from each his power.' (Auden & Isherwood, 1935, p. 180) This same sense of

[421] This quote was also partially cited by Smith, 2013, pp. 40-41

Communist conviction was also presented in *Look Stranger!* a collection of poems published the following year. Whilst Auden had altered the more nakedly political verses, his poetry still catalogues the crises while his epilogue still argues for a Communist solution by virtue of pointed references to the electrification of Gorki. (S. Smith, 2013, pp. 43-44) As the epilogue concludes, the 'wish to wound' currently has power but the work of intellectuals like Freud, Kafka and Lawrence who reveal the guilt of 'the weapon-making' (that classic interwar bogeyman) and 'whose reproaches shewed us what our vanity has chosen,' will usher in a brighter future. 'And tomorrow comes. It's a world. It's a way.' (W. H. Auden, *Look Stranger*!, 1936, pp. 67-68)

And yet even Auden's Communism, so confidently expressed in the mid-thirties, was itself a temporary stage on his long road back to Anglo-Catholicism. For Stephen Spender, Auden's Communism, like his Freudianism, like his Lawrentianism and ultimately like his revived Christianity, was a response to the same problem. Writing of Auden's conversions and their effect on his poetry he said:

> Auden's answers, which have been psychoanalysis, political revolution, universal love and Christian dogma, have never quite lost their arbitrary, experimental quality, as though they were repeated attempts to understand the nature of a problem, and to solve it by the arrangement of its elements according to certain hypotheses, nevertheless the problem itself is evermore profoundly understood and brilliantly illustrated. And the problem is Man in this Century. (Spender, 1977, p. 55)

This problem of 'Man in this Century' links both the Catholic and Communist conversion movements. The Communists were concerned with 'man' in the sense of 'mankind', while for the Catholic convert the concern was with man as the individual and his ability to live in this century. For both groups there was a fundamental disharmony that had been unmistakably revealed by the insistent crises of the age.

The Encapsulation Experience

If an engagement with the interwar narrative of crises and decay inspired conversions to the Communist party, many members still outlined a process of encapsulation whereby they were completely convinced by the doctrinal arguments presented to them; they were able to see with

their instructor's perspective. In light of the level of commitment they later showed, perhaps it is to be expected that the spies were the Communist converts who seem to have been most completely encapsulated. This however is not surprising. The conversion that is a response to a single experience is apt to fade as memory of that experience fades. In this situation old root realities have proven unsustainable and new ones have been adopted but often only in relation to this one experience. As we shall see in chapter eight many of the volunteers in the Spanish civil war found their new root-realities, inspired by an experience of the interwar narrative, were unable to withstand the new experiences encountered in the war and for a significant majority disillusion became a key part of their experience. The encapsulated convert, on the other hand, developed new root-realities that amounted to a complete interpretative framework and subsequent events were often able to be assimilated through this framework.

Anthony Blunt is perhaps the most mysterious of the Cambridge Spies. Miranda Carter described him as an enigma. 'Blunt had spent much of his life in flight from being known and understood. He was a habitual compartmentaliser and withdrawer from the world... Blunt left extraordinarily few personal traces of himself. It was as if he had spent years trying to excise himself from the record.' (Carter, 2001, p.xvi) It is therefore difficult to get a clear impression of his conversion to Communism. However, in a brief autobiography that he wrote for his NKVD handlers in 1943, Blunt gave an insight into what can moght be described as a passionless and clinical conversion. And yet, despite his later claims to the contrary, it was a conversion that lasted.

Blunt dated his interest in Communism to his return to Cambridge in January of 1934, explaining that before then he was 'an 'art for art's sake' type with no interest in politics.' (Cited in West & Tsarev, 1998, p. 129) Despite this rare otherworldly sensibility, by 1934, 'events which took place in Germany had begun to penetrate even my intellectual isolation, and I was becoming dimly aware that my own position wasn't quite satisfactory.'(West & Tsarev, 1998, p.129) In this state of mind he arrived back at Cambridge only to find that 'the intellectuals whom I had known before I went away were all coming under the influence of Communism.'(West & Tsarev, 1998, p.129) In many ways Blunt's progress towards the party mirrors the conversion process that Chesterton developed when explaining his own conversion to Catholicism. As he explains in the quote that begins this chapter, the individual is first convinced to take the Church seriously enough to 'be fair to it' then, he develops a fondness for its particular interpretation

before drawing closer and being encapsulated. Chesterton, believing that conversion to Catholicism takes on all 'the tragic and menacing grandeur of a great love affair', uses the word entrapment rather than encapsulation. (Chesterton, 1990a, p. 78)

Perhaps in Blunt's case entrapment is the mot juste. He admits that the events in Europe and the conversions of his friends made him be fair to Communism. On the topics of a number of non-political questions their views were suddenly more than simply interesting, they were scientific. It was as if Communism had 'provided a real basis for understanding the subject correctly and in a scientific manner.' (Cited in West & Tsarev, 1998, pp. 129-130) From here it was a small leap to listening to 'various discussions on political topics of the contemporary situation' and becoming 'convinced that the Marxist point of view in the given matter made sense.' (West & Tsarev, 1998, p. 130)

Chesterton also claimed in his book on conversion that one finds a certain completeness inside the Church; that it contains the best of all the other faiths. 'Christendom is in the literal sense a continent. We come to feel that it contains everything, even the things in revolt against itself.' (Chesterton, 1990a, p. 98) Blunt identified Klugmann as one of the Communists who most influenced him. (West & Tsarev, 1998, p. 130) Klugmann made very similar claims for the Communist faith as those made by Chesterton for the Catholic faith. Klugmann would tell Blunt and others that 'Communism was heir to all that was best in Liberalism, Socialism, Conservatism, Rationalism, Catholicism and Anglicanism.' (Rycroft, 1985, p. 210)[422] As revealed by Charles Rycroft's subsequent memoir, Klugmann would tell his wealthier catechumans that 'it was their revolutionary duty and destiny to spread the gospel from whatever station it had pleased the dialectic of history to call them to.' (Rycroft, 1985, p. 210)

Blunt, like many Catholic converts, found that suddenly all subjects were opened up by the interpretative framework his new faith had provided. To quote Chesterton once more, '[t]he Catholic convert has for the first time a starting-point for straight and strenuous thinking. He has for the first time a way of testing the truth in any question that he raises.' (1990a, p. 106) For Blunt, Marxism seemed to open up history in general and art history in particular; soon he was using the pages of *The Spectator* to apply his nascent Marxism to art history. (Cited in West &

[422] Also cited in Carter, 2001, p. 122.

Tsarev, 1998, p. 136) Klugmann was wont to say, 'Communism made everything rich', and the enthusiasm with which Blunt adopted Marxist interpretations of the past suggests that he agreed. (Carter, 2001, p. 125) Blunt would later tell Burgess that Marxism 'was a purifying corrective force in every branch of decadent bourgeoisie endeavour – the creative arts, the sciences, history and philosophy as well as politics…' (Boyle, 1979, p. 77)

Arnold Deutsch, Blunt's handler, wrote to Theodore Malley in Moscow describing him with great accuracy.

> TONY [his unsubtle code name] is a typical English intellectual. Speaks very highly flown English. Looks very feminine. A pederast. MADCHEN[423] [Guy Burgess] says that with TONY it is congenital. He is very educated and clever. Communism for him is based on theory. Has several works on Marxism in the history of art. Is considerably steadier and more rational than MADCHEN. He is a simple person and without big pretensions. Can control himself, is cold and a little mannered. Is to a lesser degree connected to the Communist Party than Madchen. He would hardly give up his career for the sake of our work. He understands well the task he is to do for us and is ready to help us. (Cited in Boyle, 1979, p. 133)

Deutsch clearly knew Blunt. He knew that he was a convinced convert, a worker for the cause but, on no account, a martyr. On this point he was also proven to be insightful. When Blunt was offered the chance to defect to the Soviet Union following the defection of Burgess and Maclean, he initially claimed he could not lose access to the Château de Versailles. When pressed, he became a lot more open with his Soviet handler, 'I simply couldn't live in the Soviet Union under the conditions you are offering. I know perfectly well how your people live, and I can assure you it would be very hard, almost unbearable for me to do likewise.' (Modin, 1994, p. 222)

Deutsch, however, may well have argued that when it came to espionage martyrs were dangerous. Burgess was the more reckless and passionate type of convert, the martyr type. When Burgess was approached to work for Comintern he said that he was 'honoured and ready to

[423] This codename actually means 'little girl', a reference to his flamboyant homosexuality. (Andrew & Mitrokhin, 1999, p. 61)

sacrifice everything for the cause.' (Andrew & Mitrokhin, 1999, p. 61)[424] Burgess was difficult for the Russians to understand because he combined the earnest endeavour of a party cadre with all the bohemianism of an unabashed hedonist. In a report to the centre, Boris Krötenschield, another controller in the mid forties, described the tensions in Burgess's character.

> He is a young, interesting, clever enough, cultured, inquisitive, [a] shrewd person, reads much and knows much. But at the same time with these qualities he is untidy, goes about dirty, drinks much and leads the so-called life of the gilded youth... he is well grounded politically and theoretically... in conversation quotes Marx, Lenin and Stalin.' (West & Tsarev, 1998, p. 163)

These quotations were not merely part of a role, Burgess, like Blunt, had undergone a period of intense encapsulation while at Cambridge. His initial engagement with Communist theory, like Blunt's, came through his friendship with Klugmann. He expressed frustration that his fellow pacifists refused to campaign against the causes of war, in response to which he was told, 'if you think like that your place is in the party.' (Cited in Driberg, 1956, p. 18) Concurrently it seems, though Driberg does not bother to elucidate the intellectual chronology, Burgess's studies in history were leading him to Marxist conclusions. John Henry Newman famously claimed in his *Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine* that 'To be deep in history is to cease to be a Protestant.' (Newman, 1891, p. 8) Burgess made a similar claim for Communism in his interviews with Driberg, suggesting that his studies of the modern state led him to the conclusion that 'the State had always been the instrument by which the economically dominant group in society exercised power.'(Newman, 1891, p. 19) When Burgess discussed this with David Haden Guest he was told to read Lenin's *The State and Revolution* and found therein his own theory perfectly formulated.[425]

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[424] Following Burgess's defection to Moscow, Christopher Isherwood recalled Burgess during his days of Communist enthusiasm, prior to his recruitment. '[He] was positively naive in his envy of my good fortune in being able to visit the Communist holy land, the Mecca of the proletariat. He was most eager that we should meet as soon as I returned, so that he could share my impressions.' (Hamilton, 1955, p. 578)Yet when Hamilton returned from the Soviet Union and was critical of the regime, he noted that Burgess was unmoved. 'Little did I realise that I was in the presence of a professional paid agent, an âme damnée of the Kremlin.' (p,578)

[425] Driberg essentially shows in the story of Burgess's conversion that, as Upward's tutor was warned in *Journey to the Border*, any logical study of the world results in a Communist interpretation. This seems a little too neat. Particularly as Driberg implies that Burgess was encouraged to join the party prior to these discoveries and that despite his non-membership he would discuss politics with Klugmann and Haden Guest without them giving him

Like Blunt, Burgess found his own studies were enriched by his subsequent discovery of Karl Marx's writings. Burgess began an intense program of reading, much like Marcus Hendrycks in Monserrat's *This is the Schoolroom*. He concluded that Marx's *The 18th Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, *Class Struggles in France* and *The Civil War* were all able to open up and explain the reign of Louis Napoleon better than any of the traditional texts he had hitherto relied upon. Subsequent publications by Burgess reveal an obviously Marxist interpretation of the past. For instance, in a review of Basil Wiley's *The Seventeenth Century Background*, Burgess lauds Wiley for his ability to trace the triumph of science over religion by virtue of empiricism that began in the seventeenth century of English thought. However Burgess concludes by chiding him for not taking his progressivist logic further. 'Most historians are apt to claim that the period they are examining represents a notable *advance* on anything that has gone before; that "truth" in some way suddenly "triumphed." They are thus confronted by the materialist with the question: why did "truth" triumph at this particular moment?' (Burgess, 1934, p. 466) Wiley's failure to write in teleological terms means that his criticism is less forceful. Marxism had provided Burgess with the profound teleological terms with which to understand his life. Michael Burn, the Colditz escapee and author, described the extent of Burgess's encapsulation with Marxist theory.

> Love was the cause. Far from hopelessly, he was in love. With Marxism; more precisely with the Marxist interpretation of history. The liaison, which rendered him cocksure, prodigal of his intellectual gifts, and happy, was about to pass into a secret covenant of marriage with the USSR, bringing anxieties and ultimately death in exile; but as yet he showed no sign of stress. "History" had blessed the union. "History" had taken the place of God (as Bertrand Russell hoped that mathematics would). The Marxist testaments explained all that had ever happened, all that was happening, and all that would happen,

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any doctrinal encouragement. Either Driberg's own political sympathies or Burgess's seem at the bottom of this edifying tale of inevitable Communist conversion. The irony of Driberg's position was that when he went to Moscow to interview Burgess, he himself was recruited as an agent for the KGB. Driberg's rapacious homosexuality made him an easy target. Compromising photos of him enjoying himself in 'a large underground urinal just behind the Metropole Hotel' were shown to him and he quickly had his own KGB file bearing his own codename, LEPAGE. His first act 'was the publication in 1956 of a disingenuous study of Guy Burgess which concluded that Burgess had never been a Soviet agent. (Andrew & Mitrokhin, 1999, p. 401) This was not a difficult claim to make given the secrecy of all the evidence at that time. .

> and what each person should do to help it all along, from which Guy, adding his own colouring, got the buoyant assurance of a requited lover. (Burn, 2003)[426]

Philby, as mentioned earlier, was keenly aware of interwar narrative but his lasting faith in Communism was a product of intense study. As he wrote in the introduction to his memoir, *My Silent War*:

> 'Extensive reading and growing appreciation of the classics of European Socialism alternated with vigorous and sometimes heated discussions within the [Cambridge Union of Socialist Societies]. It was a slow and brain-racking process; my transition from a socialist viewpoint to a Communist one took two years. It was not until my last term at Cambridge, in the summer of 1933, that I threw off my last doubts.' (Philby, 2002, p.xxx)

This period of study was initially inspired by a speech given by Maurice Dobbs in the Union when he saw more hope in Moscow than in Detroit. (Knightley, 1988, p. 30) In old age, living in Moscow, Philby was able to claim that 'as I look over Moscow from my study window, I can see the solid foundations of the future I glimpsed at Cambridge.' (Philby, 2002, xxxii) Philby always admitted that he had quickly discovered the evils of Stalinist Russia but that, rather than become a 'querulous outcast of the Koestler-Crankshaw-Muggeridge variety,' he decided to stay the course. Like Hobsbawm, he too followed the Petrine argument of 'Lord, to whom shall we go? You have words of eternal life.' Like St. Peter, Philby was convinced to maintain his faith by the alternatives. 'The politics of the Baldwin Chamberlain era struck me then, as they strike me now, as much more than the politics of folly. The folly was evil.' Thus he decided to keep believing 'that the principles of the Revolution would outlive the aberration of individuals, however enormous.'(Philby, 2002, pp.xxxi-xxxii) Philby's Communist study had created a lasting foundation for his faith.

A contemporary of Maclean's at Cambridge, Christopher Gillie, told Andrew Boyle of the difficulties of Maclean's conversion. When his father died, Maclean had a crisis of conscience following the funeral. Gillie's father had preached the sermon in which he explained how Maclean senior had overcome doubts and skepticism after a night of soul-searching. Following

[426] Also cited in Holzman, M. (2013). *Guy Burgess: Revolutionary in an Old School Tie.* New York: Chelmsford Press. p. 45.

the funeral, Maclean returned to Cambridge and threw himself into the study of Marxism in order to strengthen his faith. Hitherto he had assumed that Marxism was needed to combat the obvious evils of the interwar period but now he would become consumed with 'the self-imposed task of absorbing the Gospel according to Marx.' (Boyle, 1979, p. 68)[427] The process must have been effective because very soon he had developed a reputation for his confident Marxism. Cecil describes him as being motivated by two beliefs; that he was destined to succeed 'and his faith in Marxist analysis not only for the political problems of the day, but for interpreting the whole gamut of economic, social and even artistic activity.' (1988, p. 22) Such was his passion for Marxism that, following his degree, Maclean had intended either to pursue a PhD at Cambridge or travel to the Soviet Union and become a teacher. Ironically, it was the influence of the NKVD that steered him towards a more socially acceptable and inconspicuous career in the Foreign Office. (Andrew & Mitrokhin, 1999, p. 60)

As the conversions of Waugh and Greene show, he encapsulation process was a fundamental part of most Catholic conversions. Indeed the Church's rules require that the converts receive instruction to ensure that they are reasonably conversant with the teachings of the Church. Fr John O'Connor,[428] who received Chesterton into the Church, discussed a number of special points with him before giving him a penny catechism to read through, despite his reputation of having been 'intellectually Catholic' for some time. 'It was a sight for men and angels all that Friday to see him wandering in and out of the house with his fingers in the leaves of the little book, resting it on his forearm whilst he pondered with his head on one side.' (Ker, 2011, p. 473) Encapsulation is considered essential in the conversion of Catholics whereas it was not necessarily so in the case of Communists. Many of the latter began their study of Marx only after they had joined the party and even then it was frequently an incomplete study. Consequently it is worth focusing on two of the more obvious examples of Catholic encapsulation that are provided in the conversions of the writers Alfred Noyes and Arnold Lunn, rather than reiterating the encapsulation process for each of the major converts.

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[427] Interestingly, Gillie told Boyle that Maclean claimed to have been visited by the ghost of his father during the period in which he was developing his Marxist faith. (Boyle, 1979, p. 68) Tellingly, Maclean's codename was SIROTA which is Russian for orphan, a reference to his father's death and his subsequent re-emergence as a Communist. (Andrew & Mitrokhin, 1999, p. 60)

[428] O'Connor was immortalised as the model for Chesterton's Fr. Brown.

Noyes has remained famous principally for his poem *The Highwayman* and his involvement in the Roger Casement Diaries scandal. His conversion was not entirely without personal crises, coming, as it did, the year after his wife's death, but it was essentially the result 'of a long process of thought.' (Noyes, 1953, p. 192)

> My reading had been extremely 'eclectic,' and I had no difficulty in adjusting the focus of my mind to the very different fields of vision offered by Darwin and the Bible, St. John and Voltaire, Baudelaire and George Herbert... With all this varied reading, I seemed to be increasingly conscious that, with due allowance for differences in the field of vision, there were many truths that at first sight appeared to be contradictory, yet in a complete synthesis might be perfectly compatible. (Noyes, 1953, p. 197)

For Noyes, that synthesis came when he was able to bring the discoveries of science into harmony with the claims of religion.[429] In his subsequent book, *The Unknown God*, Noyes engages with many of the intellectuals who had accelerated the progress of secularism and found that they often, unwittingly, made the same claims as those made by St. Thomas Aquinas and St. Augustine. He also found that often the arguments made by evolutionists like Darwin, Spencer, Haeckel and others were able to be clarified and even developed by the Catholic philosophers. For instance in chapter ten he notes that Haeckel's materialist pantheism is based on the assumption that there exists an 'Author of all things'. The contradictions inherent in Haeckel's work are only solved by a Thomistic understanding of the phrase, 'Author of all things'. He consequently argues that by synthesizing the philosophers with the scientists he is able to draw 'cosmos out of chaos.' (Noyes, 1934, p. 137) It was this process that led him to the conclusion that Christianity 'was the only scheme that had any pretensions to covering the ground.' (p. 369) Science had shaken Christendom but it needed the Christian explanation in order to reach firmer ontological conclusions. 'Science has not changed its austere determination; but quietly and unexpectedly it has met religion at the crossroads. Each was going its own way, and each is

[429] That synthesis meant that, like Chesterton, he claimed to have found the goodness of all the philosophies within the Church. He went even further, citing Patmore's claim that the universality of Catholicism was such that it *must* one day convert the entire world. 'In a generous eclecticism, within the bounds of her liberty, and as by some providential power within her, she gathers and serviceably adopts, as in other matters so in ritual, one thing here, another there, from various sources – Gnostic, Jewish, Pagan – to adorn and beautify the greatest act of worship the world has seen.' (Noyes, 1953, pp. 196-197)

standing with a new humility in the other's presence, before an unfathomable and eternal mystery.' (p. 13) Noyes was received into the Church in 1927.

Arnold Lunn is even less remembered today than Alfred Noyes; his principal achievement is generally held to be developing the rules for the modern slalom in 1922. However he was, as Waugh described him, 'the most tireless Catholic apologist of his generation.' ('Ronald Knox.' In E. Waugh, 2001, p. 328)[430] Lunn became an agnostic while at school, after reading Leslie Stephen's *An Agnostic's Apology*. His own researches into psychic phenomena and the events at Lourdes, as well as the philosophy of A. N. Whitehead and after him the thought of St Thomas Aquinas had shaken his materialist faith. He had come to the conclusion that agnosticism, or 'Huxleyism' as he called it, was itself a religion and not a defensible one. (Lunn, 1940, pp. 197-199) His interest in Catholicism was sparked by the very conversion movement he soon joined. He wondered how the irrational church could make so many converts among the rationalists.(Lunn, 1940, p. 211) His researches in this question led him to write *Roman Converts*, a book in which he attacked as insincere the conversions of Cardinal John Henry Newman, Cardinal Edward Manning, G. K. Chesterton, Ronald Knox and George Tyrell.

Knox's controlled reply to Lunn's overbold attack gave rise to a long correspondence in which Lunn would make arguments against the faith and Knox would respond. 'My object in this correspondence is to extract from you the best possible answers to those criticisms of Catholicism which appear to me to be most difficult to meet.' (Lunn & Knox, 1952, p. 44) Lunn's arguments centred around the scandals in the Church's history, most notably the inquisition and the Borgia Popes. He questioned the existence of Hell and the omnipotence of Christ who, at certain places, 'could work no miracles' (Mark: 6:5) and any other biblical passage that seemed to have been undermined by science. His criticisms were generally very reasonable and well researched. However one can see him slowly begining to change his mind, or at least his attitude towards the faith he had been hitherto attacking. The correspondence ended a full two years before Lunn was received into the Church by Knox.

[430] Waugh speculated that Knox might have retired from public disputations once he had provided Lunn with the arguments to take over. 'Perhaps Ronald felt that in arming Sir Arnold and putting him in the field, he had fulfilled his own combatant duties. *Difficulties* was his last purely controversial work.' ('Ronald Knox.' In E. Waugh, 2001, p. 328)

In one of the last letters he sums up his objections to the Church by wondering,

> If God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that those who believe on him should not perish, but have eternal life, why did he not provide the Church, which his Son founded, with more impressive credentials? The Church may be advancing relatively to other churches, but it is declining relatively to the world as a whole... for every convert to the Roman Catholic Church there must be ten at least who have been conscientiously anxious to discover the truth, who have examined the Roman Catholic claims, and who have rejected them. (Lunn & Knox, 1952, p. 205)[431]

This type of reasonable argument was typical of Lunn, but a change was indicated when he concluded the letter by writing, 'you see that I have already begun to get up my brief against the Day of Judgement.' (Lunn & Knox, 1952, p. 207) Lunn was by no means convinced by the end of the book. He still had significant reservations about a few doctrinal points and about the Church. He explained his conversion in a letter to Ronald Knox written in 1949 by arguing that only the Catholic Church continued to defend the doctrines of Christianity while '...communions which repudiate the divine authority of the Church [tend] to degenerate into camouflaged Unitarians' and adding that this was even 'discernible in the Church of England.' (Lunn & Knox, 1952, p. 244) Following the letters Lunn spent much time in the company of Catholics like Douglas Woodruff and Fr Martin D'Arcy and Mgr. Knox. He was received into the Church on July 13, 1933 by Knox, later explaining that if he had waited until all his difficulties were resolved he would still be waiting. (Lunn & Knox, 1952, p. 245) Having concluded that Christianity's claims were probably true, Knox's ability to defend the Church from Lunn's criticisms, which were really the hoary old Protestant criticisms, was enough to convince him that if Christ had founded a Church it was the Catholic Church.

This glimpse into the encapsulation process demonstrates two things. Firstly, they illustrate how the arguments for the Catholic Church, much like those of the Communist Party, are largely concerned with historical analysis. And secondly, it shows how it is sometimes the case that argumentation, discussion and intellectual analysis can really only take the convert so far in the

[431] Knox rejected these statistics. Using the fact that 12,000 people were being received into the Catholic Church each year he reasoned that it was highly unlikely 120,000 people were examining the Church each year, searching for truth. He argued that the ones he had met were searching for holes. (Lunn & Knox, 1952, p. 213)

case of religion, and that in the end a leap of faith, despite lingering difficulties, may be the decisive step for even the most passionate convert.

Forward from Liberalism

In his autobiography Chesterton claimed that he preferred revolutionaries to reformers, 'even when I entirely disagreed with the revolutionaries or entirely agreed with the reforms.' (1936, p. 269) Revolutionaries invariably take, if not the enchanted view, certainly the long view; the historical view. They have a large vision. The interwar crises, of which individual crises were often viewed as merely symptomatic, seemed to demand the long view. This was why reformers like Keynes seemed to fail and revolutionaries seemed to succeed; they saw the modern crises in a broader context and realised the need for radical solutions. Moreover reforms demand only consent, revolutions demand conversion.

Reformers were content with Liberal politics and Protestant religion. But both movements seemed to underestimate the period. Stephen Spender's *Forward From Liberalism*, which inspired his invitation into the Party from Harry Pollitt, argued that the traditional liberal conceptions of freedom for the employers and the employed had no place in the 'postwar world of depression, tariffs, and unemployment, [and] where there were growing Fascist movements in Europe.' (Crossman, 2001, p. 230) In his book Spender argued that reform, as such, merely served to strengthen Capitalist interests. 'Reformism simply becomes a means of speeding up the out-of-date parliamentary machine, to keep it in pace with the rapid developments of the industrial era... In England the ultimate effect of reforms is to preserve the status quo.' (Spender, 1937, p. 211) Revolutionary Communism on the other hand, shatters the status quo. '[B]ecause Communism will be founded on a realistic basis of economic freedom, the political choice of the individual will, within the limits of Communist morality, be far wider than in capitalist countries.' (Spender, 1937, p. 262) Spender reaches this conclusion by firstly, somewhat haphazardly, taking the long view. He approaches his thesis with a 'Journey Through Time'.

> The link between Communists to-day and the political idealists of a hundred and fifty years ago is not one of method, not even of the "bloodshed like water and tears like mist," which must precede the overthrowing of monarchies; it is the understanding they

> both share that "politics is Brotherhood," upheld against the accepted political practice of their times. (Spender, 1937, p. 14)

Spender takes great confidence from this powerful sense of continuity with the past, seeing himself as belonging to the long-awaited generation that would achieve that for which his ancestors longed.

To the Catholic converts the reformism (or liberalism) of the Church of England seemed to indicate a subjectivism that detracted from its claims to being the Church of Christ. As Lunn put it, 'I could not return to the Anglican Church, for I found it impossible to believe that a Church which leaves its clergy free either to accept all that Christ taught or to deny much that He taught could be part of the Church which Christ founded'[432] (Lunn, 1940, p. 220) Waugh, in an article on his conversion, also took the historical view in order to argue for what he believed was the true church.

> 'England was Catholic for nine hundred years, then Protestant for three hundred years, then agnostic for a century. Catholic structure still lies buried beneath every phase of English life; history, topography, law, archeology everywhere reveal Catholic origins…. If the Christian revelation was true, then the Church was the society founded by Christ and all other bodies were only good so far as they had salvaged something from the wrecks of the Great Schism and the Reformation.' ('Come Inside.' In E. Waugh, 1983, p. 367)

In essence then the subjectivist reforms of Liberal politicians and Anglican bishops seemed incapable of satisfying the revolutionary needs of the crisis-wracked converts. The interwar converts demanded complete transformation and for that, they converted to religions that unashamedly presented themselves as the exclusive depositaries of the complete truth and the perfect expressions of historical movements, however vague and undefined. For this reasons reformers like Keynes, who sought to reignite the liberal party and Ernest Barnes, who sought to

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[432] Even Graham Greene, that embarrassed convert, wrote a poem in his diary while he was preparing for his reception into the Church:

> Put out your right foot:
> Pray the shoe's tight:
> The C. of E's crumbling –
> Rome may be right. (Cited in Sherry, 1989, p. 256)

modernize his Church failed to attract converts. The interwar converts wanted ‘the one true faith’ and only two religions seemed to be making that claim.

Chapter Seven: The Pattern and the Hard Core

He who was living is now dead
We who were living are now dying
With a little patience

Here is no water but only rock
Rock and no water and the sandy road
The road winding above among the mountains
Which are mountains of rock without water
If there were water we should stop and drink
Amongst the rock one cannot stop or think

T. S. Eliot, *The Waste land* (1922)

The major mythologies constructed in the West since the early nineteenth century are not only attempts to fill the emptiness left by the decay of Christian theology and Christian dogma. They are themselves a kind of substitute theology. They are systems of belief and argument which may be savagely anti-religious, which may postulate a world without God and may deny an afterlife, but whose structure, whose aspirations, whose claims on the believer, are profoundly religious in strategy and in effect.

George Steiner, *Nostalgia for the Absolute* (1974)

The ultimate choice I made was not for theory or party. It was a choice against death and for life. I asked only the privilege of serving humbly and selflessly that force which from death could evoke life, that might save what was savable in a society that had lost the will to save itself. I was willing to accept Communism in whatever terms it presented itself, to follow the logic of its course wherever it might lead me, and to suffer the penalties without which nothing in life can be achieved. For it offered me what nothing else in a dying world had power to offer at the same intensity – faith and a vision, something for which to live and something for which to die. It demanded of me those things which have always stirred what is best in men – courage, poverty, self-sacrifice, discipline, intelligence, my life, and, at need, my death.

Whittaker Chambers, *Witness* (1952)

In many ways this is the most important chapter of the entire thesis because it is an exploration of the reasons that the converts gave for their momentous decision. *Eliot's Waste Land* is quoted first because it is the archetypal expression of the crises that drove so many towards conversion. Steiner provides a theoretical basis for the experience of nihilistic fragmentation that Eliot has represented poetically. Whittaker Chambers, an American Communist and spy, gives the case study that validates Steiner's theory.

Having examined the growing need for conversion among England's interwar clerisy, it is useful to pause and to examine the reasons that the converts themselves provided for their conversions. Their explanations have come in a myriad of forms with varying levels of detail and completion. For the sake of a systemic understanding of the common logic of conversion provided by the subjects of this study the focus of this chapter is largely restricted to the literary output of the converts. What emerges is a common understanding of the pre-conversion landscape as a seemingly incomprehensible waste land, while the conversion destination is judged to contain the necessary remedy for the chaotic aridity in which the convert had hitherto been mired.

Taylor gave a very detailed explanation for this phenomenon. He argued that: 'there is a generalised sense in our culture that with the eclipse of the transcendent, something may have been lost.'(Taylor, 2007 p. 307) He describes this sense as the 'malaise of immanence'. This sense of malaise, of no longer possessing the hard core of certainty, means that the attempt to give one's life significance is constantly challenged by the experience of doubt; 'the sense that all [the] answers to the sense of loss are 'fragile, or uncertain; that a moment may come where we no longer feel our chosen path is compelling, or cannot justify it to ourselves or others.' (p. 308) This sense of doubt can be reinforced by an experience of the waste land. 'It can come in the feeling that the quotidian [the everyday] is emptied of deeper resonance, is dry, flat; the things which surround us are dead, ugly, empty; and the way we organize them, shape them, arrange them, in order to live has no meaning, beauty, depth, sense. There can be a kind of nausée before this meaningless world.'(p.308) This malaise 'can send people back to seek some relation to the transcendent, but it is also felt by those who for one reason or another cannot countenance such a return, or only in forms which are very far from traditional established religion. They too seek solutions, or ways of filling the lack, but within immanence; and thus the gamut of new positions multiplies. (pp. 309-310) In this chapter it becomes possible to see the

interwar conversions as both a reaction to and a product of the secularization of English society, as some converts sought the transcendent in traditional religions of the past and others went deeper into immanence and sensed the transcendent in a Communist conversion.

The chapter begins with an extended focus on the work of two significant interwar converts; Rose Macaulay, who reverted to Anglo-Catholicism, and Edward Upward, who became Communist. In this contrast we see a common system of logic regarding the benefits of conversion. From there the focus shifts to the major works of interwar Communist converts and then on to the specifically Catholic works. Across these diverse novels, poems and polemics we find common assumptions regarding the aridity of pre-conversion life, regarding the irresistibility of the conversion destination, and regarding the interior life of the convert and their 'spiral ascent.'[433] It becomes abundantly clear that conversion provided the clerist with hope and solidity in the midst of chaos.

Allowing for the obvious differences between an immanentist and a transcendent religion, there is a common experience of religious certitude. Communism acted as 'a kind of substitute theology' and as a substitution played a similar role to that played by traditional theology. (Steiner, 1974, p. 4) Where Catholic converts, through faith, felt themselves moved by an encounter with 'the Absolute' in the life of the Church, Communist converts often felt themselves similarly moved by the life of the Party. Though belief in 'the Absolute', as it was understood by the Catholics, was entirely absent for the Communists, there was a sense of encountering a cosmic ordering or arrangement that often inspired similarly mystical language.

Seeking the Final Unity

In his 1940 essay *Inside the Whale* George Orwell argued that the same impulses inspiring conversions to Rome were also inspiring conversions to Moscow. He argued that Catholicism and Communism provided the convert with doctrines in which they might believe as well as a Church to which they might be completely loyal. All that had been destroyed by secularism in

[433] Moreover we find that the Catholic converts tended to characterize the waste land as being created by the 'new religions' while the Communist converts tended to define the waste land as revealing the impotence of the old religions.

general and the interwar narrative in particular might be found, whole and coherent, in these "new" religions.

> But what do you achieve, after all, by getting rid of such primal things as patriotism and religion? You have not necessarily got rid of the need for something to believe in. There had been a sort of false dawn a few years earlier when numbers of young intellectuals, including several quite gifted writers (Evelyn Waugh, Christopher Hollis, and others), had fled into the Catholic Church. It is significant that these people went almost invariably to the Roman Church and not, for instance, to the C. of E., the Greek Church, or the Protestant sects. They went, that is, to the Church with a world-wide organization, the one with a rigid discipline, the one with power and prestige behind it. Perhaps it is even worth noticing that the only latter-day convert of really first-rate gifts, Eliot, has embraced not Romanism but Anglo-Catholicism, the ecclesiastical equivalent of Trotskyism. But I do not think one need look farther than this for the reason why the young writers of the thirties flocked into or towards the Communist Party. It was simply something to believe in. Here was a Church, an army, an orthodoxy, a discipline. Here was a Fatherland and – at any rate since 1935 or thereabouts – a Fuehrer. All the loyalties and superstitions that the intellect had seemingly banished could come rushing back under the thinnest of disguises. Patriotism, religion, empire, military glory – all in one word, Russia. Father, king, leader, hero, saviour – all in one word, Stalin. God – Stalin. The devil – Hitler. Heaven – Moscow. Hell – Berlin. All the gaps were filled up. So, after all, the 'Communism' of the English intellectual is something explicable enough. It is the patriotism of the deracinated. (Sonia Orwell, & Ian Angus (Eds.), 2000a, pp. 121-122)

Whilst he adopts a cynical perspective, Orwell is right to notice that for both the Catholic and Communist converts there is the prospect of a universal Church and there is the prospect of clear-cut doctrine that eliminated the possibility of fragmentation by virtue of a clear authority defending its integrity.

In his 1974 CBC Massey Lectures, George Steiner developed a very similar thesis regarding the attractions of Communism; describing its conversions as a religious response to secularism. However, where Orwell was cynical about the religiosity of Communism, seeing it as a single facet of a broader patriotism, Steiner took the religious impulses behind these conversions

seriously. Entitled *Nostalgia for the Absolute,* his lectures argued that in the secular era what had been lost was not so much patriotism as 'the ancient and magnificent architecture of religious certitude… we hunger for myths, for total explanation … ' (1974, pp. 5-6) As the Christian order recedes, the emerging secular order, 'this vacancy, this darkness', has been characterized by the twin experiences of disorder and blankness. (Steiner, 1974, p. 2) As we shall see, the interwar period's definitive expression of this 'darkness' came in T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* (1922) and that darkness was an experience that would drive many to conversion.

Steiner describes the secular religions as 'mythologies'; arguing that they are linked by the common elements of, totality, canonical texts which preserve a moment of 'diagnostic insight' and an emerging liturgy with its own language, rituals and symbols. (Steiner, 1974, pp. 2-4) The mythologies that Steiner principally discusses are Marxism, Freudian psychoanalysis and Lévi-Strauss's anthropology. Of these he notes, 'those great movements, those great gestures of imagination, which have tried to replace religion in the West, and Christianity in particular, are very much like the churches, like the theology, they want to replace.'(p. 5) In return for the convert's total commitment, they unveil the 'secret plan of the universe' and give the convert an externally ordained role in the implementation of the cosmic salvation. Marxism says to the believer:

> I want from you a total commitment. I want from you a total investment of conscience and person into my keeping. And in exchange, as does a great theology, it offers a complete explanation of man's function in biological in social reality. Above all, it offers a contract of messianic promise concerning the future. (Steiner, 1974 p. 10)

Secular religions eviscerated the disorder and blankness of the fragmented secular landscape by re-enchanting the life of the convert. They tapped into the mystical tradition, 'the part of Asia inside Western man, [which] has from the time of the Gospels on right to modern times, always insisted on a vision of truth beyond rational grasp, beyond logic, beyond experimental control or refutation .' (Steiner, 1974 p. 53) It was this mystical apprehension of that can be said to link the twin conversion impulses of the interwar era.

Writing over sixty years before Steiner, Evelyn Underhill's[434] *Mysticism: A Study of the Nature and Development of Man's Spiritual Consciousness*, explained that mystics were 'tormented by the Unknowable, ache for first principles, [and] demand some background to the shadow show of things.' (Underhill, 1930, p. 8)[435] This same ache for first principles is intensified in the

[434] The word mysticism is essentially a modern word. Throughout most of Christian history the word had been contemplation. (Butler, 1951, p. 4) The modernity of mysticism is an important feature of the conversion movement because interest in mysticism really grew parallel with the rise of secularism. Even a brief survey of the works of mystics reveals this same trend. Most existed in manuscript form in a handful of religious houses before being published and popularized in the 19th or 20th centuries. For instance, Julian of Norwich, the English Mystic and a contemporary of Chaucer, produced two successive works detailing her experiences, *A Vision* and *A Revelation*. Of the former, there is a fifteenth century collection of excerpts and two complete manuscripts from the seventeenth century. These manuscripts were copied in French convents and were mainly used by the religious of continental Europe. By the mid-nineteenth century Julian of Norwich's writings were starting to influence intellectuals. Her work really only became popularized in the early years of the twentieth century 'with the broad emergence of what came to be called "spirituality"'. (Watson & Jenkins, 2006, p. 18) Grace Warrack's 1901edition was re-issued in the 1920s and has consistently been cited as the influential edition that spread the work beyond obscure academic circles and Catholic religious. Thus, as religious practice was declining in many of the Churches, a rapidly growing interest in mysticism was manifested in the publication of a number of new editions of long-forgotten mystical works and academic books on the intellectual history of Mysticism. David Knowles argued that the English were particularly intrigued by the topic of mysticism and produced a plethora of works and translations. (Knowles, 1967, p. 11) An example comes from Evelyn Underhill who did much to promote the work of Blessed John of Ruysbroeck an obscure Flemish mystic from the 14th century. This in turn created a market for translations of continental works by or about the same holy man. Underhill's *Mysticism: A Study of the Nature and Development of Man's Spiritual Consciousness* was initially published in 1911 but its popularity was such that its twelfth edition was released in 1930. In the preface to that edition Underhill identified the intellectual trend that had precipitated the new edition. 'The philosophic and theological landscape also, with its increasing emphasis on transcendence, its new friendliness to the concept of the supernatural, is becoming ever more favourable to the metaphysical claims of the mystics. On one hand the prompt welcome given to the work of Rudolf Otto and Karl Barth, on the other the renewed interest in Thomist philosophy, seem to indicate a growing recognition of the distinctness and independence of the Spiritual Order and a revival of the creaturely sense, strongly contrasting with the temper of late nineteenth century thought.' (Underhill, 1930, p. vii) In short, it is possible to see that the modern idea of mysticism has been, in many ways, intimately bound up with the conversion movement that dominated intellectual life in the early part of the twentieth century

[435] Underhill was in a position to make such a claim because, in many ways, her own life was shaped by an intensified ache for first principles. She was a member of the occultist movement, the Golden Dawn. She wrote decedent literature, rather in the style of Robert Hugh Benson and Arthur Machen. Later, under the influence of Benson, she very nearly converted to Catholicism. Her good friend, Ethel Ross Barker, the Archaeologist converted and Underhill herself became convinced that the Church of Rome 'has kept her mysteries intact...' Yet she argued that the Holy Office's antipathy towards modernism made it 'unacceptable in practice.' (Armstrong, 1975, p. 58) Her letters detail two mystical experiences which directed her towards Catholicism. Writing in 1911 she explained that, while praying in a convent in Southampton, 'I was converted quite suddenly, once and for all by an overpowering vision which had no specifically Christian elements, but convinced me that the Catholic religion was true.' (Armstrong, 1975, p. 53) Ten years later she was writing to her spiritual director, Baron von Hugel, explaining that she had undergone 'the sort of conversion experience' that seemed to definitively establish the truth of Catholic Christianity. (p. 217) However she remained an Anglo-Catholic for her entire life. Underhill's popularity and the stream of books that she published caused Dean Inge to worry that the entire world was 'going over to mysticism.' (p. 128) In many ways, it was. Even the Golden Dawn had moved Rome-wards. Many of their rituals and practices from the *fin de siecle* era began to take on Catholic shape and significance while several leading members such as Eliphas Lévi, (real name was Alphonse Constant), returned to the Catholic Church while Arthur Machen and Evelyn Underhill found a home within the upper branches of Anglo-Catholicism. In 1902, Yeats' muse, Maud Gonne, a former member of the Golden Dawn, also converted to Catholicism.

disenchanted and fragmented secular age and can be identified in the writings of both the Communist and Catholic converts. Many critics of the interwar converts have suggested that they were searching for a form of romanticism but, as suggested by Steiner and Underhill, mysticism is a much more accurate term to describe the impulse that seemed to unite the Catholic and Communist converts. It covers a gamut of religious and pseudo religious experiences that go beyond mere romanticism and assume the existence of a transcendent entity or law operating in and through the world and directly shaping the experiences of the converts. The term also gives a greater understanding of those experiences as they were expressed in a myriad of articles, memoirs, novels, poems and plays written by the converts.

Underhill defines Mysticism, in its pure form, as 'the science of ultimates, the science of union with the Absolute, and nothing else.' (Underhill, 1930, p. 72) Central to that union is the discovery that in that 'Absolute' can be discerned 'nothing less than the secret plan of the Universe.' (Underhill, 1930, p. 74) For both Steiner and Underhill 'the Absolute' means God. For Communists there was no God, nor any single entity that might be said to have directly and overtly replaced God. However, their conversion to Communism still involved 'the science of ultimates', as it were. And while they didn't encounter anything they described as God, they believed that they were encountering an absolute truth, a final unity, in the Communist explanation. Moreover Communist converts often felt themselves transformed by that encounter. The other term that can be usefully applied to both Communists and Catholics is that of 'the secret plan of the Universe'. Where Catholics believed in a planner, Communists did not. However Communists certainly believed in the existence of a plan that would inevitably re-order the world into a state of paradisial harmony. Consequently where the specifically Catholic and Communist conceptions of these words might differ, there is clearly a common experience that justifies their use in this chapter.

Although writing from a wholly Christian perspective, Underhill pre-empted Steiner when she posited that even in the secular age, man invariably hungers for the Absolute: 'This hunger–that innate craving for, and intuition of, a final Unity, an unchanging good–will go on, however heartily we may feed on those fashionable systems which offer us a dynamic or empirical universe.' (Underhill, 1930, p. 39) For the Communist, as for the Catholic, the belief that one has found 'a final Unity, an unchanging good' capable of communicating the secret plan of the

universe was a source of intense joy. It was also a source of change as the convert felt moved to conform their will to that of the final Unity they believed that they had discovered. Evelyn Underhill pre-empted Steiner's discussion of 'total commitment' when she wrote:

> Mysticism... is non-individualistic. It implies, indeed, the abolition of individuality; of that hard separateness, that "I, Me, Mine" which makes of man a finite isolated thing. It is essentially a movement of the heart, seeking to transcend the limitations of the individual standpoint and to surrender itself to ultimate Reality; for no personal gain, to satisfy no transcendental curiosity, to obtain no other-worldly joys, but purely from an instinct of love... The Mystic is in love with the Absolute. (Underhill, 1930, pp. 71-72)

Underhill's description of Christian mysticism and Steiner's descriptions of the new, post-Christian religions reveal several important commonalities. The believers are moved by the conviction that they have discovered ultimate reality, be it the God of Abraham or, more simply, a 'total explanation'. This discovery engenders certain demands on the believer such as the conformity of their will to that of God or the demands inherent in the total explanation. In that sense, both religions are capable of re-enchanting the life of the convert by allowing them to transcend the minutiae of everyday life and live in a context of what they saw as 'ultimate Reality'. Both religions also protected that enchanted life with a dogmatic authority. It was an authority that someone like Orwell saw as a price to be paid for peace of mind but which the converts valued for its ability to prevent fragmentation. It is the role authority plays in preserving the harmony of the doctrine that allows the possibility of the encounter with the final Unity.[436] In short, both Communism and Catholicism provide the convert with the possibility of a sense of the mystical and, in doing so, provide the convert with an escape from the remorseless fragmentation of secularism. It is for this reason that the Communist converts, despite seeing Communism as an empirical science, were inspired to writings that can really only be described as mystical if they are to be considered meaningful.

[436] As Underhill herself explained, 'the antithesis between the religions of "authority" and of "Spirit," the "Church" and the "mystic," is false. Each requires the other.' (Underhill, 1930, pp. ix-x) The 'religious complex' is the authoritative and unifying structure that prevents the experience of fragmentation. The mystic who abandons the 'support of the religious complex' is subject to fragmentation and subjectivism. Writing in the first years of the twentieth century she concluded: 'he inevitably tends towards pantheism and seldom exhibits in its richness the Unitive Life.'(p.x)

According to the description by Underhill conversion allows the individual to approach the Absolute or final unity but after conversion there is new process of a growing apprehension and the convert begins to apprehend the transcendent reality in the everyday. 'Though he has broken for ever with the bondage of the senses, he perceives in every manifestation of life a sacramental meaning; a loveliness, a wonder, a heightened significance, which is hidden from other men,' in other words, a deeply enchanted life. (Underhill, 1930, pp. 35-36) The Communist was often equally moved by the apprehension of an immanentist order. That is not to say that every Communist was a mystic, lost in contemplation of the final unity offered by party doctrine. However it is reasonable to argue that many of the Communist converts felt they were able to apprehend dialectical materialism at work in the events of their lives and in the world around them, just as the Catholic might believe that they can apprehend the action of God in the everyday. Even after he abandoned the party for Catholicism, Douglas Hyde described his colleagues on the *Daily Worker* as people 'who worked sometimes until they collapsed, who were prepared to be jailed for the paper at any time and, if necessary, to die for their Communism.' (Hyde, 1951, p. 147) These were men and women convinced that they could perceive the final Unity in Communism.

Arthur Koestler, the Hungarian born Communist writer, provides an interesting example of a Communist convert feeling themselves transformed by an encounter with 'ultimate reality'. In his contribution to *The God that Failed*, Koestler observed that his conversion to Communism had much in common with the impulses that might lead to a more conventional Judeo-Christian conversion. 'We sang the "Internationale" but the words might as well have been the older ones: "Woe to the shepherds who fed themselves but feed not their flocks." (Crossman, 2001, p. 19) As he read Marx he felt delight when he realised that he was part of that 'fresh element of enlightenment,' come to help the proletariat. (pp.19-20) Added to this, Koestler felt that he could detect powerful nobility in the working class members of his party cell.

> It seemed to me that the proletarian members of our cell were all strong, silent, hard and kindly men, not only appointed by History to inherit the earth from the decadent bourgeoisie, but also mentally more hale and sane than the clever phoneys of my type… my own responses in this respect were particularly deep and lasting. (Koestler, 2005, p.40)

It was this feeling that he could perceive the unfolding of the Marxian explanation of history in his own life and in the other members of his party cell that was to sustain him for seven very difficult years of party life.

As he settled into party life, Koestler felt himself taking on 'revolutionary vigilance' and was prepared to report any other member of the cell for any heretical remark. As a convert he saw this attitude as reasonable given the ultimate reality that he believed he had found. Writing in the second volume of his autobiography, Koestler quotes from his novel *Darkness at Noon* in order to communicate his attitude:

> The party can never be mistaken. You and I can make a mistake. Not the Party. The Party, comrade, is more than you and I and a thousand others like you and I. The Party is the embodiment of the revolutionary idea in history. History knows no scruples and no hesitation. Inert and unerring, she flows towards her goal. At every bend in her course she leaves the mud which she carries and the corpses of the drowned. History knows her way. She makes no mistakes. He who has not absolute faith in History does not belong in the Party's ranks… The Party's course is sharply defined, like a narrow path in the mountains. The slightest false step, right or left, takes one down the precipice. The air is thin; he who becomes dizzy is lost. (Koestler, 2005, . pp. 31-32)

Praised by Orwell, *Darkness at Noon* is a novel that seeks to outline the repressive totalitarianism of Stalin's Russia. And yet in choosing this quote, Koestler is making the point that for the true believers, it was almost impossible for any form of injustice or logical contradiction to despoil the feeling of union with absolute truth. It is worth comparing this faith in the party with the faith of St. Therese of the Child Jesus. At the end of her life, in 1897, while dying of pulmonary tuberculosis, St. Therese declared that 'everything is a grace.'[437] (Saint Thérèse de Lisieux, 1977, p. 57) Thérèse's ability to perceive every possible experience as a product of divine grace is clearly a mystical viewpoint. Despite the pain of her illness, she felt able to perceive the triune God 'enacting the secret plan of the universe.' The conviction of

[437] As she lay dying she reassured her fellow religious that, even though she would probably be unable to receive her final communion, they were not to worry. 'If you find me dead one morning, don't be troubled: it is because Papa, God, will have come to get me. Without a doubt, it's a great grace to receive the sacraments; but when God doesn't allow, it is good just the same; everything is a grace.' (Saint Thérèse de Lisieux, 1977, p. 57)

Koestler and Thérèse, capable of overwhelming the experiences of confusion, physical pain and any form of set-back, gives a useful insight into the the enchanted viewpoint of the convert.

It is clear that Koestler's faith in the immutability of history and his sense that his life was being lived in the context of an inevitable Communist victory allowed him to synthesise the myriad of contradictions and about-turns that defined his life as a Communist. When he found himself amazed by the ignorance of the 'political instructors', Koestler consoled himself by remembering the totality of the Communist vision. Suddenly ignorant and even demonstrably inaccurate statements were able to be rationalised in the light of his new, enchanted perspective: 'All this to my mind was both true and untrue. It was untrue because it was a crude over-simplification of a complex reality; but in the long view of History nuances did not matter, and my sophistication did not matter, and the dialectical telescope revealed the essential truth.' (Koestler, 2005, p.36) Writing later Koestler described the solidity and longevity of this vision as a form of 'myth addiction'. (p. 38) Whatever its cause, it is clear that his belief that he could apprehend the secret plan of the universe was something that he felt loath to abandon. 'I was still chasing after the arrow in the blue, the absolute cause, the magic formula which would produce the Golden Age.' (p.39)

Eventually it became a popular assumption that the Communist believer saw the world differently. As such it became a staple of Communist propaganda. While living in the Brezhnev era Soviet Union, Kim Philby almost certainly gained permission to have his memoir published in Russia and in Europe because it played on this now-familiar trope. Russians who lived under Brezhnev were certainly less mystical in their attitudes towards life in the People's Republic.[438] Yet Philby, writing in the late sixties, claimed that his faith in the 'principles of the Revolution' had withstood the scandals of Stalinism. (Philby, 2002, p. xxxi) He declared impressively: 'as I

[438] Indeed far from seeing the Communist future during the Brezhnev-era, they were far more likely to see dark humour and Brezhnev himself became known for the jokes that his people told about him. The Russian people even joked about the repression that made such jokes a risk, though it must be said, by the seventies it was not the same risk that it had been in the thirties.
To cite one popular joke, 'At a meeting Brezhnev and President Nixon start a conversation about their pastimes:

> Nixon asks, "Do you have any hobbies Mr. Brezhnev?"
> "Oh, Yes!" Brezhnev exclaims, "I collect jokes about myself."
> "And have you collected many?"
> Brezhnev replies, "I have three camps full."

(Shepievker, *Smekh vopreki vsemu,* cited by Nolan, 2008, p. 36)

look over Moscow from my study window, I can see the solid foundations of the future I glimpsed at Cambridge.' The ability to contemplate with the eyes of faith, (where earlier he had merely glimpsed) the Communist future in the midst of Brezhnev-era Moscow was one that the KGB felt would impress listless believers at home and abroad. Philby later claimed in private that 'the Brezhnev era was a difficult one. We all suffered under his stultifying, leaden influence.' (Knightley, 1988, p. 234)[439] It is clear from what Philby was allowed to publish that the subjective and somewhat mystical apprehensions of the true-believer were regarded as a particularly striking feature of Communist writing.

It is worth noting that once Philby lost his role with the KGB and his participation in what he believed was 'the secret plan of the universe', serious doubts began to creep in. He admitted to his biographer, Phillip Knightley, 'My problem was that I hadn't swallowed everything, I hadn't taken it all in. While I was busy and they needed me, this didn't seem to matter. But when they didn't use me the doubt crept in.'[440] (Knightley, 1988, p. 234) Perhaps it was for that reason that the KGB quickly resurrected his career and thereby ensured that he never joined the ever-growing ranks of the disillusioned ex-Communists.

Finding Water in the Waste Land

As mentioned in the previous chapter, T. S. Eliot's poem, *The Waste Land*, was often held to be *the* expression of the interwar era. Eliot published his most famous poem in 1922 and its evocation of a fragmented and dystopic post-war Europe immediately found a lasting resonance with the clerisy. This 'personal and wholly insignificant grouse against life' became the iconic poem of the interwar period, by capturing 'the immense panorama of futility and anarchy which is contemporary history.' (Gardner, H. L., 1972, p. 4 and Eliot, T. S., 2005, p. 167) Eliot's panorama contrasts a past, rich in meaning, with a banal present incapable of meaning. For many

[439] In his book on Moscow, Timothy Colton argued that Moscow, though routinely done up for international events like the 1980 Olympics and presented as a Communist Utopia, was frequently a city of seething dissatisfaction due to the difficulties of daily life. 'For a Moscow population that bulged from 6.5 million in the mid-1960s to more than 8.5 million twenty years later, the panegyrics to the dream metropolis jibed poorly with the banal realities experienced day by day.' (Colton, 1998, p. 396) This makes Philby's claim even more remarkable.

[440] Coincidentally Philby found that he could talk openly about his doubts with that other great doubter, Graham Greene. 'As you know, I've met Graham Greene several times over the last couple of years. They were the most rewarding meetings in our long friendship. For the first time we were able to speak frankly with each other. We were able to discuss doubt, a matter of great importance to us both – the nagging doubt we had both felt, him as a Roman Catholic and me as a Communist.' (Knightley, 1988, p. 234)

of the interwar converts the poem captured the 'epistemological crisis', which rendered traditional systems of meaning impotent in the face of socio-political crises routinely ensnaring interwar Britain. (Brooker & Bentley, 1990, pp. 13-33) In a sense it provided a psycho-spiritual addendum to the interwar narrative. It detailed what Steiner described as secularism's twin experiences of disorder and blankness. The desire to impose an order on chaos, or to seek the 'inhibition of chaos' becomes a cornerstone of the secular response to the interwar crises. (Milbank, 2006, pp. 158, 161)Conversely the seeking out of the 'harmonic peace' beyond all understanding will become the hallmark of the Catholic converts' response to this same period of chaos.

E. M. Forster had admired Eliot before the publication of *The Waste Land* but felt that in this latest effort Eliot had been overwhelmed by the horror of barbarism and he lamented the fact that within the poem, 'the earth is barren, the sea salt, the fertilizing thunderstorm broke too late.' (Cited in Spender, 1974, p. 90) Yet for the intellectuals who came to maturity during the interwar period, the poem had an incomparable resonance. When writing her contribution to Neville Braybrooke's *T. S. Eliot a symposium for his 70th birthday*, Rose Macaulay recalled the overwhelming sense of recognition that accompanied her first reading of the poem. 'Here was the landscape one knew, had always known, sometimes without knowing it; here were the ruins of the soul; the shadowy dreams that lurked tenebriously in the cellars of consciousness; in the mysterious corridors and arcades of dream, the wilderness that stretches not without but within.' (Macaulay, 1968, p. 29)[441] She was not the only interwar clerist to react this way. The poet David Jones, a friend of Eliot's, also recalled a shout of recognition when he read the poem. 'When I first read it (in 1926 or 1927) I said to myself, "*That's it*!"' (Cited in Dilworth, 1988, p. 27) Evelyn Waugh was also immediately taken with the poem describing it as being imbued with 'the impressive flavour of the Major Prophets' (Davie, 2009, p. 255) John Cornford read it as 'England in 1931, in the grip of depression' and it quickly became the 'preface to his politics.'

[441] Also cited in Emery, 1991p. 287

(Stansky, 1965, pp. 174-175)[442] Stephen Spender directly credited the poem with Cornford's conversion to Communism. (1974, p. 91)

In Eliot's iconic poem we see the interwar narrative played out in the fragmented landscape of modern secularism: London Bridge filled with the ghosts of the previous war, the corpses that refuse to bloom into any form of socio-political stability. The bright young things seem mirrored in the rich woman surrounded by opulence but believing herself to be stuck, 'in rat's alley / where the dead men lost their bones' and being unsure if she is even alive; all the while surrounded by 'withered stumps of time'. (Eliot, T. S. 1991, pp. 56-57)[443] The sexual hedonism of the period; the 'exploring hands encounter[ing] no defence' and making 'a welcome of indifference' are presented as predatory, violent and largely sterile. (p. 62) And all the while, thought is made impossible. In the Fire Sermon, the gramophone protects the young woman from thought and she is safe in the nonsense chorus of 'Weialala leia / Wallala leialala'. (p. 63) The perceived chaos of the period is surely reflected in the falling and ruined towers.[444] This nonsense is allowed to triumph because the traditional repositories of wisdom have collapsed.

The poem is a powerful expression of fragmentation which is neatly expressed in the haunting image of subjectivism in 'What the Thunder Said', 'We think of the key, each in his prison / Thinking of the key, each confirms a prison.'(Eliot, T. S. 1991, p. 69) This subjectivism is at the heart of the poem's 'broken images'. It is there with the 'small house agent's clerk' who 'gropes his way, finding the stairs unlit...' (p. 62) And yet out of that subjectivity comes the army of converts to the political religions, remaking but also destroying the cracked and disenchanted chaos. The ancient cities give way to the modern cities but all are destroyed by the hordes.

> What is that sound high in the air
> Murmur of maternal lamentation
> Who are those hooded hordes swarming
> Over endless plains, stumbling in cracked earth

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[442] In a curious irony a classmate of Cornford's at Stowe, Hugh Heckstall Smith, credited Cornford's contagious enthusiasm for Eliot's poetry as the starting point for his conversion to Christianity. (Stansky & Abrahams, 1966, p. 182)

[443] All references to *The Waste Land* are from T.S. Eliot, 1991, pp. 53-69, unless otherwise stated.

[444] à la tour abolie W. C. Thorley's translation of de Nerval's "El Desdichado": translates the line as, 'The Prince of Aquitaine whose palace spire lies low in the dust.' (T. S. Eliot The Waste Land, 1922. Retrieved June 9th, 2014, from *The Waste Land: T. S. Eliot*: http://waste land.windingway.org/poem)

Ringed by the flat horizon only
What is the city over the mountains
Cracks and reforms and bursts in the violet air
Falling towers
Jerusalem Athens Alexandria
Vienna London
Unreal
(Eliot, T. S. 1991, p. 67)

Eliot identified Hermann Hesse's essay 'The Brothers Karamazov–The Downfall of Europe' from his book, *Gazing into Chaos*,[445] as the inspiration for this stanza. He cited the following quote as the particular idea he was communicating: 'Already half Europe, at all events half Eastern Europe, is on the road to Chaos. In a state of drunken illusion she is reeling into the abyss and, as she reels, she sings a drunken hymn such as Dmitri Karamazov sang. The insulted citizen laughs that song to scorn, the saint and seer hear it with tears.' (Hesse, 1923, p. 46) The rejection of ancient wisdom for modern blindness and the commensurate chaos was a powerful criticism leveled at the new religions during the interwar years.

Central to the poem's understanding of secularism is the absence of Christ. 'Who is the third who walks always beside you? / When I count, there are only you and I together...'(Eliot, T. S. 1991, p. 67) This image of a walk to Emmaus with only the illusion of a resurrected Christ is part of Eliot's sense that religion is lost and only charlatans like Madame Sosostris are there to fill the yawning space. The non-resurrection of Christ, 'He who was living is now dead', ensures the death of all mankind, 'We who were living are now dying / With a little patience'. (p. 66) Closely linked with this absence is a powerful sense of exile: 'by the waters of Leman I sat down and wept...' that line calls to mind the Babylonian exile as described in Psalm thirty seven. (p.60) And this exile is confirmed in the imagery of the ruined chapel, home only to the wind.

In this decayed hole among the mountains
In the faint moonlight, the grass is singing
Over the tumbled graves, about the chapel

[445] *Blick ins Chaos* (1920).

> There is the empty chapel, only the wind's home.
> It has no windows, and the door swings,
> Dry bones can harm no one. [446]
> (Eliot, T. S. 1991, p.68)

Most of the interwar clerisy recognised Eliot's *Waste Land* in their own circumstances. Some however, went further, and saw it as the inspiration for conversion. In a letter to the *New Statesman and Nation* in 1933, Julian Bell wrote, 'it might, with some plausibility, be argued that Communism in England is at present very largely a literary phenomenon - an attempt of a second "post-war generation" to escape from the waste land.' (Stansky, 1965, p. 109) John Cornford seemed annoyed that Eliot himself didn't convert to Communism. He read the poem as 'as an anatomy of capitalist society in decay' (Stansky, 1965, p. 175) But, in an essay entitled 'Art and the Class Struggle', he wrote, 'something more than description [of civilisation's disintegration], some analysis of the situation is needed. And it is here that Eliot breaks down. He refuses to answer the question he has so perfectly formulated.' (Cornford, 1986, p. 45)

Yet, it could be argued that Eliot did answer the question, most directly in his conversion poem, *Ash Wednesday*. He was received into the Anglican Church in 1927 and published the first of the fragments that comprise the poem in the same year. The poem reflected his personal movement from disbelief and despair to faith and hope. Macaulay explained the logical progression that characterized Eliot's response to *The Waste Land*.

> The anguished fragmentation of *The Hollow Men*, a few years after *The Waste Land*, dragged us more deeply into that desperate landscape... a profound sense of catastrophe, heightened and deepened by a new element, fragments of the liturgy and imagery of the Christian Church, which seemed to struggle against great odds and to be defeated: this, too, one recognised as truth.' (Macaulay, 1968, p. 32)

Yet it was in *Ash-Wednesday* that 'a new plane of existence' was reached. Spender argued that in *The Waste land* the figures were symptoms of the decay around them while in *Ash Wednesday*,

[446] Such desolation brings to mind Jeremiah's lament over the destruction of the Temple, 'And from the daughter of Zion all her splendour has departed.' (Lamentations 1: 6) As we shall see, Waugh picked up on this theme in *Brideshead Revisited* and the allusions to the chant, 'Quomodo sedet sola civitas' from the Tenebrae services of Maundy Thursday, as well as the images of ruined churches encountered by Ryder on his tour of Mexico.

they are ‘no longer conditioned by the state of the civilisation.’ (1974, pp. 106, 124) There is a sense of freedom from the decay and fragmentation on this new plane. ‘To those without apprehension of this plane, it came as a deviation into an alien land, not understood or desired.’(Spender, 1974, p. 124) Or, to once more quote Virginia Woolf’s assessment of Eliot’s conversion, ‘I was really shocked. A corpse would seem to me more credible than he is.’ (Virginia Woolf to Vanessa Bell, 11 Feb. 1928, 1977) Yet here again, what the elders of Bloomsbury seemed incapable of understanding became absolutely clear to the interwar clerisy.

It is important to see the connections between *The Waste Land* and *Ash Wednesday*. In each we see the same fragmented images but in the latter poem they are now transformed, even redeemed. The rattling bones from *The Waste Land* are now ‘scattered and shining’ under the Juniper tree; a reference to the restoration of Elijah before his journey to Horeb, the mountain of the Lord. Also, where the small house agent’s clerk groped his way back down the stairs, the speaker in *Ash Wednesday* ascends the stairs in light, looking back down at the various trials and temptations he has passed. Eliot’s later poem does not argue that the fragmentation has gone, but rather that he has found solidity in the midst of the chaos.

> The Word without a word, the Word within
> The world and for the world;
> And the light shone in darkness and
> Against the Word the unstilled world still whirled
> About the centre of the silent Word. (Eliot T. S., 1991, p. 92)

This Word, or Logos, is the reason why the landscape of *Ash Wednesday* is revitalised with water, so sorely lacking in *The Waste Land*. More specifically the transformation occurs through the intercessory role of the Marian figure in the poem, ‘who then made strong the fountains and made fresh the springs.’ This figure ‘restores with a new verse the ancient rhyme. Redeem the Time.’(Eliot T. S., 1991, p. 90) This cyclical sense of time: the present in salvific conversation with the past, reflects a sense of re-enchantment which allows the speaker to ‘sit still even among these rocks’ whilst also giving him a role in the plan of salvation. (Eliot T. S., 1991, p. 95) The poem concludes with the speaker’s prayer against fragmentation and disenchantment. ‘Suffer me not to be separated / And let my cry come unto Thee.’ (Eliot T. S., 1991, p.95)

Helen Gardner argued that 'although all Mr Eliot's poetry is the expression of a certain kind of apprehension, the change in his rhythms and style …and the change in his imagery, is the result of a profound change within this apprehension.' (Gardner H. , 1978, p. 226) It is this changing apprehension that is at the heart of the interwar conversion experience for both Catholic and Communists. Both groups first apprehended the chaos before apprehending the unheard redemptive doctrine. The interwar novelists, Rose Macaulay and Edward Upward, provide novels that cover these two visions. In comparing the two we can begin to get a sense of intellectuals diagnosing the waste land in which they lived and then pursuing deliverance from that waste land, and even a remedy to that waste land.

After the Wilderness, the Towers

The intellectual movements of the interwar years left their imprint on the life of Rose Macaulay. In 1926 she was describing the twenties as liberating and somewhat hedonistic: 'life was, by many people, turned into as much of a giddy-go-round as leisure and means allowed.' (Macaulay, 1926, p. 173)[447] She also noticed the interwar paradox of secular growth alongside that of religious fascination. 'Religion seemed in a curious state of suspense. Church-going in London had largely dwindled, and with it definite religious beliefs. But there appeared to be a great deal of interest felt in the subject.'(Macaulay, 1926, p. 180) During the war she fondly recalled the twenties as 'a good decade; gay, decorative, extravagant, cultured.' (Emery, 1991, p. 200) By the thirties Macaulay had become more politically conscious, though all the while retaining a defiant independence. She took in the *Daily Worker* but saw socialism only as a 'distant national goal,' and refused to allow it to translate into a Communist conversion. (Emery, 1991, p. 246)[448] Her major political work was in the Peace Pledge Union, for whom she was an active speaker. However she abandoned the group as early as 1938. For her the *Anschluss* indicated that the Peace Pledge Union was no longer relevant.

Between 1906 and 1940, Rose Macaulay wrote twenty one novels. Between 1940 and her death in 1958 she wrote just two; *The World, My Wilderness* in 1950 and *The Towers of Trebizond* in 1956. However, they were her greatest. These were the novels that traced out the waste land and

[447] Also cited by Emery, 1991, p. 200
[448] By the early forties she was complaining to a friend, 'why is there no Socialist, non-Communist no Transport House Party.' (Emery, 1991, p. 174)

then sought for its redemption. Most critics fondly recall Macaulay's *The Towers of Trebizond*, but its fame is largely confined to its outrageous opening sentence, '"Take my camel, dear", said my Aunt Dot, as she climbed down from this animal on her return from High Mass.' (2012, p. 1) It is fitting that this sentence has become the main reason that the novel is ever quoted because it neatly captures the novel's main problem. As Allen Brooke recently lamented, 'the novel's farcical polish has kept many readers from comprehending its serious core.' (Allen, 2003, p. 130) Yet even understanding the 'serious core' of the novel is not enough; it really needs to be read in conjunction with *The World, My Wilderness*.

In these novels Macaulay has written a highly ornate two volume spiritual autobiography. And, although both novels were written in the fifties, like Waugh's *Brideshead Revisited*, they are the product of a long-fermenting understanding of the questions and answers that preoccupied the interwar generations. In these books Macaulay 'confronts those forces she had seen plunging both civilisation and the individual self into an abyss.'(Crawford, 1995, p. 137) In the first novel, set in a post-war London still recovering from the blitz, she looks 'towards the waste land of a civilisation destroyed and the personal desert that its author has painfully traversed [through the death of a much-loved sister and the loss of her home].' (Crawford, 1995, p. 137) In the second novel she confronts the question of conversion and a return to belief. She visits the literal deserts of the Levant as a tourist, subconsciously seeking a cohesive whole. In an article entitled 'The Future of Fiction' written in 1946 for John Lehmann's *New Writings and Daylight*, Macaulay discussed the fragmentation of modern times and posed a serious question. 'Discontinuity has been the mood of our brittle time. Can we fit the pieces together, weld them into a coherent shape?' (Cited in Crawford, 1995, p. 140) *The Towers of Trebizond* is an attempt to find that coherent shape.

Macaulay begins *The World, My Wilderness* with Eliot's iconic image of the abandoned church in *The Waste Land*. 'There is the empty chapel, only the wind's home. / It has no windows, and the door swings...' (1950, p. 5) In the aftermath of the blitz, an abandoned church is at the centre of the novel's literal waste land. As the symbol for secularised modern chaos, the husk of a chapel provides an implicit explanation for that waste land. It would be easy to see the wilderness as being simply the embodiment of civilisational decay. Yet ironically it is the only place where the membrane of modern order has not been simply re-drawn over the chaos. The

rest of London is comprised of ‘meaningless grey streets’ and ‘dull, respectable, smoke-dark houses.’ (p. 50) One of the characters is confronted by the reality of the wilderness when he suddenly emerges from the chaos and into the order of London, ‘where streets were paved and buildings stood up, and a solid, improbable world began, less real, less natural than the waste land.’ (p. 74)

In the ‘improbable world’ there is a decency which hides the chaos. They speak ‘of France, of Britain, of the new government, of food difficulties, of the black market at home and abroad, of friends.’ (p. 220) But in the shell of the Church a traumatised priest, ‘trapped in his nightmares’ preaches to the young people who play among the ruins. He declares: ‘We are in hell now... Lucifer and all his legions are in me. Fire creeps on me from all sides; I am trapped in the prison of my sins; I cannot get out, there is no rescue possible for I have shut myself from God in the hell of my own making.’(pp. 166-167) In Macaulay’s novel, ‘there’s great wickedness prowling about…’ but it is only in the wilderness of bombed out London where that wickedness is plainly perceived and understood. (p. 187)

The novel centres on a family who have been driven into chaos by the selfishness of a mother who abandoned them for a life in France with a lover, subsequently marrying him and bearing him two children. The spurned husband is the very polished Giles Deniston KC, who marries again, this time choosing a very polished and ordered wife, Pamela. The novel traces the fortunes of the children of this initial descent into the chaos. The mother, Helen Michel, lives in a faux-Eden, ‘where the days slide by like fruit dropping from a tree.’ (Macaulay, 1950, p. 89) Following the murder of her lover, she lives as an indolent sybarite, sporadically publishing sham twelfth century Provençal poetry. Her eldest daughter Barbary, from her first marriage, and her son Raoul, from her second, are the products of what she openly describes as her selfishness. These are the lost children who, ‘with the instinct of jungle animals, [find their way] to the waste places, the ruined holes, the rat alleys, the barbaric wrecked hinterland, which were what they recognised as home, they had found sustenance for their unhoping spirits there...’ (p. 238) Her cuckolded first husband Deniston rebukes her for life in France with a second husband who, whilst betraying no one, was on friendly terms with the invading Germans during the previous war. He accuses her of having ‘tolerated the barbarians... the brutal dregs of a community which had chosen the road to barbarism.’ (pp. 240-241) And yet, Deniston is unable to see the barbarity

that lurks around him in polite society and has no idea that the waste land his daughter frequents even exists.

Barbary[449] is the most obvious victim of the family breakdown. She instinctively refused to tolerate the Nazi barbarians and joined the Marquis, a noble act that led to her being complicit in the murder of her step-father and the murder of her first lover / rapist.[450] Her violent childhood proves that the chaos was not as simple as the war because it outlasted the war and it was shared by both sides. Her childhood of 'screaming at shadows' and 'running uncatchable for the dark forests' had given her an automatic sense of anarchy. (Macaulay, 1950, pp. 14, 19, 25) Yet it is a spiritual anarchy. When she falls down into the ruins she ends up in a coma and descends into her tortured subconscious. There, using obviously Eliotic imagery, Macaulay reveals the internal chaos that Barbary has inherited.

> Always there was fear and blackness and red pain. Sometimes she would blow up trains, sometimes entice the enemy into a trap, sometimes try to warn him, running in vain with weighted limbs. Bats, hanging in caves and from church roofs would gibber and squeak; rats ran over her bound form; she lay deep in ruins, fearing death, fearing hell, trying in agony to repent and be saved. (Macaulay, 1950, p. 227)

Barbary is 'tormented by the unknowable'. (Underhill, 1930, p. 8) The frustrated desire for salvation becomes the prevailing response of the children of the war, the children of the chaos. In the hollowed-out church at the centre of the novel's anarchic London geography, Barbary and her half-brother Raoul create a series of pagan / Christian rituals in an effort to find forgiveness. Barbary elects to preach, 'I shall say how divorced people can't really marry again. And I shall preach about hell, like Père Richaud at the Lycée. They don't have much hell in the English church, Richie says. But we'll have hell in our church.' (Macaulay, 1950, p. 58) As they

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[449] Charles Lock observed that Macaulay cites Flaubert's letter to Turgenev from 13 November 1872, and that in the original French Flaubert uses the word *Barbarie* which was doubtless the inspiration for Barbary's name. (Lock, 2012, p. 337)

[450] Echoing the ambivalent sexual relationships of *The Waste Land* Macaulay does not make clear whether the relationship was consensual, predatory or a combination of both. 'A thin, fair young face, the face of the enemy, the harsh, broken French of the conqueror, the smell of the forest in October, of wild apples and wood fires and heath … later the Marquis had killed him… No one had known. They knew that she had been caught by the Germans, beaten a little, released with a warning. They did not know that she had met again in the forest the one who had ordered her to be beaten and released; met him three times, and the third time it was a trap. They had only known of the trap, and had praised her for her cunning.' (Macaulay, 1950, p. 77)

instinctively fashion a religion to fill the void left by a religion they never had, Barbary says, 'It would be better to be a Christian and get forgiveness, and only mind about God and Hell. Perhaps I shall myself turn devout, in that church.' (Macaulay, 1950,p. 58)[451] Barbary's older brother, Richie, is also increasingly religious and is thinking about converting to Catholicism. 'I might go Catholic, all the same. I like their traditionalism; their high Toryism; the stand they put up against the tide. All tides, I mean. Their services are enchanting, too. What services ought to be, if they are to be at all.' (Macaulay, 1950, p. 29)

The novel restricts itself to simply identifying the conversion impulse of the young people in the waste land without really resolving the tension. Like Eliot's famous poem, it is more concerned with diagnosing the chaos than with escaping it. Indeed, Macaulay uses Eliot's poem to suggest that not only is there is no cure but that perhaps we are doomed to remain children of the waste land.

> [On] the margins of the wrecked world... here you find the irremediable barbarism that comes up from the depth of the earth, and that you have known elsewhere. "Where are the roots that clutch, what branches grow out of this stony rubbish? Son of Man, you cannot say, or guess..." but you can say, you can guess, that it is you yourself, your own roots, that clutch the stony rubbish, the branches of your own being that grow from it and from nowhere else. (Macaulay, 1950, p. 129)

By the end of the novel Barbary is essentially left 'on the margins of the wrecked world' despite moving back to Paris with her mother. Indeed Macaulay never really answers the question that Barbary poses when she looks out 'over the cold grey tumbled waste,' and sees the defiant dome of St. Paul's and wonders whether it is a 'mighty symbol dominating ruin; formidable, insoluble riddle; stronghold refuge and menace, or mirage and gigantic hoax? (Macaulay, 1950, p. 186)

[451] In a later scene Barbary finds the pages of the *Dies Irae* and chants it moving up the aisle before demanding that Raoul joins her. 'Raoul! ...Come and repent. With thy favoured sheep O place me, nor among the goats abase me. Raoul, you must repent, so that you don't go to hell. You can repent, because you were brought up a Catholic. I can't because I'm a heretic, and heretics can't undo what they've done.' (Macaulay, 1950, p. 66) In another connection with *The Waste Land*, Lock argues that the torn leaves of the hymnal connect Barbary's despairing message of salvation with the 'tearing and scattering of the leaves on which the Cumaean Sibyl had written her prophetic words.' (2012, p. 335)

A hint is given in the final pages when Richie, visiting the bombed out wilderness, has much the same meditations as his sister and becomes 'aware of an irremediable barbarism coming up out of the earth, and of filth flung against the ivory tower.' (Macaulay, 1950, p. 252)[452] Richie quotes the rich woman from *The Waste Land*, thereby amalgamating 'London / unreal' with the physical waste land: 'we are in rats' alley, where the dead men lost their bones.' Then Richie turns away: 'Shuddering a little, he took the track across the wilderness towards St. Paul's. Behind him, the questionable chaos of broken courts and lanes lay sprawled under the October mist, and the shells of churches gaped like lost myths, and the jungle pressed in on them, seeking to cover them up.' (pp. 253-254) St. Paul's represents the last hope of an 'unchanging good' in the midst of the chaos.

The Towers of Trebizond, published in 1956 is a roman à clef set in Turkey. Crucially the novel is essentially concerned with Macaulay's own walk 'across the wilderness towards St. Paul's', following the death of her adulterous lover, Gerald O'Donovan. Macaulay's autobiographical protagonist, Laurie, is a fiercely independent young writer and illustrator who, having been engaged in a long-term affair, has strained her Christian faith to breaking point. She accompanies her Aunt Dot and Father Chantry-Pigg on an eccentric tour of the Black Sea region of Turkey in an effort to establish an Anglican Mission there. In this novel she exchanges the barbaric ruins of London for the ancient ruins of Trebizond, the final resting place of the Roman Empire. Among these ancient ruins she discovers the coherent whole for which she has been searching. She discovers the enchanted connections with the past that her abandoned faith possesses.

The story focuses on the Byzantine stronghold of Trebizond but this ancient city is located in Kemal Atatürk's secular Turkey and is therefore buried beneath the modern city of Trabzon. Secular Turkey with its hidden antiquity provides a useful analogy for the secular world from

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[452] Here again Macaulay borrows from Flaubert's letter to Turgenev, written on November 13, 1872:
My dear Turgenev, ...I am appalled by the state of society. Yes, such is the case. Stupid, perhaps, but there it is. The stupidity of the public overwhelms me. Since 1870 I've become a patriot. Watching my country die, I feel that I loved her. Prussia may lay down her arms: we can destroy ourselves perfectly well without her help. The bourgeoisie is so bewildered that is has lost all instinct to defend itself; and what will succeed it will be worse. I'm filled with the sadness that afflicted the Roman patricians of the fourth century: I feel irredeemable barbarism rising from the bowels of the earth. I hope to be gone before it carries everything away. But meanwhile it's not very gay. Never have things of the spirit counted for so little. Never has hatred for everything great been so manifest - disdain for Beauty, execration of literature. I have always tried to live in an ivory tower, but a tide of shit is beating at its walls, threatening to undermine it. It's not a question of politics but of the *mental state* of France. (Flaubert, 1982, p. 200)

which Laurie has emerged. Macaulay makes sure we see the triteness of this world. She has one Turkish character boast of the modern reforms introduced by Kemal Atatürk who has liberated his people from the difficult commands of the prophet and released them to 'a free life in hats, with education.' (Macaulay, 2012, p. 46) The narrowness of modernity is also manifested in the BBC recording van that seems to dog their progress through Turkey. The van houses producers hungry for local colour, who would bribe the locals to 'break out' into singing and dancing and thereby create a 'nice home-service program about Trebizond' without actually seeing the enchanted past that awaits them.[453] (p. 71)

Macaulay's satirical ire is especially captured in the portrait of the modern man that she develops in the final chapters. Laurie buys an Ape from a Greek sailor in Istanbul and brings it home. She teaches it to read and to play tennis and to drive a car and it soon attends Church with her. The Ape learns basic morality; he learns 'not to throw things at people when he was vexed, not to steal, not to cheat at games, to do what he was told, anyhow sometimes, and to help in the garden and do little errands, and chores like peeling potatoes.' (Macaulay, 2012, p. 246) Macaulay's Ape is really a satirical portrait of modern man. Given an education that has much in common with a Public School education, he is able to create a façade of morality but is, in reality, an unthinking and largely unresponsive figure that seems to exist without a proper soul. 'I sometimes wondered, and thought that perhaps it was true that human souls are specially privileged in this matter and the other creatures definitely underprivileged. (p. 247) The novel contains many young men like David and Charles, who were, in this respect, underprivileged.

Macaulay includes herself as someone capable of living a soulless existence. Through Laurie she explains that her continued affair consigns her to existing in a fog:

> Then comes the times when you wake suddenly up, and the fog breaks, and right and wrong loom through it, sharp and clear like peaks of rock, and you are on the wrong peak

[453]As we shall see, Edward Upward also attacked the triteness of irreligious modernity. His particular target was a decidedly and unashamedly bourgeois teacher whom his main character confronts over the question of investments: 'Presumably…he lived and kept a family solely on a teacher's salary without any private income from investments, that made his defence of them even more contemptible. But most likely he had inherited some shares and lived in a newish suburban house with bay windows and a studded oak door, and an electric bulb in a sham antique lantern over the porch, and an asbestos-walled garage, and a concrete crazy pavement, and a garden with concrete walks and regimented flowers, and forsythia in April and buddleia in August. At the thought of the concrete crazy pavement Alan's rage rose to its climax.' (Upward, 1977, p. 81)

> and you know, unless you can manage to leave it now, you may be marooned there for life and ever after. Then, as you don't leave it, the mist swirls round again, and hides the other peak, and you turn your back on it and try to forget it and succeed. (Macaulay, 2012, p. 150)

While it often 'seems better to live in a blur'; (Macaulay, 2012, p.150) she later admits that this has led to a less human existence. Where every generation before her own spoke about morality, the modern intellectuals spurn any talk of objective good and evil. 'I do not remember that when I was at Cambridge we talked much about such things… though we talked about everything else, such as religion, love, people, psychoanalysis, books, art, places, cooking, cars, food, sex, and all that. And still we talk about all these other things, but not about being good or bad.' (p. 152) The ape life is ironically produced by a modern and elite education that enables the individual to discuss anything except the most basic and most pressing questions.

This superficial understanding of life is impossible in modern Trabzon in Turkey because of its physical connections with the deep past. 'Trebizond, the ghost that haunted Trabzon' seems to haunt the visitors as well. (Macaulay, 2012, p. 94) Laurie quickly understood that it was 'a place that had some hidden meaning, which [she] must try to dig up.' (Macaulay, 2012, p. 133) Somewhat pointedly the three travellers spend much time drawing and annotating maps in an effort to navigate the chaos of ruins and connect with the ancient city at its heart.

Macaulay had long believed that ruins provided a mystical connection with the past and that this connection was essentially religious. In her travel book *Pleasure of Ruins* she argues that man's connection with heaven can be illustrated by the experience of visiting ruins. For there, time may become cyclical and the pilgrim may transcend the narrow limitations of his time and find himself in communion with the ancients.

> The ascendancy over men's minds of the ruins of the stupendous past, the past of history, legend and myth, at once factual and fantastic, stretching back and back into ages that can but be surmised, is half-mystical in basis. The intoxication, at once so heady and so devout, is not the romantic melancholy engendered by broken towers and mouldered stones; it is the soaring of the imagination into the high empyrean where huge episodes

> are tangled with myths and dreams; it is the stunning impact of world history on its amazed heirs. (Macaulay, 1966, p. 40)

Macaulay develops this idea through Laurie who argues that the traveller is particularly open to the deep past. 'I dare say foreigners in England really only want to see Stonehenge, and Roman walls and villas, and the field under which Silchester lies buried…' and yet, ironically, progress is measured by 'Sheffield and Birmingham, or our model farms and new towns and universities and schools and dams and aerodromes and things,' achievements which hold no interest for the real traveller. (2012, p. 62)

The traveller is after the hidden meaning which is confusing, esoteric, and utterly intoxicating. As she travels, Laurie likes 'to think about Jason and the other Argonauts sailing along this coast, anchoring here and there, tossed about by the high waves, on the way to Colchis and the Golden Fleece.'(Macaulay, 2012, p. 65) As she reaches the Black Sea she is caught up in:

> Some tremendous ancient drama long since played, by Argonauts, by Jason and Medea, by the Greeks, by the Ten Thousand, by Imperial Rome, by the Goths, by an army of Christian martyrs by Justinian and Belisarius, by the Byzantines, by the Comneni, by the Latins, by the romantic last Greek emperors commanding the last Greek corner of the Euxine, and ultimately by the Turks who slew the empire; and still the stage was set, and drama brooded darkly in the wings. (Macaulay, 2012, p.133)

It is the drama of good and evil, the drama which the non-convert can only sporadically perceive. Macaulay makes many references to the players in this ancient drama; however she argues that 'Troy was our Ancestor, and the center of a world that Turks could never know.' (Macaulay, 2012, p. 38) Consequently it is the journey of Jason and his search for the Golden Fleece which becomes the dominant motif from deep history. For Macaulay, Jason's search mirrors her own. The Ram with the Golden fleece has long been considered by Christians as an allegory for the incarnation.[454] (See: Tanner, 1993, p. 149) The anagogical stratum of the novel is foreshadowed

[454] The Golden Fleece has an obvious Incarnational significance. The Ram was sired by the divine figure Poseidon. The word 'gold' in Greek literature was an epithet for divine beings. The skin (which has connotations of flesh) restores Jason to his rightful heritage. Ancient Meditteranean religions often worshipped a fleece or skin or the sheep. For instance in ancient Anatolia the fleece was 'a ritual symbol personifying a god-protector.' In the house of the Pelopides 'whoever possessed the golden lamb had the right to the kingdom.' (Lordkipanidze, 2001, p. 3)

by the parallel journey of Jason who sought the sacred fleece in his own journey to the Black Sea.

In his essay, 'Religio Poetæ', Coventry Patmore[455] describes Christianity as being in its infancy, though to its critics it has always seemed as though it were in its decay. (1893, pp. 3-4) This paradoxical sense of youth and age reflects Christianity's ability to transcend time. This same paradox of infancy and age characterizes the religious vision of Rose Macaulay in her novels. For Laurie and Richie, the value of St. Paul's, Christopher Wren's iconic image of Anglicanism, is its enchanted connection to the ancient faiths and rituals that Laurie finds among the ruins of Trebizond.

The key to Laurie's obsession with the Church she has rejected comes in the fictional epigraph that Macaulay attributes to the *Dialogues of Mortality*. In these dialogues Phrastes and Eroton discuss the 'that strange bright city on the hill, barred by its high gates…' (Macaulay, 2012, p. 1) The city is defined by a paradox, it is barred to all 'who do not desire to enter it more strongly than they desire all other cities.' And yet whilst that must mean few can enter, '[t]hose who have once desired it cannot let it go, for its light flickers always on the roads they tread, to plague them towards it as a magnet drags steel, and, though they may never enter its gates, its light will burn them as with fire, for that is its nature.'(Macaulay, 2012, p.1) This is the ache for 'first principles' that tortured many members of the interwar clerisy, including Macaulay. Having abandoned their faith at school they seemed unable simply to subside into apathetic unbelief.

For Macaulay, the holy city of Trebizond followed the long Christian tradition of a Holy City as a metaphor for the Kingdom of God. In her most explicit description of Trebizond, she represents the city in a mystical vision, couched in the language of the Johannine visions in the Book of Revelations:

> Then, between sleeping and waking, there rose before me a vision of Trebizond: not Trebizond as I had seen it, but the Trebizond of the world's dreams, of my own dreams, shining towers and domes shimmering on a far horizon, yet close at hand, luminously enspelled in the most fantastic unreality, yet the only reality, a walled and gated city,

[455] Associated with the pre-Raphaelites, the poet Coventry Patmore introduced the artists to the famed poets of the day such as Tennyson, Browning and William Allingham in 1849. He later converted to Catholicism in 1864.

> magic and mystical, standing beyond my reach yet I had to be inside, an alien wanderer yet at home, held in the magical enchantment; and at its heart, at the secret heart of the city and the legend and the glory in which I was caught and held, there was some pattern that I could not unravel, some hard core that I could not make my own, and, seeing the pattern and the hard core enshrined within the walls, I turned back from the city and stood outside it, expelled in mortal grief. (Macaulay, 2012, pp. 200-201)

In a letter to her spiritual director, Macaulay explained the significance of the vision that Laurie has whilst sleeping in the Anglican Cathedral cloister in Jerusalem. 'Trebizond stands for not merely the actual city (tho' this comes in, and a lovely place it is) but for the ideal and romantic and nostalgic vision of the Church which haunts the person who narrates the story.' (Macaulay, 1963, p. 219) At the centre of that vision lies the coherent whole, described as 'the pattern and the hard core'; it is the 'unchanging good', to quote Underhill; and its hardness, though confronting, is the reason for its permanence.

Earlier in the novel, when she visited the ruins of Trebizond, her camel nibbled on the carob tree outside the ruined wall of the city, reflecting Laurie's position as the prodigal son yet to turn away from land of exile.[456] (Macaulay, 2012, p. 146) Yet at the heart of her desire to return to the city is the desire to return to the sacraments. 'Hearing Mass was bad enough, hearing it and not taking part in it, seeing it and not apporaching it, being offered it and shutting the door on it...' becomes a type of hell. (p. 65)

From the beginning Trabizond is a place of enchantment. Macaulay laments the Islamic arrivals who distanced the supernatural from the daily life by banning the Greek traditions of magic. It had been 'a Byzantine art and industy; the arrival of the... matter-of-fact Ottomans, who were neither clever nor imaginative, and thought wizardry wrong, had driven it underground to be practised privately and lucratively by the Greeks who remained in the city after the Turkish massacres. Like the fairies, the enchanters were of the old profession.' (Macaulay, 2012, p. 139) Laurie visits one of the modern enchanters and takes potions that give her visions of Byzantium in all its liturgical splendour and political chaos. Later she recognises the central value of this

[456] "He would gladly have filled his stomach with the pods that the swine ate. (Luke 15: 16) The Greek word keration which is translated as pods more specifically means carob pods. (MacArthur, 2010, p. 76)

same vision in the Byzantine liturgies of St. John Chrysostom, the 5th century Bishop of Constantinople. (p. 178)

Laurie ascribes sophia or wisdom to Chrysostom. The Byzantine reformer was, in many ways, the perfect defender of the hard pattern or wholeness at the centre of the opulent and romantic chaos of Constantinople. Chrysostom means 'golden mouthed' and he was commonly described as a 'Divine Orator'. An apt reflection of his uncompromising role comes in his *Sermon on Eutropius*. Here he lambasted Eutropius who, formerly his enemy in Imperial circles, had flung himself at the altar in the Hagia Sophia, begging for sanctuary. As the former Consul lay before him, Chrysostom began his excoriation of the gross excesses of the Imperial Court and in doing so contrasted the hard core with the ephemeral confusion of political power and exotic beauty that surrounded it in Byzantium.

> Vanity of vanities, all is vanity… Where are now the brilliant surroundings of your consulship? …They are gone – all gone: a wind has blown upon the tree shattering down all its leaves, and showing it to us quite bare, and shaken from its very root; for so great has been the violence of the blast, that it has given a shock to all these fibres of the tree and threatens to tear it up from the roots. (Schaff, 1889, p. 249)

It is this powerful Christianity at the heart of exotic Byzantium that gives it its true value. This is the difference between mere exoticism and the Christian liturgies of the Byzantine period, 'so full of dignity and light and *sophia* [wisdom]'. (Macaulay, 2012, p. 178) It is this that attracted the Catholic convert, the deeper wisdom and the unmistakable communion with God in the liturgy. When Laurie's belief is later challenged by her unbelieving mother (who has also abandoned the family) she tells her to 'go and read some of the liturgies and missals. Especially the Greek.'(Macaulay, 2012, p. 199) Then she quotes the O Antiphons, that, since about the eighth century, have been chanted before and after the Magnificat during Vespers in the week before Christmas. She quotes the first and fifth antiphons, the appeals to Divine Wisdom and Eternal Light, 'O Sapientia' and 'O Oriens'.[457] The translation of her quote would read, 'O

[457] The full text of the antiphons that Macaulay cites would be as follows:
O Sapientia: "O Wisdom, O holy Word of God, you govern all creation with your strong yet tender care. Come and show your people the way to salvation."

Wisdom, arranging all things strongly and sweetly, come to teach us.' O East, (which probably means Dawn of the East or Morning Star) splendour of eternal light and sun of justice, come and shine on those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death.' (trans. L. Joseph, 2014)

Macaulay's focus on the Wisdom and Light provided by Christianity is particularly poignant; it directly contrasts with the dark chaos described in *The World my Wilderness*. Moreover, her particular quote combines two very powerful ideas of the interwar era, the idea of an absolute wisdom and the idea that it is particularly meant for those struggling in the dark chaos. It is 'The light of the spirit, the light that has lighted every man who came into the world.' (Macaulay, 2012, p. 199) It can be argued that the interwar converts were united in their belief in the existence of that light and the need for that light.

This idea of each person possessing an inherent attraction to the light of the Spirit is a powerful statement of interwar religiosity. Macaulay develops this theme throughout the novel. It is the idea that belief is 'in the blood… it's in all our blood.' (Macaulay, 2012,) As we shall see the idea that belief was a natural instinct was an idea that was promoted by Communists such as Day-Lewis and Catholics like Chesterton. Stephen Spender reviewed Macaulay's novel for *Encounter* and, citing Laurie's quotation from the O antiphons, argued that 'it is a tract not for logicians nor for reformers but for those who wish to embrace a secret'. (Spender, 1957, p. 78) As we have seen, Spender was himself an interwar convert; he too knew the attractions of embracing a secret.

The novel delves deeply into the strange allure of that secret. It shows the innumerable scandals and oddities of the churches but also shows the undiminished power of those same churches to attract converts. Macaulay satirises but, in a sense, admires the pilgrims flocking to Mt. Ararat in preparation for the very latest Second Coming. 'We might catch up with the Seventh Day Adventists making for Ararat and the Second Coming, for they are part of the strange and ignorant life that goes on, and has always gone on, round about there. No one is surprised at the things that happen in that country, such as the ark landing on the top of Ararat and letting loose on it all those creatures…' (Macaulay, 2012, p. 81) This high country where secular modernity

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O Oriens: "O Radiant Dawn, splendour of eternal light, sun of justice: come, shine on those who dwell in darkness and the shadow of death." (Saunders, 2003)

cannot reach is a place of belief in the transcendent. It is place where the limits of rationalism are surpassed. The movement of countless pilgrims, most of them wildly eccentric in their belief, points to the extremes of the conversion movement. These are the people who, like Fr Chantry Pigg, 'believed everything from the Garden of Eden to the Day of Judgement, and had never let the chill and dull breath of modern rationalist criticism shake [their] firm fundamentalism.'(p. 13) These caricatures are the men and women intoxicated with belief, but, as Laurie reasons, 'with religion you get on a different plane, and everything is most odd. It only goes to show that Human beings are odd, because they have always been, on the whole, so religious.' (p. 144) Part of the appeal of the supernatural is attested to by the cynical and largely amoral intelligentsia who are also flocking to Turkey, to write their 'Turkey books.' (.p. 45) These seem to be the ranks out of which more converts are likely to emerge. Like the young men and women of interwar Oxbridge, they claim no religious belief, but litter the novel languidly discussing religious questions and hungrily visiting esoteric places of pilgrimage.

For Laurie the equation of conversion becomes fairly simple. The Church is a paradoxical gift of love and goodness that emanates out of human frailty and even cruelty.

> …the church, which grew so far, almost at once, from anything which can have been intended and became so blood-stained and persecuting and cruel and war-like and made small and trivial things so important… But it is what happens when a magnificent idea has to be worked out by human beings… And yet they had grasped something, so that the church has always had great magnificence and much courage… and it has flowered up in learning and culture and beauty and art, to set against its darkness and incivility and obscurantism and barbarity and nonsense, and it has produced saints and martyrs and kindness and goodness… and it is a wonderful and most extraordinary pageant of contradictions, and I, at least, want to be inside it, though it is foolishness to most of my friends. (Macaulay, 2012, pp. 196-197)

Many critics have wondered why Macaulay refused to allow Laurie to return to the practice of her faith following the death of her lover. Indeed Macaulay herself, in January 1951, had

returned to the practice of *her* faith following the sudden death of Gerald O'Donovan.[458] There is an argument to be made that by keeping Laurie outside the faith, Macaulay is able to illustrate better what she sees as the tragedy of the non-convert. 'Having to do without God, without love, in utter loneliness and fear, knowing that God is leaving us alone for ever; we have driven ourselves out, we have lost God and gained hell.'(Macaulay, 2012, pp. 275-276) By the end of Macaulay's two great novels we see the road out of the chaos; we see the 'towers of Trebizond, the fabled city, shimmer on a far horizon, gated and walled and held in a luminous enchantment.'(Macaulay, 2012, p. 276) And we find ourselves saddened that Laurie has returned to the chaos, unable to face 'the hard core' at the centre of the city. (Macaulay, 2012, p. 277) Underhill argued that 'the sacrifice which men of genius – mystics, artists, inventors – make of their whole lives to this one Object, this one vision of truth, is not self-denial, but rather self-fulfilment.' (Underhill, 1930, p.65) But for Laurie it seemed too much like self-denial and she vainly wished that 'the pattern should perhaps be easier, the core less hard.' (Macaulay, 2012, p. 277)

The Spiral Ascent

When Edward Upward died at the age of 105 in 2009, the last link with the generation of interwar converts was severed. In many ways he was the ultimate convert. In the obituary he wrote for Upward, Christopher Hitchens recalled his visit to Upward's home on the Isle of Wight. At that time the author was only in his mid-nineties; he still subscribed to the *Morning Star* and while he admitted that 'there doesn't seem much hope these days', he was working on a story entitled, 'The World Revolution'. (Hitchens, 2009) Upward's conversion to Communism outlasted most of the interwar conversions. He instilled the Communist faith in many of his friends before, in 1948, leaving the party in order to practise a more traditional version of his political faith.

[458] On the 12th of January 1951 she had gone to confession, finding it powerfully humbling but also a relief. (Emery, 1991, p. 300) From that point on, despite numerous doubts and mental reservations, Macaulay had partaken of the Sacraments and lived as a full member of the Anglo-Catholic communion. Along with John Betjeman she had been a regular at the more liberal Anglo-Catholic establishment of Grosvenor Chapel. (p. 303)

Edward Upward's most complete autobiographical writing came in the trilogy of novels that comprised *The Spiral Ascent.*[459] In the final volume he uses his main character, Alan Sebrill, to recount the events of his life and the intellectual changes they inspired. What is made clear is that Upward/Sebrill's path to Communism followed much the same pattern as that of many of his fellow converts. He lost his Christian faith while at school, taking to crossing his fingers during the creed. (Upward, *The Spiral Ascent*, 1977, p. 568) Upward went on to Repton as an unformed materialist and there he developed a Cult of Gloom in which all his acts were directed against the school and its ethos. He mocked the OTC, he cheated in exams, he stole from missionary fundraising and, when given some authority, he refused to continue the practice of fagging. (Upward, 1977, pp. 644-646) Once at Cambridge he became convinced that Freud was able to provide the unchanging good, the root realities, that departure from school had so recently fragmented. Like his later conversion to the 'new political life' his conversion to Freudianism was couched in vaguely mystical terms.

> We had in some dim way touched on the elementals. The panic we felt, Richard[460] said, was like the true classic panic which used to be felt by the followers of the god Pan. Except that we were possessed not by Pan but by Freud. Freud. We kept on repeating the name. Sigmund Freud. Or alternatively, Tod… Mr Tod. Or God. Freud was God. (Upward, 1977, p. 681)

Soon after this experience, Upward wrote a poem entitled *Religio Poetae*. It is probable that the idea was taken from Coventry Patmore's relatively well-known essay of the same name, because Upward has clearly attempted to write the poem that Coleridge planned, which was Patmore's topic. Patmore, one of the converts from the *fin de siècle* era, was writing about the religious perceptions of poets. The poet is described as having a 'spiritual insight', like that of Laurie in Trebizond, which allows him to see 'celestial beauty and substantial reality where all is blank to most others...whereby he detects, in external nature, those likenesses and echoes by which spiritual realities can alone be rendered credible and more or less apparent, or subject to "real apprehension"' for the non-poetic masses. (Patmore, 1893, p. 3) In his poem, Upward addressed

[459] The trilogy is comprised of *In the Thirties* (1961), *The Rotten Elements: A Novel of Fact* (1969), and *No Home but the Struggle* (1977).
[460] A somewhat thinly disguised Christopher Isherwood.

an invisible force that has clearly taken the place of a Divine entity, yet the real purpose seems to be to expose the religious perceptions of the poet.

> In the rain's shadowy pace, in the wind's cry
> I feel your strength that shaped to live and die
> All forms that ever were in earth or sky . . .
> Within the stone long-dead your strength yet reigns,
> Within the swallow's skull some dream remains,
> Some shadow of your bounty that sustains...
>
> I have not failed your trust, I have not strayed,
> Since of your very fancy you have made
> My life, and the mind's meanest gesture weighed.
> (Upward, The Spiral Ascent, 1977, p. 682)

It is evident that even before he had convinced himself of Communism he had come to believe, as Patmore did, that the poet 'attains to unveil the infinite and express it in credible terms of the finite'. (Patmore, 1893, p. 4) The poet is therefore a teacher but, 'for effective teaching there must be the disc of really apprehended dogma'; in other words, there must be that hard core, the final unity. (p. 6) Communism would provide Upward with the dogma and indeed the trilogy of novels are essentially concerned with the search for a synthesis of his poetic and political life.[461] Central to Upward's poem and Patmore's essay is the basic conception of the poet as a visionary who can perceive supernatural realities behind the natural realities; the poet as a mystic. This is the point where Upward's novel goes beyond Macaulay's. Laurie apprehends the final unity in the heavenly city, but, as we shall see, Sebrill embraces Communism's final unity. Thus, where

[461] Patmore argued that the poet will be the chief communicator of an inevitable religious revival. 'I think that it must be manifest to fitly qualified observers, that religion, which to timid onlookers appears to be on a fair way to total extinction, is actually, both by tendency from within and compulsion from without — through heresies and denials of all that cannot be "realised" — in the initial stage of a new development, of which the note will be *real apprehension*, whereby Christianity will acquire such a power of appeal to the "pure among the Gentiles," i.e. our natural feelings and instincts, as will cause it to appear almost like a New Dispensation, though it will truly be no more than the fulfilment of the express promises of Christ and His Apostles to the world' (1893, p. 8). Given Edward Upward's role as the Communist catechist who worked for the conversion of Auden, Spender and Isherwood, it is easy to see the wisdom of Patmore's theory of the poet as the religious revivalist, albeit not in the religion Patmore predicted. As John Lehmann wrote, 'I heard with the tremor of excitement that an entomologist feels at the news of an unknown butterfly sighted in the depths of the forest, that behind Auden and Spender and Isherwood stood the even more legendary figure of … Edward Upward.' (Cited in Hitchens, 2009)

Laurie perceives the possibility of an enchanted or mystical life, Sebrill lives the Communist version of that life, climbing ever higher. A powerful irony emerges from this comparison and that is that Upward, the materialist, has written a novel that breaks free of symbols and signs and seeks directly to detail the mystical experiences on offer to the converts that live the enchanted life.

The novels of Edward Upward can be seen to combine the themes of chaos and wholeness that we find in Eliot's poetry and Macaulay's novels. As we saw in the previous chapter, Upward's *Journey to the Border* concerns the movement through the fragmented landscape in search of conversion. The tutor tries to elude madness whilst solving the 'epistemological crisis' encountered as he navigated the racecourse and its myriad of conversion destinations. Facing a life without conversion the tutor concludes, 'Thinking was only an exercise, a weaving of decorations… why go to Switzerland and say 'mountains' when you can just as easily say 'mountains' here and now.? Why go anywhere, why *be* anywhere?' (Upward, 1994, p. 28) In this mood he concludes that the 'unknowable blurred world… is eternally heartless, mindless, dead. It is dead even though it moves.' (p. 30) It is the waste land.

Upward followed his 'waste land novel' with his 'Ash-Wednesday novel', *The Spiral Ascent*. Whilst it is initially concerned with conversion, the majority of the novel is written about life as a believer. He details the ascent to the level of a pure political struggle, free from the compromises of party lines and self-censorship. It is a novel of perpetual and somehow strangely cyclical conversion moments in which he seeks the 'poetic life' only to realize that it is stale unless animated by living 'the new political life.' (Upward, *The Spiral Ascent*, 1977, p. 787) Finally, in old age, he discovers this new political life for which he would 'lose everything… if necessary'. (Upward, 1977, p. 787) This new life transcends any parochial politics and is described simply as 'the political struggle'. (Upward, 1977, p. 787) The struggle simply involves the local fight against injustice and he joins the small group of villagers protesting against the imperialism and capitalism of the Vietnam War era. Yet in these small demonstrations he discovers a source of rarified poetic vivacity that imbues the landscape with a palpable 'marvellousness.' Upward's joy and complete abandonment to the ever-new political life reveals a certain political mysticism. In tracing out the major themes of *The Spiral Ascent*, having examined similar themes in

Macaulay's novels, we begin to get a sense of *why* the clerisy sought to 'escape the Waste land' through conversion to such dogmatic religions.

In previous chapters we have used the word enchanted to describe the life lived in touch with the supernatural. However at the centre of the enchanted life is really the mystical life. The former is an essentially religious life. The latter is the attempted life of holiness. As Taylor makes clear the enchanted life was lived by most people; it was a way of experiencing the everyday. (2007, p. 25) The mystical life, on the other hand, is the self-conscious deepening of the enchanted life and is generally found among the saints. Upward's novel, going beyond the conversion experience, is really concerned with a life in which his sense of enchantment deepens; a life that constitutes a form of political mysticism.

In *The Spiral Ascent,* the focus is on the conversion rather than a detailed account of the waste land. The protagonist, Alan Sebrill, has also just graduated from university and is facing an uncertain life as an unenthusiastic educator. He too is unable to accept the reality into which he has been born, yearning instead to transcend the narrow life and 'come alive again at last.' (Upward, 1977, p. 8) An inability to transcend his bourgeois limitations leads to a suicide attempt. As he wanders the cliffs preparing to throw himself over, he suddenly desires to turn to religion. He decides against non-conformism, believing that 'he would do better to attend some church which would seem wholly strange, such as the Catholic one, visible a few miles inland, with the Italianate tower and windows. Other poets, far better poets than himself, had turned to Rome.' (p. 41)[462] As he reaches the cliff's edge he decides that 'if he did not join [the party] there was nothing before him except madness or death.' (p. 42) He was rescued from this waste land by conversion.

Once he visits the Party's committee rooms he concludes that his duty is to abandon his 'quasi-religious motives' and simply abandon himself to the party. 'From now onwards his aim must be

[462] Later, in the full flower of his Communist life, Sebrill and his plain but admirably doctrinaire wife Elsie worry about their children succumbing to the lure of Rome. 'Wouldn't it be dreadful if we became so absorbed in the Party that we didn't look after the children properly and one of them grew up to become a fundamentalist – or a Catholic convert, like George Fletcher's daughter.' 'That was a shocking thing. We thought of him as a model communist, tirelessly active; but when he was at home, which wasn't often, he was unpleasant to his wife – I daresay he despised her for not being a communist, though she wasn't religious – so it's not surprising the daughter reacted against everything he stood for.' (Upward, The Spiral Ascent, 1977, p. 325) It is interesting that though Sebrill himself was earlier attracted to Catholicism he and his wife could only explain this later conversion to the desperate floundering of a traumatised child.

not to help himself, save his own soul, but to help Communism.' (Upward, 1977, p. 45) He describes his first Communist meeting as an escape 'from imagination into reality.'(p. 51) And yet this reality, despite his rejection of religious motives, is clearly mystical, giving him a new perception.

> The impression of drabness which he had been ashamed of having was removed, and he recognized both the greatness and the beauty of the people he had come among... He saw these people once again as he had imagined them before he had entered the room, and as he had temporarily been unable to see them when confronted by their actuality, and he saw them the more clearly for having been actually in their presence: they were the representatives of the future. From their eyes, bleared or bright or set in undernourished faces marked with skin disease, there looked out the life of the future, that better and beautiful life on earth which – through their efforts and the efforts of others like them – would eventually come. It was this, Alan thought, that made them even to the outward view so immeasurably more impressive than the gracefully-bodied, welldressed young men and women he had seen in the summer beneath whose bourgeois exterior the only future that could be detected was one of decay. (Upward, 1977, pp. 56-57)

This mystical sense of the secret plan of the universe ennobles the impoverished and decrepit activists whilst enlivening Alan's conversion to the party. As he goes out with a working class member and hands out leaflets for an upcoming election, Sebrill undergoes a powerful realisation, concluding from his 'blissful day' that Communism would renew the world, purging it of its loathsomeness; it would allow him to live the poetic life but it demanded complete self-surrender.

> He knew how he must live and die. He saw now what it meant to be a Communist. A mere change of heart, a mere revolution in the soul, would not make a Communist. Only constant political action could do that. If he lived his external life rightly, kept unfailingly in touch with the Party and worked for it, there would be no need to worry about his soul or his poetry. (Upward, 1977, p. 69)

Sebrill soon undertakes the discipline of party life, accepting the suppression of his will in an effort in to play his part in the secret plan of the universe. 'He finds that what really counts is not

so much the more spectacular events such as demonstrations but the steady everyday political grind.'(Upward, 1977, p. 110)

As his faith deepens he comes to believe that Communism is the path to an earthly paradise and, in that way, has a religious power that Catholicism could never have matched. 'It would become far more important than even the greatest religious organizations had ever been, because unlike them it would be worldwide and without rivals… There could only be one Communism, just as there could only be one body of scientific knowledge.'(Upward, 1977, p. 138) This final unity would complete the secret plan that religion had only ever perverted; Communism would remove the doctrine of personal sin and establish heaven on earth. (pp. 138-139) Alan saw himself as part of the plan, saw himself following the revolutionaries, the 'partakers in the greatest event that had occurred in the history of the world'. (p. 172)

The major hurdle on the ascent in the first volume is the expulsion from the party of Sebrill's friend, Bainton who is deemed to be a hopeless romantic. Sebrill concludes that, 'there, but for the grace of . . . Marx, go I,' but at the same time rejects personal feelings for the sake of the party. At this act of self-denial Sebrill experiences a sense of unity with the Communist final unity. 'Alan, in arriving at this view of Bainton, felt an exaltation not altogether different perhaps from what might have been felt by a religious person in the act of subordinating natural human desires to the supposed will of God. It was an exaltation that arose from the very suppression of his natural kindly feeling towards Bainton.' (Upward, 1977, p. 177)

The first volume ends with the reaffirmation of his Communist destiny; 'This is why I was born.' (Upward, 1977, p. 280) Like Gerard Manley Hopkins at Manresa House in North Wales, Sebrill abandons his poetry for the sake of sake of the secret plan of the universe. 'A time would come when human beings would know how to remove the social obstacles which they themselves had been forced to set up against happiness. Then the poetic life could be lived – though he would be dead – by others whose inborn bent would be similar to his.' (p. 281) The poetic life is essentially that lived by the mystical figure with a particular apprehension or 'spiritual insight', to use Patmore's words. Upward is so engaged in fighting to follow the dictates that he doesn't have time to give these insights written expression. He is too busy being Martha that he cannot

afford to be Mary. This disharmony is only resolved when his complete surrender to his vision of ultimate reality takes him beyond the narrowing confines of the party.

Following the war, Alan and Elsie Sebrill became convinced that the party has abandoned the Leninist principles of constant revolution and has instead accepted a policy of accommodating the gentle socialism of Atlee's Labour government, despite its seemingly capitalist demands for increased production. Initially their ability to live in the future was enough to palliate this suffering. He was able to transcend the petty disappointments of the day by remembering that life was not 'something in the past, everlastingly lost, but as a shining future possibility inspiring him to persevere in the political struggle through which alone [the poetic life] could eventually be realized, for others if not for him.' (Upward, 1977, p. 403) Soon however, Alan's devotion to Communism's final unity, the dialectic of history, strains his loyalty to the party mechanism that allowed him to live the Communist version of the enchanted life.

Hitherto the choice had been between Communism and Chaos;

> ...the Party had been everything to him – and but for it he would have killed himself long ago, as a young man. It had taught him that his personal unhappiness had been due ultimately to the same external evil which was the cause of the immeasurably greater wretchedness of the oppressed and exploited all over the world, and that the only freedom for him as for them was to be found in the struggle against this evil, and that only the Party could lead the struggle successfully. (Upward, 1977, pp. 426-427)

And yet when the party seemed to abandon the final unity, Alan had no choice but to abandon the party; he had 'reached a dialectical point of change.' (Upward, 1977, p. 453) Detached from Communist life he feels himself falling into the void without the party to serve. 'Outside the Party there could be no way for him to continue the political fight... He was purposeless and he was a deserter from the cause of the exploited and the oppressed. At this thought, a rage against himself arose in him which was stronger than his terror' (p. 460) And yet, despite his loss of the vision that emboldened his first steps as a Communist, Sebrill decides to continue to serve the Party 'as a poet.'(p. 461) In his blindness and solitude he turns to something like prayer in an effort to produce the poetry of which the Communists worthies might approve. And yet this was now of little use. The darkness seemed complete. 'He found he could stop his trembling by

thinking of Stalin and by speaking the name of Stalin, repeatedly but not quite aloud, much as a religious believer might have called on the name of God. Yet though this was an effective method of suppressing the physical symptoms of his anxiety it did not help him in the least with his writing.' (p. 471)[463]

In her description of the mystical way, Underhill explained that the Dark Night of the Soul interrupted the illuminations that marked the first part of the journey to total unity with God. The self is tossed back from its hard-won point of vantage. Impotence, blankness, solitude, are the epithets by which those immersed in this dark fire of purification describe their pains.' (Underhill, 1930, p. 381) And yet this pain precedes the final discovery of Absolute reality and the perfect service of one's will to that reality. Underhill describes this as being a characteristic of the Unitive Life – 'the high point of the spiral ascent....' (p. 413) One can see parallels between this experience and the experience that Upward describes in his novel.

In the final volume, *No Home but the Struggle*, Upward is living a life of happiness, as a poet. He is outside the party but still committed to 'the revolutionary abolition of poverty' and, as such, writes poetry for the revolution. (Upward, 1977, p. 505) In the meantime he begins to protest on behalf of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament. Suddenly the exaltation that marked his youth returned. 'Why do I feel such a joy, such a calm and immutable-seeming exaltation, this afternoon as I walk up the High Street...? I think my joy can only be explained as an after-effect of the C.N.D. vigil I took part in the day before yesterday, at the War Memorial, to protest against the new series of nuclear tests that the Soviet government has begun.' (pp. 599-600) By protesting against the Soviet Union, Sebrill's commitment to Communism's final unity has been revealed as total and he is rewarded with a sense of new life: 'I finally and absolutely

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[463] This is a very telling moment in Upward's novel. It reveals the depth of his belief, putting him on the same level as the true believers like Vladimir Mayakovsky. Mayakovsky wrote a poem on the occasion of Lenin's fiftieth birthday that includes what seems to be a meditation on a divinised Lenin:

'Lenin!
Lenin!
Lenin!
I glorify
In Lenin
world faith
And glorify
My faith.'

(Tumarkin, 1983, pp. 99-100)

abandoned the old political life. My joy this afternoon assures me that the new poetic life has truly begun.' (p. 603) Soon this life is augmented with the hope of a perfect unity when the Chinese Communist Party attacks the revisionism of the Soviet Union.

> [S]uddenly we found that a communist-led country with seven hundred million inhabitants was on the same side as we were. It was this discovery which started the growth in me of the idea, fully conscious at last this afternoon, that Elsie and I might one day be able to rejoin – not the Party, because it does not look like ever being able to cleanse itself of its revisionism – but the Marxist-Leninist movement which I believed I was joining when I became a Party member... or that if such a movement has hardly begun to exist again yet in this country we ought to help to revive it. (Upward, 1977, pp. 659-660)

This powerful hope, combined with his increasingly active role with the CND, leads Upward to the perfect harmony of the poetic and a purified political life, free from compromise. 'If I am to write poetry at all in future I must turn once more to a life which is primarily in support of the political struggle.' (Upward, 1977, p. 786) As Sebrill takes this decision he fully expects to resurrect the mystical perceptions of his youth.

> I know now that the only way I can bring poetic vitality into the poetry I want to write in future is by writing it to serve the political struggle. And only by making the struggle my first concern always, and by being prepared to lose everything for it if necessary, shall I become capable of finding more often in my surroundings here something of the same marvellousness that my imagination helped to give them years ago... (Upward, 1977, p. 787)

Edward Upward's novel, *The Spiral Ascent*, reveals the mystical attractions of Communism. Whilst Upward was a hardline Communist, in his autobiographical writing we see, in surprisingly explicit detail, the powerful religious attractions that the young intellectuals were often seeking and, to some extent, finding in the Communist Party. Communism provided a haven from the fragmentation of secularism and provided a path back to a form of the enchanted life.

Embracing the Hard Core of Communism

As shown in the previous chapter, for many of the converts the experience of chaos in the form of interwar crises was often a crucial catalyst for conversion. They would describe these political and economic experiences in terms of the waste land, and their conversions as a way out of that waste land. Even as doctrinaire a Communist as John Cornford would include the imagery of chaos and decay in his dry theoretical treatises on Communism. He would describe the 'decay of the whole capitalist order' and the accompanying 'chaos and misery of a society' that lacked the 'complete transformation' of Soviet order. (Cornford, 1986, pp. 85, 90, 91-92) As Andrew Boyle summed it up, 'the agony of the thirties was an agony of conflicting beliefs. The choice between fumbling democratic procedures for intractable local problems and the final revolutionary solution of the Communist International seemed a simple one for rebellious and discontented idealists to make.' (1979, p. 11)

And yet it responded to a deeper religious need as well. As Cornford put it in a powerful poem written while he was at Stowe: 'And they, who had faced disaster at compass points, / had not foreseen this inner chaos. Disaster / struck from within and smashed outer defences.' (Cornford, 1986, p. 28) Arthur Koestler put it in somewhat simpler terms when he explained, 'I became converted because I was ripe for it and lived in a disintegrating society thirsting for faith.' (Crossman, 2001, p. 17) Communist converts would often describe their conversions using religious language and their writing often conforms to the typically interwar pattern that begins with the chaos of *The Waste Land* before moving tothe coherent order of *Ash Wednesday*.

The poetry and prose of the interwar converts to Communism contain several telling commonalities. There is a widespread agreement on the chaos, illustrated but not necessarily caused by the interwar narrative. This chaos is frequently defined by images of decay, dryness, sterility (and dissatisfying sexual experiences), winter landscapes and death. There is a welter of Madame Sosostris figures proffering false religions and false hope amidst the chaos. While the non-converts are often abandoned to the waste lands, the converts discover the irresistible order and coherence of their Trebizond. Their conversion is often explained in somewhat mystical, even biblical, language. And the imagery shifts to that of water, fecundity, growth and purpose as the converts discover their part in the secret plans of the universe. The supine sterility of the

rich elites awaiting death in their dark waste lands is often contrasted with images of fire and light that characterize the converts who discover new life in their new faith.

Though he was never an actual member of the party, W. H. Auden recognized the power of the Communist system. It demands 'self-surrender for those individuals who, isolated, feel themselves emotionally at sea.' (Cited in Carpenter, 1981, p. 152)[464] In 'A Communist To Others', his contribution to Michael Roberts' 1933 collection *New Country*, Auden reversed the usual pattern of imagery, positing the rich and powerful as the inheritors of a waste land:

> The future's kissed you, called you king,
>
> Did she? Deceiver!
>
> She's not in love with you at all
>
> No feat of yours can make her fall,
>
> She will not answer to your call
>
> Like your retriever.
>
> (Roberts, 1933, p. 22)

Not only are the rich doomed but the religious, the 'dare-devil mystic[s]', are promised a future in which 'nothing remains but the dry-as-bone / night of the soul.' (Roberts, 1933, p. 211) Liberal intellectuals are next and are promised a similar future of sterility and decay, 'Their daughters sterile be in rut, / may cancer rot their herring gut'. (p. 213) He finishes by addressing the intellectuals who 'fled in horror… to islands in your private seas' but demands that they 'return, be tender; or are we more / than you could face?' (p. 213) The poem finishes with a return to the working classes who will inherit the future:

> Comrades to whom our thoughts return,
>
> Brothers for whom our bowels yearn
>
> When words are over;
>
> Remember that in each direction

[464] For Michael Straight, the need to believe even transcended his own powers of reasoning. He wrote to his mother from Cambridge, 'My actions are based upon my personal needs rather than my convictions... I want to believe. ...That's why I want to go to the North of England, to see conditions there myself. For there's no sound basis for Communism in Cambridge, and there may be in the North.' (1983, p. 71) It is interesting to see so firm a conviction that experience of the interwar narrative would, in all probability, result in a conversion.

> Love outside our own election
> Holds us in unseen connection:
> O trust that ever.
> (Roberts, 1933, p.213)

On one level Auden's poem is a perfect example of the clerist's attitude. The poor will inherit the earth but they need intellectuals to let them know it. However, on a deeper level, there is a clear example of a mystical vision. The future is a time beyond words, it is a time of completion in which the workers and their supporters are bound together by an extrinsic and transformative love, while those that allowed the world to flounder, 'to whom our misery's a rumour', will be cast out. (Roberts, 1933, p. 211)

For Cecil Day Lewis, Party membership was the only alternative to Catholic conversion.

> Inoculated against Roman Catholicism by the religion of my youth, I dimly felt the need for a faith which had the authority, the logic, the cut-and-driedness of the Roman church – a faith which would fill the void left by the leaking away of traditional religion, would make sense of our troubled times and make real demands on me. Marxism appeared to fill the bill. (1960, p. 209)

As mentioned in the chapter on the universities, Cecil Day Lewis's first major poem, *Transitional Poem*, was concerned with the mind's search for wholeness, an antidote to fragmentation. This search is then completed in the next major poem, *Magnetic Mountain*. Here the whole is found in political religion. The symbol for the new whole is the Magnetic Mountain that calls men to herself, linking the sky to earth, the eternal with the temporal and containing within the resources to create the ordered and redeemed new world.

The poem is separated into four sections. The first section outlines the Communist Trebizond, the second goes back through all the waste lands out of which every man is being called. The third reveals the logic of interwar conversions. It reveals a world in need of redemption and contrasts converts with the non-converts who remain in their decaying worlds. The fourth section discusses the converts who board their ark and 'cast off onto chaos and shape a course' (Day Lewis, 1992, p. 166) before landing on the Magnetic Mountain and calling the new converts to

their posts, creating the foundations of the new civilisation. The poem concludes by pointing to the utopia of the future for which the first converts will have given their lives.

A key symbol in the poem is the kestrel. The kestrel has obvious links with that other poetic falcon, Manley-Hopkins' Windhover.[465] Day Lewis, like Hopkins, recognizes the mystical *inscape*[466] of the falcon, expressed in its freedom, its power and artistry. Day Lewis uses the Kestrel as an image of the spirit of the intellectual. He calls it 'My kestrel joy' (Day Lewis, 1992, p. 135) and it instinctively seeks to escape the waste land, and through its flights of freedom is drawn to the magnetic mountain. Indeed the Kestrel plays much the same role as that of Noah's dove,

> Follow the Kestrel, south or north,
> Strict eye, spontaneous wing can tell
> A secret. Where he comes to earth
> Is the heart's treasure. Mark it well.
>
> Here he hovers. You're on the scent;
> Magnetic mountain is not far,
> Across no gulf or continent,
> Not where you think but where you are.
> (Day Lewis, 1992, pp. 164-165)

The idea of the Kestrel is an important one because it reflects Christian idea of conversion, that of the soul containing the instinctive longing for transformation and purgation, and the ability to recognize its homeland in the conversion destination.[467]

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[465] Day Lewis was clearly influenced by Manley Hopkins, going so far as to directly quote a line from Hopkins' Oxford poem, 'Peace', 'He comes with work to do, he does not come to coo' (1992, p. 162) This sets up the final section which is about the final leap of conversion, leaving friends on the pier and discovering the higher realities in the new life. By invoking Hopkins' poetry of mystical contemplation, Day Lewis links the Communist apprehension of higher truths from atop the Magnetic Mountain, with the Catholic, or at least, Christian mystical experience of God's contemplative peace.

[466] By the inscape Hopkins means the inherent qualities that imbue it with a particular identity and dignity.

[467] Day Lewis later used many of these same ideas in what he described as a morality play entitled, *Noah and the Waters*. The play was a disaster, not only because of the slabs of Marxist writing that blight the dialogue but also because Noah's conversion to the Communist cause leads him to a pastoral utopia that even the *Daily Worker* rejected as backward. Day Lewis's biographer wrote of the play, '*Noah and the Whale* shows Day-Lewis taking

The mountain contains, at its centre, a hard core in the form of magnetic ore that will underpin the new utopia. Far from the fragmentation of the earlier poem, here the Kestrel is at peace having come to rest over the mountain.

> Somewhere beyond the railheads
> Of reason, south or north,
> Lies a magnetic mountain
> Riveting sky to earth.
>
> Kestrel who yearly changes
> His tenement of space
> At the last hovering
> May signify that place.
>
> Iron in the soul,
> Spirit steeled in fire,
> Needle trembling on truth –
> These shall draw me there.
>
> ...
>
> Near that miraculous mountain
> Compass and clock must fail,
> For space stands on its head there
> And time chases its tail.
>
> There's iron for the asking
> Will keep all winds at bay,
> Girders to take the leaden
> Strain of a sagging sky.
>
> O there's a mine of metal
> Enough to make me rich

[his] commitment to its furthest extreme, to a point when it began to damage his credibility as a writer.' (Stanford, 2003, p. 146) Day

And build right over chaos
A cantilever bridge.

(Day Lewis, 1992, pp. 136-137)

For Day Lewis, Communism contained a mystical truth that was 'beyond the railheads / of reason'. On the mountain we also find an enchanted or cyclical sense of time in which the spirit, 'steeled in fire' discovers the truth and, with the natural resources at hand, is able to bridge the chaos. The waste land is defeated. All the while the soul is drawn irresistibly to the mountain by its iron. This seems to be the Communist equivalent of Augustine's idea of the restless heart.[468]

In part two Day Lewis, using the imagery of autumn, outlines the decay of modern life, describing the false religions that might keep people unwittingly bound to the waste land. The first is progressive life, where love is a clinic and 'creation's pulse / keep[s] Greenwich time' (Day Lewis, 1992, p. 141) However the speaker rejects the offer of modern family life, 'I / must have life unconditional, or none.' (Day Lewis, 1992, p.141) Each false religion is characterized by a modern unnaturalness and winter's frozen landscape. He attacks the public schools; 'here we inoculate with dead ideas / against blood-epidemics, against / the infection of faith and the excess of life.' (p. 143) And asks the old boys, 'will it suffice / to wear a scrum-cap against falling skies?' (p. 144) He attacks deadening religion 'who mobbed the Kestrel out of the air' while all the time, despite the plethora of 'early flowering dream[s]', within the speaker the spirit is ever-seeking the true religion.

There, as a candle's beam
Stands firm and will not waver
Spire-straight in a close chamber,
As though in shadowy cave a
Stalagmite of flame,
The integral spirit climbs
The dark in light forever.
(Day Lewis, 1992, pp. 146, 149-150)

[468] 'Thou movest us to delight in praising Thee; for Thou hast formed us for Thyself, and our hearts are restless till they find rest in Thee. (Augustine, 1900, p. 1)

In section three Day-Lewis lays bare the logic of the interwar conversions. He outlines the fallen state of the world and the need to find something more. He details the empty and unsatisfying sterility of the non-converts. 'Shall the harsh friction the gritted teeth of lust / not generate a spark, bring me to life?' (Day Lewis, 1992, p. 152) He uses the symbols of the poised hammer and the sharpened sickle to represent the need for a Communist solution to a bleak and deceitful world. (p. 153) Where section two excoriated the makers of idols, section three urges the people to turn away from the idols.

> They tell you all's well with our lovely England
> And God's in our capital. Isn't it grand
> Where the offal of action, the rinsings of thought
> From a stunted peer for a penny can be bought?
> It seems a bargain, but in the long-run
> Will cost you your honour, your crops and your son.
> They're selling you the dummy, for God's sake don't buy it.
> (Day Lewis, 1992, p. 155)

Day Lewis contrasts the convert with those who hold onto their unjust positions. The converts are the 'ones have found their good' like the wealthy young man, an inversion of the rich young man of the gospels, who having heard 'though from afar, / the clear first call of new life, / …shall arise, shall scatter his heirlooms, shall run till he falls.' (Day Lewis, 1992, p. 158) The non-converts however, are left to '[die] of dry-rot ending in asylums, / a curse to children, a charge on the state.' (p. 161)

In the final section we see 'spring's first explosion' and winters glacier's breaks, flooding the landscape with water, the powerful symbol of salvation, so common in interwar poetry:

> To feel frost surrender, an ice age finished:
> Whose strength shall melt from the mountains and run
> Riot, careering down corries and canyons.
> What floods will rise then through rivers replenished,
> Embankments broken, and bluffs undone,
> Laid low old follies, all landmarks vanished.

Is it ready for launching, the Argo, the Ark,
Our transport, our buoyant one, our heart of oak.
(Day Lewis, 1992, p. 165)

The spring time is the time of conversion but the utopia that is to come is in summertime. For now 'that new life must break through.'(Day Lewis, 1992, p. 168) And the new converts in the springtime of chaos, begin to understand 'the length and breadth and depth of decay' and, in this new life, they cast off their bourgeoisie preoccupations and suffer for the new kingdom: 'We shall expect no birth-hour without blood.' (pp. 170, 172) And yet, the peace of feeling assured that they are working for the redemption of the world and the reassertion of a mystical vision is enough.

Eyes, though not ours, shall see
Sky-high a signal flame.
The sun returned to power above
A world, but not the same.

…

On our magnetic mountain a beacon burning
Shall sign the peace we hoped for, soon or late,
Clear over a clean earth, and all men turning
Like infants' eyes like sunflowers to the light.
(Day Lewis, 1992, p. 174)

When he first joined the party Day Lewis was skeptical about many aspects of Communist theory but despite that he felt at peace. 'I did have a real sense of tranquility, a conviction that I had obeyed my conscience and done right.' (1960, p. 211) Part of his peace was based on the self-sacrifice that was required for him to play his part in what he saw as the secret plan of the universe. 'We were prepared to help destroy a system that perpetuated itself by such hideous human wastage, even though our own pleasant way of life would be destroyed… how radiant for some of us was the illusion that man could, under Communism, put the world to rights.' (Day Lewis, 1960, pp. 210, 211)

In *World Within World*, Spender echoed Day Lewis's belief that the soul or kestrel spirit yearned for the same background to the shadow show of things,' for ultimates. (Underhill, 1930, p. 8) 'In love I wished for a transcendence of physical desire, an escape from the real. In politics, I wished for a social revolution which would achieve justice without introducing new injustices into the methods used to make revolutions.' (Spender, 1977, pp. 31-32) Though his memoir was written from the jaundiced perspective of lost faith, Spender admitted that the yearning towards perfection was a particular symptom of the period. 'The peculiarity of the 1930s was not that the subject of a civilisation in decline was new, but that the hope of saving it or transforming it had arisen, combined with the positive necessity of withstanding tyrannies.'(Spender, 1977, p. 249) Despite his brief and disappointing Party membership, Spender understood the attractions of a complete conversion and even in hindsight regretted the timidity of his political religion.

> We were the Divided Generation of Hamlets who found the world out of joint and failed to set it right… I now think that what I should have done was either throw myself entirely into political action; or, refusing to waste my energies on half-politics, made within my solitary creative work, an agonized, violent, bitter statement of the anti-Fascist passion. (Spender, 1977,p. 202)

In his contribution to *The God that Failed*, Spender explained that in Communism he found a coherent explanation for what he had instinctively suspected for some time. From childhood he had understood that all mankind was linked by a similar fate; 'since to be born is to be a Robinson Crusoe cast up by elemental powers upon an island,' but that the equality of man had been perverted and the world had entered a fallen state. 'How unjust it seems that all men are not free to share what nature offers here; that there should be men and women who are not permitted to explore the world into which they are born, but who are throughout their lives sealed into leaden slums as into living tombs.' (Crossman, 2001, pp. 231-232) Initially these ideas were vaguely Christian and 'really to act according to them I would have had to give all I had to the poor and live as simply as a peasant in India or China.' (p. 232) It was the interwar narrative that convinced Spender that the fault wasn't fallen man but economic inequality. 'Only when the crisis spread to Great Britain and other countries begin to realize that it was a disease of capitalism throughout the world.'(pp. 233-234) It is interesting that in the intellectual climate of interwar Oxbridge such a realization led to an instinctively Communist response: 'Gradually I

became convinced that the only cure for unemployment, other than war, was an international society in which the resources of the world were exploited in the interests of all the people of the world.' (p. 234) He briefly emerged from his conversations in Berlin, with Upward, holding the conviction that revolution was the only solution to the chaos and that 'all public actions and many private and personal ones were of two kinds: those for, and those against the revolution.' (p. 239) Spender was ultimately unconvinced that the 'central organizations of the Communists [were] capable of making a classless society, or indeed of doing anything except establish[ing] the rule of a peculiarly vindictive and jealous bureaucracy…' and so he abandoned Communism. (p.243) Not because its analysis of the chaos was incorrect but because it couldn't redeem that chaos.

Yet for a brief period Spender was able to convince himself that he would support the revolution, 'even if it meant the loss of my own social independence.' (Crossman, 2001, p. 240) He explained that, in the midst of crosstides, the convert enjoyed 'the doubly secured Communist conscience' the twin anchors being, 'the fixed vision of the evils done by capitalism, and the equally fixed vision of the classless society of the future.' (pp. 240-241) This, in turn, allowed 'the happy communist' to live 'in a state of historical-materialist grace.' (p. 256) Their whole vision had been transformed by their conversion. 'The Revolution was the beginning and the end, the sum of all sums. Someday, somewhere, everything would add up to the happy total which was the Dictatorship of the Proletariat and a Communist society. This way of thinking cancelled out all experiential objections.' (p. 255)

To outsiders like Spender the mystical vision of the convert often seemed absurd and anti-rational but to the adherents they were utterly convincing. The philosopher Karl Popper had a similar experience to that of Spender. In a 1953 Lecture, he explained that it was the totality of the secular religions, completely antithetical to their claims of scientific objectivity, that revealed their falsity; leading him to abandon the Social Democratic Party of Austria in 1919, after only a few months of membership.

> I found that those of my friends who were admirers of Marx, Freud, and Adler,[469] were impressed by a number of points common to these theories, and especially by their apparent *explanatory power*. These theories appear to be able to explain practically everything that happened within the fields to which they referred. The study of any of them seemed to have the effect of an intellectual conversion or revelation, open your eyes to a new truth hidden from those not yet initiated. Once your eyes were thus opened you saw confirmed instances everywhere: the world was full of *verifications* of the theory. Whatever happened always confirmed it. Thus its truth appeared manifest; and unbelievers were clearly people who did not want to see the manifest truth; who refused to see it, either because it was against their class interest, or because of their repressions which were still "un-analyzed" and crying aloud for treatment. (Popper, 1972, pp. 34-35)

The totality of the convert's vision was so overwhelming that many of the new Communists were able to ignore reports of the most outrageous cruelties in Stalinist Russia. Steiner explained that inherent within this mystical vision was a powerful hope, a hope that could only be understood 'in the light of a religious and messianic vision, of the great promise which says you shall wade through hell up to your eyeballs if necessary because you are on the destined prophetic way to the resurrection of man in the kingdom of justice.' (Steiner, 1974, p. 9) After the chaos of the waste land, after the fear of the interwar narrative, it is little wonder that many intellectuals surrendered to the hope of Communism as the ultimate reality and then later, like Koestler, gave in to their 'myth addiction'.

In the poems that Spender submitted for Michael Roberts' *New Signatures* in 1932, we can see the same hope that he would later reject. Across the poems there is the basic contrast between the Waste land and Trebizond. The privileged elite live in a world of decay; 'those ladies like flies perfect in amber / those financiers like fossils of bones in coal.' (Roberts, 1935, p. 86) They are cut off from the salvific movements and are thus prisoners.

[469] In the same year, Popper also volunteered in one of Alfred Adler's clinics. He got to know him quite well but was ultimately unconvinced by the research methodology that had underpinned the development of individual psychology. Perhaps unsurprisingly, following his break with Marxism and Freudianism and Adlerian psychology in 1919-1920, he briefly turned to existentialism 'accepting a leap of faith to reform politics.' (Hacohen, 2002, p. 94)

Far far the least of all, in want,
Are these
The prisoners
Turned massive with their vaults and dark with dark.(Roberts, 1935, p. 87)

Escaping from this fate is the intellectual who meditates on ‘those who were truly great.’ (Roberts, 1935, p. 89) These are the men of ‘flowering spirit’ whose blood was ‘drawn from ageless / springs / breaking through rocks in worlds before our earth.’ The imagery of water and fire connects these converts with those found in the poems of Eliot and Day Lewis. The ‘truly great’ provide Spender with an edifying example; with a way out of the decay that threatens the rich and a way into the harmonious and paradisal uplands of the Communist landscape:

Near the snow, near the sun, in the highest fields
See how these names are feted by the waving grass
And by the streamers of white cloud
And whispers of wind in the listening sky.
The names of those who in their lives fought for life
—Who wore at their hearts the fire's centre.
Born of the sun they travelled a short while towards
the sun,
And left the vivid air signed with their honour.
(Roberts, 1935, pp. 89-90)

The hearts bearing ‘the fire’s centre’ are similar to Day Lewis’s ‘spirit steeled in fire’ and both are similar to what Underhill termed ‘this spark of the soul—with its innate capacity for apprehending the Absolute. (1930, p. 298) For the Communist convert a key element in the conversion literature was the idea that they were made for Communism. Being born of the sun and travelling to the sun gives full expression to the idea often found in Catholic conversion stories that conversion is just going home. Thus, having discovered their new religion they were able to sign their very air ‘with their honour.’

The world of coherence is presented in the only overtly Communist poem among Spender's contribution. 'The Funeral' describes the funeral of a worker. Here we find a sense of order, coherence, and that same symbol of fire that characterized the 'truly great'.

> This is festivity; it is the time of statistics
> When they record what one unit contributed.
> They are glad as they lay him back in the earth
> And thank him for what he gave them.[470]
>
> …
>
> They think how one life hums, revolves and toils,
> One cog in a golden and singing hive:
> Like spark from fire, its task happily achieved,
> It falls away quietly.
> (Roberts, 1935, p. 95)

Even in death the worker is able to inspire meditations on the perfect life, representing a sense of peace that is denied to the rich who are still alive in their waste land. He has served as a cog in 'a golden and singing hive' a completely cohesive factory. It would be unduly cynical to see this poem as representing Spender's ignorance of working class life; what it really represents is the sense of unity and purpose that he believed could be found in the Communist life.

While Spender was ultimately suspicious of Communism's totality, this was what attracted Eric Hobsbawm, even when the victory seemed improbably distant. 'What made Marxism so irresistible was its comprehensiveness. 'Dialectical materialism' provided, if not a 'theory of everything', then at least a 'framework of everything', linking inorganic and organic nature with human affairs, collective and individual, and providing a guide to the nature of all interactions in a world in constant flux.' (Hobsbawm, 2003, p. 97) Once the convert joined the party, he had made a commitment to a 'chosen life' and enjoyed a coherent intellectual landscape. 'The party was what our life was about. We gave it all we had. In return we got from it certainty of our

[470] The judgement of Christ is replaced in the judgement of the workers and instead of the Master exclaiming, 'Well done, good and faithful servant,' (Matthew 25:21) it is the other servants who thank the dead man – this is very clear expression of humanist religion.

victory and the experience of fraternity.'(Hobsbawm, 2003, pp. 124, 129) James Klugmann said something similar when he recalled that 'My commitment to the cause was for life, and it was an exhilarating moment to be alive and young, we simply *knew*, all of us, that the revolution was at hand.' (Cited in Boyle, 1979, p. 72) This extraordinary sense of hope reflects the power of the hard core that the Communists had found in their new religion. The British author, Shiela Grant Duff recalled that 'Russia was our hope of peace and our protection from poverty… .' (Cited in Holzman, 2013, p. 42)

Hobsbawm's account of party life contains accounts of numerous lives that were lived in an extraordinary obedience to the dictates of the party.[471] As he puts it quite simply, 'If the party ordered you to abandon your lover or spouse you did so.' (Hobsbawm, 2003, p. 135) The salvific mission of the Party was such that he describes its early history in Europe in terms redolent of the *Acts of the Apostles*: it is analogous to the story of the suffering Church. As he explains when discussing the early martyrs, 'In the total war we were engaged in, one did not ask oneself whether there should be a limit to the sacrifices imposed on others any more than on ourselves. Since we were not in power, or likely to be, what we expected was to be prisoners rather than jailers.'(pp. 139-140) As we shall see, the accounts of the suffering Church in Mexico, provided by Greene and Waugh during the late thirties, would reveal very similar attitudes.

Among those who had been a prisoner was the ever-edifying David Haden Guest. As Harry Pollitt wrote in his introduction to Haden Guest's posthumous memoir, Communism provided a coherent unity to the young convert's life. 'His was a living Marxism' and because of that he was protected from the waste land that proved too much for the defeatists who came and went. 'We

[471] Most poignantly Hobsbawm tells the story of Ephraim Feuerlicht who had been given the Party name, Franz Marek. Marek had been leading figure in the French party and was almost executed by the Gestapo in 1944 but the arrival of the Allies saved him. Most of his professional life had been spent as a professional revolutionary in the 'Apparat' of the illegal Communist Party in Austria; setting up and running 'safe houses, frontier crossings, and the provision and distribution of literature – and later its entire agit-prop activities.' (Hobsbawm, 2003, p. 142) During the war he worked for the Marquis in France. After the war he returned to Austria and worked as a writer and editor for party publications. Having protested the invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968, and, having briefly separated the Austrian party from Soviet influence, he was expelled from the party. He continued to work for a left-leaning journal but died in complete poverty in 1970. 'He died a Communist… He continued on this road to the end, resisting the temptations of a post-political refuge in literature or graduate seminar. In this way, he was a hero of our times, which were and are bad times.'(p. 143) Hobsbawm also recalls the story of a young Communist trapped among the burning ruins in bombed out Cambridge during the Second World War, 'She cried out: Long live the Party, long live Stalin... Long live Stalin... and Good-bye boys, good-bye Tedy.'(p. 134) Both stories reveal an apprehension of the Absolute which survived even the most disastrous set-backs. It is little wonder that Hobsbawm found them so edifying.

see in this memoir how the discipline of being a Communist and knowing how to combine the unity of theory and practice… stimulated manifold energies and brought them into a synthesis which saved him from frittering away his gifts and from becoming a mere dilettante.' (C. Haden Guest, 1939, pp. 9-10) Haden Guest believed that in Communism he had found the final unity. It was an encounter that 'explains why so many of David Guest's own circle felt impelled like him to be prepared to give the greatest thing that men can give – their lives.'(p. 12) As one comrade put it in this same memoir, 'we became inspired missionaries for a new integration of thought and action, a new science of life.'(p. 89)

Philip Toynbee explained the intransigent Communism of his friend Donald Maclean in terms of a direct response to the chaos of interwar England, as well as an excess of faith.

> Obsessed, as every decent man was obsessed in those years, by Fascism in the world at large and by a peculiarly callous and vulgar Old Gang in power at home, it was natural enough at that time for a young Englishman to become a Communist. …looking around at our own hells we *had* to invent an earthly paradise somewhere else. Either because he was so deeply in that he couldn't get out or because he needed the consolations of belief even more than most of us did, Donald Maclean must have kept his blinkers on long after most of us had gotten rid of ours. (1967, p. 22)

When Maclean got to the Soviet Union he took the time to learn Russian, he joined the local Communist party, spurned the trappings usually available to apparatchiks and, according to Yuri Modin, lived simply and demanded work so that he could be useful to the Worker's State. Later he was friendly with several known dissidents but always remained in the party. (Modin, 1994, pp. 248-249) He defended the invasion of Hungary, describing it as being like the War in Spain; the rebels being Franco and the Russian Tanks being the international brigades. (Toynbee, 1967, p. 22) The consolations of belief were, for Maclean so insistent that amidst the grim reality of Soviet life he would claim to Toynbee in 'hectoring and didactic' letters that 'great deeds are being performed here.' (Toynbee, 1967, p. 21) Maclean's faith in the coherent whole, the hard core, of Communism was seemingly immune to the challenges of Soviet policy and even life in the Soviet Union, something that few converts could claim.

The power of these conversions is also revealed in the stubborn conversions of the young Communists even among the disorganized chaos and unremitting barbarity of the war in Spain. John Cornford's poetry, written while he was in Spain, is frequently quoted and discussed in relation to the clerist converts who ran off to fight in the conflict. And yet 'Full moon at Tierz: before the storming of Huesca' and 'A Letter from Aragon' only really reveal the extent of his Communist devotion, in the face of stubborn facts. By themselves Cornford's final poems actually seem complicated, ambivalent and paradoxical. (S. Smith, 2005-2008, pp. 360-361) But read in conjunction with Cornford's juvenilia, in particular his long poem, 'Matachin', these final poems reveal a convert tenaciously clinging to the hard core of Communism in spite of the stink of corpses, the ragged graves, the screaming women and the naked rumps of infants and the moaning militiaman 'unprepared for such pain' that he catalogues in his poetic letter from Aragon. (Cornford, 1986, p. 41) Cornford's first major poem, 'Matachin' reveals the waste land that sustained his faith throughout the chaos of the war in Spain.

Written while he was still at Stowe, 'Matachin' was Cornford's *Waste Land*. It catalogues the fragmented world that awaits him as well as the sterile religions and traditions that he can no longer rely upon. In the opening part of the poem he discusses a future wherein he and his contemporaries, 'must act the parts assigned to us in myths' even though the masks that they are given distort the mind 'expressed by borrowed features whose static grimace moulds it, plastic, within.' (Cornford, 1986, pp. 20-21) Cornford reasons that if he is to act 'we must act in our own sagas.' (p. 21) Later, Cornford was one of the earliest English volunteers to fight in Spain; he wrote to his lover, Margot Heinemann, 'but now I, John Cornford, am beginning to emerge above the surface again and recognise myself and enjoy myself, and it feels good.' (p. 175) Despite his misgivings, his identity was solidified in Spain where he fought 'like a Communist, if not like a soldier.' (p. 174) Communism, having replaced the myths, was able to give him a new part that did not distort his features so much as give them their perfect expression.

'Matachin' continues by describing in detail the chaotic landscape of yet another interwar waste land.

> There is no more peace in this landscape.
> Heap up the stubble as fuel for an angry mind

> That else will burn what it was lighted to warm.
> No peace for you here, no more oneness with earth,
> And that is not to be recovered. Turn back.
> Go range about the world to gather moss,
> An emptier distracted search. Or remain
> Waiting, watching, indifferently observing
> Reactions of others or self to useless experiments,
> And not revive the apologetic fantasy.
> (Cornford, 1986, p. 22)

Here are the familiar images of aridity and aimlessness, the same sense of chaos; 'huge, empty buildings falling,' and the sense that the landscape cannot be redeemed. (Cornford, 1986, p.22) There is also the vocational question raised by such aridity. The only options are escapism or indifference. The poverty of these options helps to understand Cornford's relief at being able to fight like a Communist in Spain.

The chaos, 'not of our own making / nor our preventing' is described in terms of the fall of Carthage and fall of Rome. But these somewhat predictable schoolboy tropes are off-set by the particularly interwar declaration of religion's impotence. Amidst the chaos, the speaker 'come[s] in darkness to the Maison Dieu falling…' (Cornford, 1986, p. 23) Its collapse is put down to the fact that it is a beautiful lie; it 'creates a too well-ordered view of chaos / that hides its ugliness with unfelt symbol─ / for superstition gone, here is no more fear ─ / there is needed a new symbol for chaos.' (Cornford, 1986, p. 23) From religion he moves to the suburban home where the 'desolation' is overwhelming: 'Language is purposeless here, mind's river stagnant / ….[because] the house is blind.' (Cornford, 1986, p. 23) The result of this waste land is the descent into the paradox of frustrated desire. 'I was by now accustomed to unreason, / nor were you puzzled, searching for a oneness. / …We must do something, there is nothing to be done.' (Cornford, 1986, p. 27)

This paradox of an instinctive but unsatisfied search for a final unity, clearly finds its solution in the Communist Party. In the poems he wrote at Cambridge, Cornford focused on a sense of vocation, believing that he had discovered the secret plan of the universe. He rejects the wisdom

of his elders, ‘Here we break for good with the old way of living, / for we’re leaving only what wasn’t worth having, / and face turned forward, for there’s no life here.’ (Cornford, 1986, p. 29) He accepts his role in the salvific mission to redeem the chaos of his time, a role that is reflected in Communism’s ability to transform the interwar period’s iconic image of the wronged worker:

> You know at what forge our purpose was steeled,
> At what anvil was hammered the hammer we wield,
> Who cut the sickle to a cutting edge.
> And under the light of our five-point star
> The faces you see here are different far
> From those at the closed works, or fallen bridge.
> (Cornford, 1986, p. 30)

As ‘the storm sweeps down’ light returns to the landscape; it is the light of a new vision. ‘But light slitting the eyelids in the cold dawn, / The old world seen in a new light.’(p.30) This perception is founded in the vocational action of the Communist activist. In ‘As Our Might Lessens’, also written while he was at Cambridge and had begun his new life as a servant of the revolution, he wrote, ‘Action intervenes, revealing / New ways of love, new ways of feeing, / Gives nerve and bone and muscle to the word.’ (p. 33) The sterility and loneliness of ‘Matachin’ is forgotten in the redeemed Communist landscape, expressed in the fecund image of a woman, but only if their weak flesh is overcome in their vocational struggle.

> If through this hell we keep our nerve and pride
> Where the nightmare faces grinned
> We, or our sons, shall wake to find
> A naked girl, the future at our side.
> (Cornford, 1986, p. 35)

In ‘Full moon at Tierz: before the storming of Huesca’ Cornford finally enters ‘the senseless-seeming pain’ (Cornford, 1986, p. 35) that he predicted in his Cambridge poems but is carried through by his faith; ‘We are the future. The last fight let us face.’ (p. 38) The poem opens with waste land about to be redeemed by the light of the dialectic; note the very familiar imagery of sterile ice and darkness and flowing water.

The past, a glacier, gripped the mountain wall,
And time was inches, dark was all.
But here it scales the end of the range,
The dialectic's point of change,
Crashes in light and minutes to its fall.

Time present is a cataract whose force
Breaks down the banks even at its source
And history forming in our hands
Not plasticine but roaring sands,
Yet we must swing it to its final course.
(Cornford, 1986, p. 38)

Cornford wants to take his place in this act of redemption but is locked 'in a private battle with my nerve'. (Cornford, 1986, p. 39) This tension is admirably captured in the lines, 'We plunge into the dark alone, / Earth's newest planet wheeling through the night.' (Cornford, 1986, p. 39) The poem ends with the idea that the fight on Huesca's plain is really the fight of the entire world; it is the fight 'for Communism and for liberty.' (Cornford, 1986, p. 40) Cornford's understanding of his role in an essentially redemptive act is captured in his poetry, in 'As our might Lessens' he observed that 'the dying crucify the living still / For those whose tortured torturing flesh / Stirred at the body under the lash....' (Cornford, 1986, p. 32) Cornford appropriates Christological imagery in order to connect the dead with the living. In the poetry of the Western Front the dead taunt the living but in Spain they are united through the bonds of a mystical compassion. In his poem 'To Margot Heinemann' he described the pain of their separation in similarly salvific terms, 'Dear heart, the thought of you / is the pain at my side, / the shadow that chills my view.' (Cornford, 1986, p. 39 p. 40) Cornford was among 'the living,' who sought to renew the earth and out of the sacrifice of his personal loves and fears, 'Earth's newest planet' would be born in the midst of chaotic night.[472]

[472] Contrasting the two poems that Cornford posthumously contributed to Stephen Spender's *Poems for Spain,* Monteath shows that the poem 'To Margot Heinemann' is intensely personal and only linked with Spain through the word 'Huesca', whereas 'Full Moon at Tierz: Before the Storming of Huesca' is written with the communist faith

Stan Smith rightly points out that Cornford battled doubts during his time in Spain. 'A hesitant and solitary being wills himself, in a kind of prayer to an absent Marxian deity, not to lose his faith, to be a good Communist...' (S. Smith, 2005-2008, p. 361) And yet even when he was at Cambridge, Cornford was aware that his weak flesh might undermine his high calling. A clue to his attitude comes in poetic tribute to Sergei Kirov, following the latter's murder.

> Nothing is ever born without screaming and blood.
>
> Understand the weapon, understand the wound:
> What shapeless past was hammered to action by his deeds,
> Only in constant action was his constant certainty found.
> He will throw a longer shadow as time recedes.
> (Cornford, 1986, p. 36)

Cornford's 'Letter from Aragon' possesses a strange irony, even sarcasm, that has more in common with the war poems of Owen and Sassoon than with his earlier poems. The speaker continues to remind the reader that despite horrific violence, 'this is a quiet sector of a quiet front.' (Cornford, 1986, p. 41) And yet, despite the potential for even greater violence, he retains his certainty, his hard core, by remaining in action.

In his diary letter to Margot Heinemann Cornford revealed that when he first joined up, he thought about leaving and, on one occasion had even tried to leave but was forced to remain. (Cornford, 1986, pp. 172, 174) By September he had been chosen to return to England to gather together volunteers and return with them to the front. Despite his misgivings, he did so. He once again chose action. A letter that he slipped past the censors in early December of 1936, concludes, 'No wars are nice, and even a revolutionary war is ugly enough. But I'm becoming a good soldier… there's a tough time ahead but I've plenty of strength left for it.' (Cornford, 1986, pp. 188-189) That letter was written on December 8th. By the middle of December he had been offered the chance to remain behind the lines training the English volunteers, but once again he

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and consequently, 'personal fears...are allayed through the recognition of the collective purpose to which he dedicated himself.' (Monteath, 1994, pp. 86-87) This was the same vocational consolation that animated much of the early romantic poetry from 1914 but was missing from the anti-war poetry written in the years after 1915.

chose action. (Stansky, 1965, p. 387) He was killed on either December 27th or 28th, 1936, at the age of twenty one.

In June of that year, before he first travelled to Spain, Cornford wrote to his mother boasting of the convert's special apprehension. '…to be a revolutionary means to approach the whole reality there is, which is different and wider than other people's, in a different way.' (Cornford, 1986, p. 170) His desire to approach the 'whole reality' and retain his certainty kept him in the front lines.

In Cornford's 'Sad Poem' with which he said goodbye to his lover, Ray Peters, he wrote, 'There's a new life fighting in me to get at the air, / And I can't stop its mouth with the rags of old love.'[473] Whilst this may have been viewed dimly by Peters who had borne him an actual child, it reflects Cornford's powerful belief that he must take his place as a revolutionary fighter, in keeping with the secret plan of the universe. As his father later wrote, 'the reward of giving at last *all* he had to a cause that promised, at least, to be the cause of liberty, was a brief but exalted happiness, not to be bought at a lower cost.' (Stansky, 1965, p. 359) A similar understanding of Cornford's faith was shown by the political scientist Ernest Barker, who contributed to an obituary for Cornford in the *Cambridge Review*,

> His belief in Communism was no youthful effervescence; it was a still water which ran deep… He had a first-rate mind; but he had also something greater – very much greater. He was one of those who are willing to stake heart's blood upon their convictions, turning them into a faith, and acting in the strength of their faith. One may disagree with the convictions: one can only bare the head before the testimony offered to them. (Sloan, 1978, p. 250)

In his letter to the Hebrews, St. Paul described the saints of the Old Testament thus: 'all these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance.' (Hebrews 11:13) The obituaries written for Cornford employ a similar logic to to describe admiringly his death in Spain. His encounter with

[473] He had also used this logic when he broke things off with his cousin, Elisabeth Raverat. 'She can't lead the sort of life I do; and I neither can nor want to give it up. She's born in the wrong century; the fault for our failure isn't in ourselves so much as in the time we're living in… If one's ready to kill and be killed for the revolution, this kind of break shouldn't make too much difference, Heil Rot Front!' (Cornford, 1986, pp. 167-168) In Heinemann he clearly found someone who was similarly revolutionary in thinking.

the final unity of Communism was enough to sustain him even in the midst of seemingly incomparable savagery.

Embracing the Hard Core of Catholicism

The Catholic converts were obviously also reacting to the modern waste land; finding their pattern or hard core, in the midst of modern chaos. In the introduction to his book on four of the most significant British converts to Catholicism, Adam Schwartz discussed the 'common early twentieth century pattern of: dismay with modern secularity, search for an affirmative alternative, and ultimate acceptance of Roman Catholicism as the culmination of countercultural convictions.' (2005, p. 8) The subjects of Schwartz's insightful study were G. K. Chesterton, Christopher Dawson, Graham Greene and the poet David Jones and, as he notes, the writings of all four really constitute 'a form of rebellion against modern secularism'. (Schwartz, 2005, p. 13) The Catholic converts, much like the Communist converts, moved from *The Waste land* to the coherent order of *Ash Wednesday*. However, there is an important distinction between the writing of the communist converts and the Catholic converts that such a movement produced. The Communist Trebizond was obviously progressivist in outlook.

The Catholic converts celebrated a movement from the chaos to coherence but the significant difference between the two groups was that the Catholics grounded their hard core, not in a future utopia, not in scientific progress but in the enchanted wisdom of the past. Their hard core was to be found, as Macaulay's was, among the ruins of Trebizond, rather than among the rationalised plans of the party room. As Schwartz explained:

> Their "no" to modern unbelief was a "yes" to traditional notions of human nature and ways of life and thought, values they invoked to judge the post-Christian world deficient and that they found voiced best by a particular form of Roman Catholicism: it was this faith that seemed the best hope for promoting their desired transformation of their culture... These writers, then believed more in *rinnovamento* than *aggiornamento*, thinking that the twentieth century Church existed in living continuity with its past and hence could be sensitive to current conditions without forsaking its ancestral teachings. They were thus conservative and radical: each did uphold traditional Roman Catholicism,

> yet not because it was hoary, but because he saw this ancient creed as a truer view of God and man than that offered by reigning irreligion… (2005, p. 24)

Given that their writing was at their centre of the Catholic converts' vocations, an overview of the major works of the converts covered in this study will be included in a later chapter. For now this chapter will be concerned with specific works by Roy Campbell, David Jones, G. K. Chesterton, Evelyn Waugh and Graham Greene that provide evidence of the converts' understanding of their own conversion.

Roy Campbell's poem *The Flaming Terrapin* creates a clear juxtaposition between the world of tradition and anarchic modernity, telling the story of the movement from the waste land to the Promised Land. The poem is written in the short-epic tradition of Eliot, Sitwell and Pound. (Northrop Frye, *Anatomy*, Cited in Voss, p. 453) And yet the central conceit of the poem has much in common with Day Lewis's *Magnetic Mountain.* The poem synthesizes an array of mythological figures and images which combine to tell the story of Noah's ark, bearing Noah and his sons to the promised shore. Outside the ark there is the anarchy of the modern world.

> The souls of Nations, tossed like stormy trees,
> With groans and heavy thunder filled the breeze,
> And as each race, in travail with its doom,
> Sent forth its hollow voice into the gloom,
> The flying winds its faint, sad rumour bore
> Till all was heard along that dismal shore.
> Anarchy, jolted in a rattling car,
> Crested the turrets of the storm, and plied
> His cracking whip with forked lash to scar
> Red wheals across the gloom…
> (Campbell, 1949, p. 73)

The enchanted Ark of tradition, bearing the power and wisdom of the past, sails through the anarchic, even diabolical, storms of modernity. It lands at the promised shore and the enchanted connections between heaven and earth are re-established through a mythological salvation narrative.

High on the streams of ether, through the void
The angel riders of the air deployed
Their glittering files, as if in one hooped line
Of flame, the far horizons to confine,
And spin a running girdle round the earth-
A belt of fire...
Now the earth meets the sun: through nerve and limb
Trembling she feels his fiery manhood swim:
Huge spasms rend her, as in red desire
He leaps and fills her gushing womb with fire...'
(Campbell, 1949, p. 88)

Campbell's mountain, much like Day Lewis's [re]-connects heaven and earth and, using similar imagry of fire marks the rebirth of a redeemed and [re]-enchanted landscape. Where Cornford simply described the future as a 'naked girl' Campbell goes further and describes the earth as a woman in the moment of copulation. Both of these images implicitly call for re-birth, their radicalism further explains why Keynes' call for patient and rational reform (previous chapter) were largely ignored by the interwar intellectuals.

The final stanza of the poem explicitly poses the question that is only implicit within Day Lewis's *Magnetic Mountain*. How is it that the speaker is so drawn to this magnetic mountain; why is he fearless amidst the chaos?

Though the dark sky has gathered stormy numbers
Of vultures to be snowed upon my corpse;
Though the weak arc of Heaven warps
Beneath the darkness that encumbers
The night beyond; though we believe the end
Is but the end, and that the torn flesh crumbles
And the fierce soul, rent from its temple, tumbles
Into the gloom where empty winds contend,
In gnat-like vortex droning─what is this

That makes us stamp upon the mountain-tops,
So fearless at the brink of the abyss,
Where into space the sharp rock-rampart drops
And bleak winds hiss?
It is the silent chanting of the soul:
'Though times shall change and stormy ages roll,
I am that ancient hunter of the plains
That raked the shaggy flitches of the Bison:
Pass world: I am the dreamer that remains,
The Man, clear-cut against the last horizon!'
(Campbell, 1949, p. 93)

Campbell wonders aloud about the mystical element, Day Lewis would call it the 'kestrel joy', that 'makes us stamp upon the mountain-tops'. Both the Communist and Catholic converts were aware of a mystical longing that refused simply to succumb to the bleak chaos, and instead sought the mountain top. It was there in Alan Sebrill's refusal to commit suicide; it was there in Klugmann's preparedness to commit for life; it was there in Cornford's preparedness to keep fighting in Spain; it was there in Koestler's refusal to allow the contradictions of party policy to shake his belief. For Campbell the 'silent chanting of the soul' in the midst of a purely materialist conception of man would ultimately lead him to seek a solution in the Catholic Church.[474]

As shown in the previous chapter, it was the 'silent chanting of the soul' that moved David Jones towards Catholicism while in France. In a talk he gave for the Welsh Home Service of the BBC in 1954, David Jones identified his 'particular Waste Land' as 'the forward area of the West Front'. (Jones, 1959, p. 28) It was there, 'sometime in 1917 somewhere in the neighbourhood of Ypres' that, like so many of the soldiers with whom he served, he was confronted by the Catholic tradition. However, following his encounters,'four years later, in 1921, I found myself unable to do other than subscribe to that tradition.' (Jones, 1959, p. 28) Whilst we have already

[474] In a letter to his parents regarding this poem, he revealed what might almost be considered spiritual darwinism: 'I would much sooner feel that I was a Simian in the state of evolution into something higher, than a fallen angel in a state of decline. So, with the deluge as symbolizing the war and its subsequent hopelessness, I have represented in the Noah family the survival of the fittest, and tried to describe the manner in which they won through the terrors of the storm and eventually colonized the earth.' (Cited in Pearce, 2004, pp. 66-67)

encountered David Jones as a war poet in an earlier chapter, it is important to revisit his work in light of his position as an interwar convert. Despite the fact that his Waste Land was 'the ffosydd[475] in Gallia Belgica' what we may discover is that many of the themes discussed in this chapter are also to be found in Jone's great poetic memoir, *In Parenthesis*, and other autobiographical fragments. (Jones, 1959, p. 28)

As mentioned in the chapter on the interwar narrative, a major theme of the First World War's trench literature was the inapplicability of religion to the Western Front. To take but one example, Wilfred Owen's *Anthem for Doomed Youth* is a highly structured rejection of religious ritual. An anthem is a religious hymn from the Anglican tradition.[476] Using the form of an anthem, Owen structures both the octave and the sestet antiphonally. (Clausson, 2005, p. 167) The question is about the place of ritual in the war and the answer rejects the possibility of any form of religious ritual in such a landscape.

> What passing-bells for these who die as cattle?
> Only the monstrous anger of the guns.
> Only the stuttering rifles' rapid rattle
> Can patter out their hasty orisons
> No mockeries now for them; no prayers nor bells;
> Nor any voice of mourning save the choirs, –
> The shrill, demented choirs of wailing shells;
> And bugles calling for them from sad shires.
> (Owen, 1974, p. 44)

To Owen, in the face of the animalistic slaughter, (itself an ironic inversion of traditional notions of religious sacrifice), prayer becomes a mockery and the voices of choirs becomes senseless violence. The angry sarcasm of Owen's poetry became, in time, a very recognisable feature of trench literature. This is one of the major differences between David Jones and his contemporaries.

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[475] Ditches

[476] The word Anthem is a combination of the words antiphon and antiphony and is a musical composition that is sung responsively. 'The first definition of *anthem* in the *OED* is: "A composition, in prose or verse, sung antiphonally, or by two voices or choirs, responsively; an ANTIPHON."' (Clausson, 2005, p. 166)

In Parenthesis was one of the last pieces of trench literature able to make a mark on the literary establishment. As mentioned in an earlier chapter, the poem includes many of the traditional themes of trench literature. It mourns the stupidity of officers, the loss of faith in the war but it is clearly a poem written after the publication of Eliot's *The Waste land*. Begun as a few sentences in 1927, *In Parenthesis* wasn't completed until 1932 and not published until 1937.[477] 'One might attempt to define *In Parenthesis* as a poetic transmutation of personal experience into a memorial to, and a lament for, the ancient unity of this island of Britain.' (Hague, 1975, p. 38) The poem, though mourning the fragmentation accelerated by modern war, seeks to understand the events by grounding them in the deep past; through Shakespeare's histories, Arthurian legends, early Welsh epic poems and earlier still to *The Iliad* and Troy. Writing as a Catholic, the poet creates a text which bears the marks of the conversion experience, and Jones, rejecting the tradition of Owen and others, actually seeks to understand the events through the enchanted and unifying experience of the liturgy. Whilst the multiple layers of allusions and symbols make the poem somewhat ellusive, as Charles Andrews explained so succinctly, 'whatever the specific referent, the liturgy places these events into a context of religious worship, giving them holy meaning. [John] Ball's injury and the death of his company are not a senseless waste when the trench city becomes a sort of Holy City, where war has spiritual significance.' (2007, p. 92)

'I did not intend this as a 'War Book' – it happens to be concerned with war. I should prefer it to be about a good kind of peace...' (Jones, 2003, pp.xii-xiii) In section seven of *In Parenthesis* the battle of the Somme begins, the previous six sections having all sought to prepare the men for this one glorious consummation. It is there in Mametz wood that Siegfried Sassoon lost his faith in the war, but is there that Jones is able to find an enchanted peace. For Jones the period of the Somme and after was one of 'wholesale slaughter' thanks to the peculiar violence of purely mechanized war and the rapid turnover of men. However in the lead-up to the Somme the waste land was able to be a place of enchantment. (Jones, 2003, pp. ix-x) It is this recognition that differentiates Jones from his contemporaries. Clearly the Church in all her gothic splendour is able to be everywhere, even here in the midst of chaos and suffering.

[477] Since the war Jones had, intermittently, been one of the '6,000 mental cases still under observation.' (Jones, 1995, p. 98)

Mametz wood is described as a Cathedral with the sun 'filtered from high up traceries' and below 'in the very core and navel of the wood there seemed a vacuum, if you stayed quite still, as though you'd come on ancient stillnesses in his most interior place', (pp. 171, 181) while below the men lay the crypt in which the buried soldiers were able to 'fructify the land' with their 'clammy drippings'. (pp. 182, 163) Yet this is not mere romanticism; the entire structure of the poem seeks to portray the movement towards the Somme and the sacrifice of the men as bearing a direct relationship to the liturgy of the Mass. As Dilworth put it, 'The culmination of this destruction in battle… corresponds in liturgical importance to the Christian Eucharist. In fact, certain actions that lead to the Somme offensive resemble parts of the Christian Mass that precede its Canon.' (1973, p. 245) Dilworth goes on to view the approach to the front line as an extended introit to the altar of sacrifice while the final decision of the General Staff to launch the ill-fated attack 'corresponds to the final oblating prayers of the Mass – the *Hanc Igitur* and *Quam Oblationem* – which lead directly into the consecration…' (pp. 252-253)[478]

In his description of the men as they see the signal to charge, Jones employs the language of the Mass and an allusion to Abel to place them amongst a long line of priest-figures. 'Each one bearing in his body the whole apprehension of that innocent, on the day he saw his brother's votive smoke diffuse and hang to soot in the fields of holocaust; neither approved nor made acceptable but lighted to everlasting partition.' (Jones, 2003, p. 162) The line 'neither approved nor made acceptable' inverts the *Quam oblationem tu* from the Cannon of the Mass. 'Be pleased, O God, we pray, to bless, acknowledge, and approve this offering in every respect; make it spiritual and acceptable, so that it may become for us the Body and Blood of your most beloved Son, our Lord Jesus Christ.'(p. 221, ft.14)[479] For Jones the willing acceptance of death by many of the 'innocent' solders links the first day of the Somme with the sacrifice of Calvary and its unbloody reenactment in the sacrifice of the Mass.

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[478] The *Hanc igitur* takes its name from the first words of the prayer. It is currently translated as 'Therefore, Lord, we pray: graciously accept this oblation of our service, that of your whole family; order our days in your peace, and command that we be delivered from eternal damnation and counted among the flock of those you have chosen.' While the *Quam oblationem tu* translates as, 'Be pleased, O God, we pray, to bless, acknowledge, and approve this offering in every respect; make it spiritual and acceptable, so that it may become for us the Body and Blood of your most beloved Son, our Lord Jesus Christ' (International Committee on English in the Liturgy, 2011)

[479] Jones gives the Latin, 'Quam oblationem tu, Deus, in omnibus, quaesumus, benedictam, adscriptam, ratam, rationabilem, acceptabilemque facere digneris: ut nobis Corpus et Sanguis fiat dilectissimi Filii tui, Domini nostri Iesu Christi' and the translation comes from the International Committee on English in the Liturgy, 2011.

Those happy who had borne the yoke
who kept their peace
and these other in a like condemnation[480]
to the place of the skull.
(Jones, 2003, p. 154)

Jones' conversion to Catholicism enables him to sense an incarnational reality in the deaths of the men and he uses Eucharistic language for his explanation of the hidden nobility of his dead comrades, 'who with intention took grass of that field to be for him the Species of Bread.' (Jones, 2003, p. 163) Where Owen found ritual to be impossible, Jones found that grace was able to transform retrospectively even the savagery of the Somme into an enchanted ritual.[481]

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[480] Jones develops this divide between those ready for death and those who are not, in the minutes leading up to the attack. In the final two minutes the men are either seeking to be excused or making excuses. The former are linked with Job through the question, 'Responde mihi?' Which Jones, using a footnote, connects with the little office of the dead and Job 13: 22-28

22 Then summon me and I will answer,
or let me speak, and you reply to me.
23 How many wrongs and sins have I committed?
Show me my offense and my sin.
24 Why do you hide your face
and consider me your enemy?
25 Will you torment a windblown leaf?
Will you chase after dry chaff?
26 For you write down bitter things against me
and make me reap the sins of my youth.
27 You fasten my feet in shackles;
you keep close watch on all my paths
by putting marks on the soles of my feet.
28 "So man wastes away like something rotten,
like a garment eaten by moths.

The mystical figure of Job is a perfect foil for Jones' infantrymen. They are not the viciously misused conscripts that we find in Graves, Sassoon, Blundell etc. Rather, they are windblown leaves who are paradoxically tormented by God and yet, at the same time, enjoy a mystical intimacy with God.

[481] In the Waste land of Jones' Mametz wood there is a curious paradox of ordered chaos. '[T]he world falls apart at the last to siren screech and screaming vertical steam in conformity with the Company's Sailings and up to scheduled time.' (Jones, 2003, .p. 159) In this enchanted chaos, 'you move forward in your private bright cloud like / one assumed / who is borne up by an exterior volition.' (p. 164) It is worth noting that Jones explained his persistent allusions to King Arthur by explaining that the Celtic Arthur was 'the Protector of the Land, the Leader, the Saviour, the Lord of Order carrying a raid into the place of Chaos.' (Jones, 2003, p. 201, ft. 42) (Also cited in Dilworth, 1973, p.249) It is this understanding of the possibility of salvation in the midst of Chaos differentiates Jones' poetry from the other war poets, while also connecting it with the poetry of deep history.

Against this enchanted ritual founded on and ennobled by the sacrifice of Calvary and re-presented in the Mass, Jones places the immanentist ritual which is only capable of destruction and fragmentation. (McInerney, 2011, p. 61)

> 'He stood alone on the stones, his mess-tin spilled at his feet. Out of the vortex, rifling the air it came—bright, brassshod, Pandoran; with all-filling screaming the howling crescendo's up-piling snapt. The universal world, breath held, one half second, a bludgeoned stillness. Then the pent violence released a consummation of all burstings out; all sudden up-rendings and rivings-through—all taking-out of vents— all barrier-breaking—all-unmaking. Pernitric begetting—-the dissolving and splitting of solid things.' (Jones, 2003, p.24)[482]

'Alone on the stones', is where the sacrifice takes place.[483] The mess tin, earlier referred to as 'the bloody thing' and carries 'this day's bread' has gone and now the soldier stands in its place. At that moment in the Mass when the priest prays, 'make holy these gifts, we pray, by sending down your Spirit upon them like the dewfall' a bomb descends and, rather than a new creation, there is merely destruction (McInerney, 2011, p. 61) This was the immanentist power rather than the transcendent power that could redeem such squalor.[484]

It is Jones with his innate capacity for perceiving the Absolute who is able to see a paradoxical dignity in the slaughtered men and poetically transform the chaos into a religious ritual. Central to Jones' enchanted waste land is the Queen of the Woods who, much like the Marian figure in Eliot's *Ash Wednesday*, is able to win grace and protection for those men in her care, thereby helping to sanctify the waste land.

> Pray her hide you in her deeps
> she's only refuge against

[482] Also cited in McInerney, 2011, p. 61.
[483] In Jones' later poem, *The Anathemata* he refers to the place of sacrifice as 'the threshold-stone'.
[484] At one point the immanentist power seems to be in the ascendent and Jones seems to echo Owen when he writes, 'No one sings Lully Lully / for the mate whose blood runs down.' (Jones, 2003, p. 174) Lully Lully comes from the Middle English *Corpus Christie Carol* and, on the surface it seems that the dead go unaccompanied by ritual. And yet the *Corpus Christie Carol* identifies Christ in the tomb as 'a knight' whose wounds bleed 'by day and night.' (Traditional, 2011) In other words, Christ is the chivalrous knight par-excellence whose blood fructifies the earth, as the soldiers' blood is said to do. By no one singing Lully Lully over the dead soldiers in the midst of the carnage, it simply means that no one is able to recognise the similarities between the self-sacrificing men and Christ himself.

this ferocious pursuer
terribly questing.
Maiden of the digged places
let our cry come unto thee.
Mam, moder, mother of me
Mother of Christ under the tree
reduce our dimensional vulnerability to the minimum─
(Jones, 2003, pp. 176-177)

Crouching against the earth turns into a prayer to the 'Mother of Christ' and the survival of John Ball seems to be a product of the prayers to his Mother while those who fall are honoured by the Queen of the wood.[485]

Yet the Virgin Queen cannot find one soldier, Dai Greatcoat. '[S]he calls both high and low, she has a very special [decoration] for him.' (Jones, 2003, p. 186) While critics generally disagree on the role of Dai Greatcoat in the poem, they are in agreement that his great boast in section four contains the key to the entire poem. It is important to remember that 'Dai' was Jones' nickname among the troops and that while he wrote *In Parenthesis* he wore his army greatcoat. Dai responds to the escalating boasts of military nous and experience by announcing:

My fathers were with the Black Prince of Wales
at the passion of
the blind Bohemian king.
They served in these fields,
it is in the histories that you can read it, Corporal–boys
Gower, they were–it is writ down–yes.
Wot about Methuselum, Taffy?
I was with Abel when his brother found him,
under the green tree.
I built a shit-house for Artaxerxes.

[485] In the final pages many of the figures from the previous portions of the poem are chosen as 'twelve gentlemen' for that 'elect society.' These varied men who we have seen as figures of absurdity, crassness, courage and honour are given different marks of distinction that seem like a supernatural version of military honours.

I was the spear in Balin's hand

that made waste King Pellam's land.

(Jones, 2003, p. 79)

Having been with David, having served with Longinus, Dai is an archetype who cannot die because he seems to have always existed. As the embodiment of cyclical time, Dai is a figure of traditional wisdom who is able to explain the chaos that, to soldiers like Owen and Graves, merely seemed like empty madness.

I was in Michael's trench when bright Lucifer bulged his
primal salient out.
That caused it,
that upset the joy-cart,
and three parts waste.
You ought to ask: Why,
what is this,
what's the meaning of this.
Because you don't ask,
although the spear shaft
drips,
there's neither steading – not a roof-tree.
(Jones, 2003, p. 84)

By seeing the roots of the conflict in the original cosmic discord and the emergence of evil, Jones is able to see it as the most recent manifestation of the ageless struggle between good and evil. Dai Greatcoat has served in all the great battles of the past and while he held the tunics of those who crucified Christ, he also heard Christ's invitation to a restored world, 'Applis ben ripe in my gardayne'. (Jones, 2003, p. 83)[486] The line comes from an anonymous 15th century poem in

[486] The full quote is:
Fair love, let us go play:
Apples ben ripe in my gardayne.
I shall thee clothe in a new array,
Thy meat shall be milk, honey and wine.
Fair love, let us go dine:

which Christ promises the poet that he will prove the poet's love through heaven-sent adversity. (Anon., 1904, p. 39) Thus Dai Greatcoat is caught up in the Salvific drama of good and evil. His role in the war is part of the promise implicitly made to him by Christ's death. At the end when the Queen cannot find him it is because he is destroyed, blown to pieces.[487] His death is a mystery but the frustration of Major Knacksbull, who is the Forward Observation Officer, helping to direct the barrage of shells, suggests that he was reduced to 'clots and a twisted clout' by his own side. (Jones, 2003, pp. 176-177) This is an important detail because earlier the men who 'preoccupied with dead lines─gibbering the formulae of their profession─' were directly contrasted with Father Larkin and his salvific mumbling to the dead. (Jones, 2003, p. 173) Though both on the British side, we get a sense of conflicting roles, one directing death and another bringing about the resurrection of the dead. This is the same dichotomy that exists between the immanentist power of the bomb (representing mechanized warfare) and the life-giving power of the sacraments.[488] Dai Greatcoat has been killed by the merchants of death but he is assured of repose by Christ's promise, 'Fair love, let us go play'. (Anon., 1904, p. 37) Even the most violent deaths along the Western Front were able to be understood, even celebrated, from the convert's perspective. The distance between the poetry of Wilfred Owen who lost his faith as early as 1912 and died before the war ended,[489] and the poetry of Jones who became a Catholic in 1921, surely reflects the mystical perspective of the convert.

Thy sustenance is in my crippe, lo!
Tarry thou not, my fair spouse mine,
Quia amore langueo.
(Anon., 1904, pp. 37-38)

[487] The disappearance of the body in the midst of the crucible in Mametz wood is a kind of transubstantiation 'of living bodies to dead matter.' (Dilworth, 1973, p. 253)

[488] A neat summation of the different attitudes between the two poets comes in the fact that for Owen, antiphonal responses from the psalter became mockeries in the chaos of war, whereas Jones was able to perceive a form of antiphonal ritual in the midst of that same chaos.

Bursts in groups of four jarred the frosted air with ringing sound.
Brittle discord waft back from the neighbourhood of the Richebourg truckway.
Guns of swift response opened on his back areas. In turn his howitzers coal-boxed the supports.
So gathered with uneven pulse the night-antiphonal: mortared-canisters careened oblique descent with meteor trail; and men were dumb and held their breath for this, as for no thing other.
(Jones, 2003, p. 99 also cited in Dilworth, 1973, p. 245)

[489] In a letter to his mother written in early 1912 Owen wrote of abandoning his position as a Vicar's assistant in Dunsden due, among other things, to his growing agnosticism. 'Murder will out, and I have murdered my false creed. If a true one exists I shall find it. If not, adieu to the still falser creeds that hold the hearts of nearly all my fellow men. Escape from this hotbed of religion I now long for more than I could ever have conceived a year and three months ago.' (Stallworthy, 1974, p. 83) By 1917 disbelief had hardened into cynicism and we see how unmoved he was by the very things that had so moved Jones. Visiting a 'Great Gothic Church' in the Picardy region,

Following his 1922 conversion to Catholicism Chesterton wrote a series of articles for the Dominican publication *Blackfriars* and the American *Catholic World* in which he explained his decision.[490] He wrote that there were only two fundamental reasons why anyone would convert, 'one is that he believes it to be the solid objective truth, which is true whether he likes it or not; and the other that he seeks liberation for his sins.' (1990b, p. 27) However, in these apologetic articles Chesterton developed many of the ideas that would find their fullest and most complete expression in his influential work, *The Everlasting Man* (published in 1925). The main thesis that would emerge from these works was based on a perception of the coherent opposition provided by the Church to the fragmented and chaotic secularism that lurked outside. Outside the Church were 'all the wild innovations and insurrections of modern intellectualism...the new and revolutionary religions that have recently swept the world' (Chesterton, 1990b, p. 38) while inside he saw what he regarded as the objective truth.

According to Chesterton, his own optimism, which he discussed in detail in his *Autobiography*, had been in danger of becoming one of these new religions. Out of this first-hand experience of secularism, Chesterton saw the difference between the Church and the new religions.

> ...the very little I thought I had to say was at one time in some real danger of becoming a complete philosophy. I can only explain my escape from such a disaster by the mercy of God; and it is true that even in those days, there was something in my mind, as there is in every man's, telling me that what I wanted was not new truth or neglected truth, but truth. And to to have turned my one truth into a system, in the matter of modern pioneers would have been nothing more or less than giving my one truth the chance to turn into a falsehood. (Chesterton, 1990b, p. 44)

Chesterton had the choice of taking his 'half-truth into the bustle and confusion of the modern world, of general secular society, and pit[ting] it against all the other notions' or he could 'take his half-truth into the culture of the Catholic Church, which really [was] a culture and where it

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he wrote to his mother, '[I] listened under the knave, as Belloc says, for the voice of the Middle Ages. All I could hear was a voice very much beyond middle age. However I stayed to vespers; and after leaning my hat and stick up against a piece of the true Cross, I sat and regarded the plants (with their paper flowers wired on them), and St. John in bathing costume looking ruefully at another saint in a gold dressing-gown; and the scarlet urchins holding candles and chewing, - probably the grease.'(p. 176)

[490] The articles were later collected together and published under the title *Where All Roads Lead*.

really [would] be cultivated. For that place is really a garden; and the noisy world outside…is none the less a wilderness because it is a howling wilderness.' (Chesterton, 1990b, pp. 47,49) Like the Communist converts, in escaping the fragmented waste lands, Chesterton finds a choherent whole and it proves central to his conversion.

In *The Everlasting Man*, Chesterton expalined the opposition of the Catholic Church and the 'howling wilderness' outside, in remarkable detail. Though ostensibly the book was written as a response to H. G. Wells' *Outline of History,* Joseph Schwartz described it as being 'more like T. S. Eliot's *Four Quartets* or the poetry of David Jones or the fiction of Saul Bellow' in its search for mythopoetic truth in order to understand the meaning of history. (Schwartz J. , 1996, p. 58)

Chesterton begins his argument with prehistoric man and, citing the cave-paintings, draws the conclusion that man is alone in the universe, in the sense that he is unlike anything else. 'The man had drawn a stag just as the child had drawn a horse; because it was fun.' (1947, p. 34) This creativity is later reflected in the riot of myths from the ancient world. From these rich art forms Chesterton concludes that man is naturally religious; indeed he is naturally mystical.

> Every true artist does feel, consciously or unconsciously, that he is touching transcendental truths; that his images are shadows of things seen through the veil. In other words, the natural mystic does know that there is something *there*; something behind the clouds or within the trees; but he believes that the pursuit of beauty is the way to find it; that imagination is a sort of incantation that can call it up. (Chesterton, 1947, pp. 120-121)

The ancient world had separated the philosopher and the priest. The two streams of existence had run parallel. '...in every age and country outside Christendom there has been a feud for ever between the philosopher and the priest. It is easy enough to say that the philosopher is generally the more rational; it is easier still to forget that the priest is always the more popular.' (Chesterton, 1947, pp. 286-287) For Chesterton the popularity of the priest's rituals over the cold diagrams of the philosopher points to the natural religiosity of mankind. In Christianity he found he was able to join the two once more in a new and fruitful harmony. Chesterton repeatedly borrows Christ's metaphor of the key to explain his experience of encapsulation in which he discovered the power of the Church and its unique role.

> Beyond the broad suggestion of this chapter I attempt no apologetic about why the creed should be accepted. But in answer to the historical query of why it was accepted and is accepted, I answer for millions of others in my reply; because it fits the lock, because it is like life. It is one among many stories; only it happens to be a true story. It is one among many philosophies; only it happens to be the truth. We accept it; and the ground is solid under our feet and the road is open before us. It does not imprison us in a dream of destiny or a consciousness of the universal delusion…. We are Christians and Catholics not because we worship a key, but because we have passed a door; and felt the wind that is the trumpet of liberty blow over the land of the living. (Chesterton, 1947, pp. 288-289)

That final image of the land of the living, like much in the Communist poetry, posits the world outside the conversion destination as a place of decay and death.

But for the interwar converts to Catholicism it was the hardness of that truth is that ensured the survival of the Church in every age. Chesterton repeats the prophecy of Christ: 'Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.' (Chesterton, 1947, p. 302) For Chesterton, as for the other converts, Christ's words seemed to be part of a total explanation for which they have been searching and through which they were able to find union with the Absolute.

Yet the Church does more than survive; 'the Faith is always converting the age, not as an old religion but as a new religion.' (Chesterton, 1947, p. 290) For Chesterton, the Church possesses a mystical power that prevents it from disappearing even though many generations abandoned the faith or diluted it to the point where its demise seemed inevitable. 'Christendom has had a series of revolutions and in each one of them Christianity has died. Christianity has died many times and risen again; for it had a God who knew the way out of the grave. (p. 290)

Conflating the deep past with the post-war era, Chesterton perceived the redemptive power of the Church amidst the chaos of the world. As men lose faith they become prey to the most absurd of rational cults or to the despair of hedonism. 'The effect of this staleness is the same everywhere; it is seen in all drug-taking and dram-drinking and every form of the tendency to increase the dose. Men seek stranger sins or more startling obscenities as stimulants to their jaded sense.'

(Chesterton, 1947, p. 187) For this reason, he adds, there are those who come to believe that the Church holds the key and, just as suddenly as the end of religion is predicted, there is rejuvenation. Of the interwar era in particular, he wrote, ‘the Faith has a better following among the young men than among the old. When Ibsen spoke of the new generation knocking at the door, he certainly never expected that it would be the church-door.’ (p. 296) *The Everlasting Man* attempts to discover the seeds of salvation history in the mists of prehistory, in an effort to understand better the phenomenon of the Church. What Chesterton discovers is an essentially mystical anthropology that yearns for the magnetic mountain or the city of Trebizond or, as he puts it more directly, Communion with God.

> Again and again, before our time, men have grown content with a diluted doctrine. And again and again there has followed on that dilution, coming as out of the darkness in a crimson cataract, the strength of the red original wine. And we only say once more to-day as has been said many times by our fathers: 'Long years and centuries ago our fathers or the founders of our people drank, as they dreamed, of the blood of God... Day by day and year by year we have lowered our hopes and lessened our convictions; we have grown more and more used to seeing those vats and vineyards overwhelmed in the water-floods and the last savour and suggestion of that special element fading like a stain of purple upon a sea of grey. We have grown used to dilution, to dissolution, to a watering down that went on for ever. But 'Thou hast kept the good wine until now.' (Chesterton, 1947, pp. 300-301)

In Chesterton’s explanation of the history of the world as essentially the history of mankind’s redemption, we can see, on one level, the coherent whole provided to the convert but on another, we can see the long contest between the waste land and the Garden of the Church, so central to the interwar understanding of Catholic conversion.

In *Ways of Escape* Graham Greene pointed to his 1938 journey to Mexico as the beginning of an emotional conversion to Catholicism. ‘It was in Mexico too that I discovered some emotional belief among the empty and ruined churches from which the priests had been excluded, at the secret Masses of Las Casas celebrated without the Sanctus bell, among the swaggering

pistoleros...' (1980, p. 76) In his interviews with Marie-Françoise Allain, Grahame Greene expounded on this second conversion.

> ...when one has been with believers who suffered for their faith – the Masses said in secret in Chiapas, and Tabasco, where there were no longer either churches or priests – this endowed the Church with such grandeur, the fidelity of the believers assumed such proportions that I couldn't help being profoundly moved... religion was the peasant approaching the altar on his knees, his arms outstretched as though crucified. (Allain, 1983, p. 155)

In Mexico ever since the Revolution of 1910 the government had become increasingly concerned with 'regain[ing] physical control over the nation; it began to shape and define a new philosophy for its existence and a new role in the performance of its goals.; it manufactured a new set of powers and generated a new crop of institutions…' (Wilkie & Michaels, 1969, p. 11) From the 1920s onwards under the control of men like Alvaro Obreǵon, Plutarco Elías Calles and Lázaro Cárdenas, that 'new philosophy' was increasingly explicit and repressive Marxism. By the time General Cárdenas had taken control in 1934 a significant portion of the land was being divided among the peasants, the oil industry was being expropriated and simmering tensions had been carefully developed into an ongoing class war. (Cockcroft, 2010, p. 70) A key facet of the interwar regimes was the violent suppression of the Catholic Church which was a crucial feature of Cárdenas' time in power.

The history of Mexico in the first half of the twentieth century has frequently been viewed as an ongoing battle for progress. Where the Catholic converts saw the new religions creating the waste land, others admired the rational Marxism for being able to restrain the forces of chaos. As early as 1940 the economist Frederico Bach was describing the period in glowing terms.

> At the present moment, Mexico is in a state of social and economic transformation. In the past the majority of the Mexican people lacked economic opportunities, and the development of individual opportunity on their part was impossible because the means of production were controlled and monopolized… The new distribution of the sources of production will in time create a condition unknown in the past; a truly rich Mexico, the wealth of which will be due to productive efforts freed from all the obstacles which

formerly obstructed them. [491]

(‘The Distribution of Wealth in Mexico’, cited in Wilkie & Michaels, 1969, pp. 279-280)

However when Greene arrived in Mexico, he found the Church grimly defying the forces of chaos; surviving in the midst of the waste land. He described his experiences in *The Lawless Roads* (1939) before immortalizing them in *The Power and the Glory* in 1940. Evelyn Waugh traveled through Mexico in the same year as Greene, also publishing his book, *Robbery Under Law*, in 1939. In a review written for the *Spectator*, Waugh described Greene’s book as being couched ‘in the imagery of *The Waste Land*’ and written in the tone of Augustine with the Barbarians pressing at the gate and ‘the City of God seem[ing] yearly more remote and unattainable.’ (‘The Waste Land.’ In E. Waugh, 1983, p. 249) Waugh’s own contribution was more political and empirical than Greene’s. However, as Douglas Patey put it, ‘for all its attention to the details of Mexican history... *Robbery Under Law* is not, or not simply, a book about Mexico; it is a more general ‘object lesson’ about the modern state, a state riven by discordant ideologies, without religious moorings and heading for anarchy and war.’ (2001, p. 167)

In both books we see the two converts witnessing their faith in action and the chaos of its absence. Both converts emerged from their experiences with a clear sense of the indestructibility of the hard core. Or, to borrow the quote from Newman’s *Apologia Pro Vita Sua* with which Greene began his book:

> ‘…the corruptions, the dreary hopeless irreligion, that condition of the whole race, so fearfully yet exactly described in the Apostle’s words, “having no hope and without God in the world,”–all this is a vision to dizzy and appal; and inflicts upon the mind the sense of a profound mystery, which is absolutely beyond human solution.’ (Cited in Greene, The Lawless Roads, 2002, p. 7)

Greene had written something similar in one of his letters to Vivienne while he was preparing for his reception into the Church. ‘I do all the same feel I want to be a Catholic now, even a little apart from you. One does want fearfully hard, something fine & hard & certain, however

[491] Unsurprisingly, a few years after penning this endorsement he worked for the Mexican government. He was employed in the State Food Agency where he directed its Academy for Cooperation.

uncomfortable, to catch hold of in the general flux.' (Sherry, 1989, p. 256) It would later seem too hard and certain, as it had to Laurie in *The Towers of Trebizond*, but in the final years of the interwar period, Greene was convinced that Catholicism was the only refuge capable of withstanding the onslaughts of barbarism.

The section of Waugh's book that deals exclusively with the persecution of the Church is entitled 'The Straight Fight.' The title comes from Christopher Dawson's assertion that the modern tension is not a straight fight but rather a three part struggle between Liberalism (Capitalism), Communism and Catholicism. (Patey, 2001, p. 383 ft. 43) Waugh rejects this thesis in favour of the popular interwar notion that the fight was between chaos and the return of Christendom. '...the politicians know that the religion of the country is Catholic; and it is in direct conflict with merciless, fanatical atheism – an atheism that at the moment adopts Marxist language, just as in earlier generations it used Liberal language, but which antedates either; [being] the atheism of the impenitent thief at the crucifixion.' ('Robbery under law: The Mexican object-lesson.' In E. Waugh, 2003c, p. 865) For Waugh this was a battle for civilisation and all 'of the spiritual and material achievements of our history', concluding that the the anglosphere needed to learn the lesson of Mexico's 'decay.' (In E. Waugh, 2003c, p. 917)[492]

For Greene the battle was more starkly framed. In Mexico he too encountered the decay that Waugh decried, 'Outside was complete irresponsibility – waves of it breaking over a countryside – lawless roads, the reversed signpost, the desert pressing in.' (Greene, G. 2002, p. 50) But for Greene the chaos of Mexico was merely one type of barbarism; the soulless 'ape life' that might be found in 'civilisation' was another. '[T]he world seemed to carry the scent of decay' (p. 79) Encountering American magazines in Las Casas while attending the Holy Week ceremonies, he concludes: 'I loathed Mexico – but there were times when it seemed as if there were worse places.' (p. 184)[493]

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[492] Waugh's understanding of this ageless battle was founded on a very Catholic understanding of concupiscence arising from original sin. 'Barbarism is never finally defeated; given propitious circumstances, men and women who seem quite orderly, will commit every conceivable atrocity. ...we are all potential recreuits for anarchy.' ('Robbery under law: The Mexican object-lesson.' In E. Waugh, 2003c, p. 917)

[493] He goes on to explain: 'Here were idolatry and oppression, starvation and casual violence, but you lived under the shadow of religion – of God or the Devil. [Citing an article from a Magazine he continued] 'Rating for Dating' – it wasn't evil, it wasn't anything at all, it was just the drugstore and the Coca Cola, the hamburger, the sinless graceless chromium world. (Greene, G. 2002, p. 184)

Greene also repeatedly invokes a lineage of martyrs in order to contextualize the barbarism that threatens the Church in Mexico. He places the popular Mexican priest who had been shot by the government troops, Miguel Pro, as the latest in a line that stretches back to Edmund Campion and even earlier to Thomas À Becket. He also sees the popular technique of invoking the word 'treason' against the priests as being ageless; it was 'used in the time of Elizabeth in England, just as much as in Mexico, Russia, or Germany today'. Greene saw in the execution of Pro the paradoxical self-destruction that he would later embody in the Lieutenant from *The Power and the Glory*. In *The Lawless Roads* he used Campion's paradoxical response to his guilty verdict (1581) when discussing the death of Pro: 'In condemning us, you condemn all your own ancestors, all our ancient bishops and kings… To be condemned with these lights – not of England only, but of the whole world – by their degenerate descendants, is both gladness and glory to us.' (Greene, G. 2002, p. 75) For Greene the martyrs of Mexico were merely the latest in a long line of heroes in the constant struggle with the intruding chaos.[494]

In an article on sloth, Evelyn Waugh commented that 'most of the world's troubles come from people who are too busy. If only politicians and scientists were lazier, how much happier we should all be.' ('Sloth.' In E. Waugh, 1983, p. 572) The paradox for Catholic converts was that the chaos was caused by secular ideologies. It was the modern city of Trabzon. Waugh called it, 'the bureaucratic paradise of the machine state,' while for Greene it was 'the new, drilled totalitarian day.' (Greene, G. 2002, p. 71) ('Robbery under law: The Mexican object-lesson.' In E. Waugh, 2003c, p. 836) The new regimes promised rational order by divorcing the people from the 'superstitions' that held them manacled to the past. For the young Catholics the result was precisely the opposite. Waugh begins his 'notes on anarchy' by musing on this paradox; 'It is waste land, part of a dead, or at any rate, a dying planet. Politics, everywhere destructive, have here dried up the place, frozen it, cracked it and powdered it to dust. Is civilisation like a leper,

[494] Waugh also drew connections with Elizabethan England when poking fun at the state's assertion that the priests were only interested in money and women. The solution, which 'had worked very well in Tudor England,' was to 'found a National Church; building should be opened to it, protection and financial support guaranteed; all that the priests had to do was to resign their allegiance to the Pope and transfer it to Calles and, as a guarantee of their good faith, to marry. The alternatives were official favour and advancement and a comfortable domestic life on the one hand; persecution and death on the other. Hostile propaganda had made the Mexican clergy notorious all over the world; they were said to care only for women and money... And yet in that whole maligned society only three old reprobates could be found to accept Calles's offer.' ('Robbery under law: The Mexican object-lesson.' In E. Waugh, 2003c, p. 873)

beginning to rot at its extremities?' ('Robbery under law: The Mexican object-lesson.' In E. Waugh, 2003c, pp. 720, 721)

Greene utilized similar Eliotic imagery when he discussed the same paradox of order producing chaos. He contrasted the scandals, of which the Church was constantly accused in government propaganda, with the reality that surrounded him. The monks who preached a message of love were accused of the most vicious cruelty towards the Indians while the Government which was rescuing the peasants from cruelty seemed capable of only preaching hate. 'No hope anywhere: I have never been in a country where you are more aware all the time of hate. … this hate – one cannot believe it will be succeeded by anything at all: it poisons the human wells; like rats we shrivel internally, suck water with a frantic thirst and swell and die.' (2002, p. 127)

In 'What the Thunder Said' Eliot summarized the experience of death in a totally secularized landscape. 'He who was living is now dead / We who were living are now dying / With a little patience'. (Eliot, 1991, p. 66) To quote Waugh's caveat, 'whether consciously or not' Greene seems to find live figures from Eliot's *Waste Land* in the Catholics dying without the sacraments in violently secularized Mexico. A local woman in Tabasco, the most completely secular state, told him, in a phrase that Greene kept repeating, there they 'die like dogs.' (Greene, 2002, pp. 114, 123, 165, 170, 171)

> 'We die like dogs.' There were no secret Masses in private houses such as are found in the neighbouring state, only a dreadful lethargy as the Catholics died slowly out – without Confession, without the Sacraments, the child unbaptised, and the dying man unshriven. I thought of Rilke's phrase, 'An empty, horrible alley, an alley in a foreign town, in a town where nothing is forgiven.' (. p.123.)

For Waugh and Greene the only hope in such a landscape was the Catholic Church. Before he went to Mexico, Waugh attended the 1938 Eucharistic congress in Budapest. The congress was marked by the shadow of Fascism when German and Austrian pilgrims were prevented from coming by the Nazi regime that had forcefully united the two countries only two months earlier. In an article he wrote for the *Catholic Herald*, Waugh contrasted the unity and hope provided by the sacramental life at the heart of the congress, with the chaos that marked its absence in Nazi territory.

> At hundreds of confessionals priests heard confessions in every language… and the priests moved down the lines of kneeling men giving communion… For the English-speaking men Fr Martindale emphasized in a few incisive sentences what had, I think, in a more muddled way been in all our minds, that here alone, in a troubled world, lay a solution and a hope… All over the world, men and women of every race and colour are looking to the congress as a tangible sign of the Union of Christendom. Here all too plainly was another sign. At Budapest differences were being forgotten and ties strengthened; a few hours distant the conflict which dates from the fall of Adam still raged uncertainly**.** (‘Budapest Eucharistic Congress.’ In E. Waugh, 1983, pp. 236, 238)

Greene echoed these sentiments when he contrasted the tyrannical state and the fearless Miguel Pro kneeling to pray for his killers in the little dirty police yard, ‘Perhaps the only body in the world today which consistently – and sometimes successfully opposes the totalitarian State is the Catholic Church.’ (Greene, 2002, p. 74)[495]

Similar to the argument made by Chesterton in *The Everlasting Man*, Greene came to the conclusion that the search for the enchanted life was a natural and largely indestructible instinct among mankind. He observed the hollowed out churches that littered the landscape (like those of Eliot and Macaulay) and he noted how they still attracted pilgrims, how the Indians came in their thousands to reverence the feet of Christ crucified in the abandoned church of Santo Domingo in Las Casas. (Greene, 2002, p. 179) Greene observed that the Indians, widely believed to be the chief victims of clerical mendacity and avarice, would create their own enchanted rituals in the absence of the sacraments. ‘The Mass is forbidden in the churches; only in the secrecy of a private house can the daily genuine miracle be performed; but religion will out, and when it is suppressed it breaks its way through in strange and sometimes poisonous forms.’ (Greene, 2002,

[495] Greene continues with a detailed defence of the Church which, in light of his criticisms in the sixties and seventies, seems somewhat remarkable. ‘In Germany motor-cyclists distributed the Pope’s encyclical secretly at night; in Italy the *Osservatore Romano* printed what no Italian paper dared to print – protests against the bombing of Guernica and attacks on open towns; and in Mexico, in a back street the typewriter goes steadily on, and the young priest, ill at ease in his lay suit, laughs with genuine carefree mirth at his own arrest a few years back he said, ‘It was the happiest time of our lives.’ (Greene, 2002, p. 74) This ‘hope and exultation, under the light of death’ was, incidentally, echoed in Waugh’s writing, where he described the men and women engaged in the spread of the Catholic faith as ‘the only genuinely happy and hopeful people I met in Mexico.’ (‘Robbery under law: The Mexican object-lesson.’ In E. Waugh, 2003c, p. 900)

p. 192)[496] In the 'region of the great crooked crosses,' Greene believed that the centre was able to hold because it fed an insatiable need in the people: 'their crosses, their places of worship; Christianity existing like themselves wild and cut off and incomprehensible.' (Greene, 2002, pp. 155, 193) He ends the book by recalling, from the comfort and security of Chelsea, the hungry churches waiting in the waste land. 'And in Chiapas the white churches fell to ruin …like faces the world has corrupted waiting through the dry months and the rains for the footsteps, the voice, 'Is it easier to say your sins be forgiven you…?'' (Greene, 2002, p. 224)

For both Greene and Waugh the permanence of the Church was, in some ways, assured by the poverty and impotence of the rationalist negation that was its replacement. Greene noted the impotence of the secularist teachers who had sought to replace the priests in the life of the village. '…he tried to take on himself the part the priest would have performed in the old days. He was benevolent and patronizing, he knew everybody, but unlike the priest he knew nothing. He sat there like a poster advertising something of no value to anyone at all.' (Greene, 2002, p. 209) Waugh showed the impotence of the new religion by contrasting its pilgrimage sites with those of old. Across chapters six and seven we see a clear contrast between the Six Year Plan exhibition and the shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe. At the former, large proportions of the crowds were made up of foreigners, including 'earnest students of the Left Book Club kind, who, abroad, will stare entranced at a cot or a blackboard if they have been told that they represent proletarian progress.' ('Robbery under law: The Mexican object-lesson.' In E. Waugh, 2003c, p. 837) At Guadalupe the crowd is made up of the local faithful because it is held to be a place of hope: '…they believe that it was at Guadalupe that Mexico became a nation and that Our Lady took them in her keeping; she is still there guarding them; and they have come from time to time to make sure.' (E. Waugh, 2003c, pp. 883-884) Waugh found in Guadalupe the same thing that

[496] Waugh observed that not only would people continue to practice a religion of a sort but that the urge to adorn and decorate their churches continued in the midst of dire poverty. He noted that when he visited 'a shabby, unremarkable church,' halfway between Puebla and Cholula, the people were still spending money they could ill-afford to do the place up. 'They had got hold of a tin of gold paint and were 'doing the place over'. It was the nastiest kind of gold paint that dries with a dull powdery surface … All of them lacked the things which we consider necessaries and they had clubbed together to buy imitation gold paint; aesthetically the result was deplorable; they had ruined the patina and rendered their statues quite unsuitable for the drawing rooms of Cuernavaca... to what purpose was this waste? The answer, quite simply, was carved on the lintel: A.D.M.G., to the greater glory of God... For the impulse to adorn is part of love, and those who see in the glories of Mexican decoration only the self-advertisement of a clerical caste and the oppression of a people, do not know love.' ('Robbery under law: The Mexican object-lesson.' In E. Waugh, 2003c, p. 869)

he found in Budapest earlier that same year. 'People of every conceivable kind were always there, praying… (E. Waugh, 2003c, p. 884) It was a public demonstration of the hard core which he believed he had found in the Catholic Church.

Both Waugh and Greene cite General Cárdenas who, irritated by the failure of the persecution to put an end to Catholicism was forced to announce, 'I am tired of closing Churches and finding them full. Now I am going to open the churches and educate the people and in ten years I shall find them empty.'[497] ('Robbery under law: The Mexican object-lesson.' In E. Waugh, 2003c, p. 892, Greene, 2002, p. 39)[498] However, Waugh and Greene had already found that 'persecution [was]...having its normal result of producing a priesthood of intense devotion.' ('Robbery under law: The Mexican object-lesson.' In E. Waugh, 2003, p. 894) Greene was clearly edified by the few priests he did meet and, perhaps unfairly, contrasted them with the clerics that littered Trollope's Barsetshire novels. He met the young Miguel Darío Miranda, Bishop of Tulancingo, who would later be Cardinal Archbishop of Mexico City. Bishop Miranda told him, 'It was the duty of priests and bishops to die; he had no sympathy for compliant and pious horror.' (Greene, 2002, p. 210)[499] Greene was moved by the enchanted priesthood whose members had risked everything to continue their mystical work. '[T]here were always catacombs where the secret rite could be kept alive till the bad times passed…'[500] (Greene, 2002, p. 39) Waugh and Greene believed that they had discovered the enchanted drama of Trebizond defiantly surviving in the

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[497] And yet the progressivist assumption that education must mean atheism was itself negated by clerist converts by virtue of being quoted by Greene and Waugh.

[498] Just as Chesterton found that 'Christianity has died many times and risen again; for it had a God who knew the way out of the grave.' (1947, p. 290) So Waugh and Greene found that in Mexico Christianity was reviving usually at the hands of priests and lay workers; men and women who were risking everything for the sake of the Church. 'There are no Eucharistic congresses… in Mexico; but there is nevertheless, a religious revival in progress that is transforming the Mexican Church; driven into the catacombs, the Church is recovering their spirit.' ('Robbery under law: The Mexican object-lesson.' In E. Waugh, 2003c, p. 898) Ironically the focus of the rejuvenation is in the area of education, frustrating the designs of Cárdenas, 'they seek to train and maintain teachers, within and outside the Government service, to counteract the official atheism.' ('Robbery under law: The Mexican object-lesson.' In E. Waugh, 2003c, p. 898) Greene recorded that one training college which began in 1926 during the worst of the persecutions had begun with only six trainees but, by 1938, had sent out fifty-six thousand, some of whom had even gotten work taking tourists around government sites so that 'now the Church's voice begins to be heard – among the Rotarians and the earnest social workers...' (Greene, 2002, p. 75)

[499] Greene also met Archbishop Leopoldo Ruiz y Flóres, 'who had worked the miracle of the Eucharist now for fifty years. He came gently down, bitter, kindly, Pickwickian: the dangerous man. They had put him on an aeroplane with detectives in 1932 – he was allowed to take nothing but his breviary – and dumped him across the border.' (p. 214)

[500] Greene uses the explicit language that we will find in his novels in chapter nine. '...during the Calles persecution God had lain in radio cabinets, behind bookshelves. He had been carried in a small boy's pocket into prisons; He had been consumed in drawing-rooms. He had eternity on his side.' (Greene, 2002, pp. 39-40)

midst of the confused violence of revolutionary Mexico and its survival seemed to prove the reality of its hard core.

Conclusion

T. S. Eliot gave a talk in February 1937, entitled 'A Christian message to the World' but he remarked that the title should have been, 'The Church's Business is to Interfere With the World.' (1948, p. 71) During the course of the speech he separated the voice of the Church from the political voices of the world by remarking how the Church is concerned with 'fixed beliefs which cannot be changed', with 'first principles which it is the business of the Church to repeat in and out of season.' (Eliot, 1948, pp. 72, 76) This idea of the 'permanent things,'[501] of the pattern and the hard core was what animated the explicitly Catholic writing of the interwar converts to Rome like Graham Greene, David Jones and Evelyn Waugh. Many of the converts looked to the Church to preserve the 'permanent things' that political parties were seemingly incapable of recognizing. And, in their turn, they re-presented these 'permanent things' in the art they produced as Catholic writers.

For the Communists permanence was an idea of the future. In *The Idea of a Christian Society* Eliot observed that modern society was at present a negative society; it seemed to have abandoned Christianity but it had yet to adopt its overtly pagan replacement. (Eliot, 1948, p. 10) The Communist converts were in the business of promoting Christianity's replacement; of filling the vacuum. Educated spies like Anthony Blunt, Guy Burgess, Donald Maclean and Kim Philby, and warriors such as the Romilly Brothers, David Haden Guest, Ralph Fox and John Cornford, often sought to destroy the barriers that seemed to prevent society from being founded on the 'permanent things' of the future. As the converts took their place as operatives working for the secret plan of the universe, the Communists most frequently abandoned their place in the Clerisy while the Catholics eagerly took it up. The next two chapters are concerned with the converts fighting and writing for the cause of permanence.

[501] [T]he Church cannot be, in any political sense, either conservative or liberal, or revolutionary. Conservatism is too often conservation of the wrong things: liberalism a relaxation of discipline; revolution a denial of the permanent things.' (1948, p. 76)

Chapter Eight: La Trahison des Clercs

The Treason of the Intellectuals

The supporters of the proletarian revolution have staked their lives on a philosophy. It is the only reason that they have for going on with the grim job of living. You cannot expect them to admit even to themselves that Russia has proved them wrong…without the comfort of a dramatic conversion to some other faith. Nobody can endure existence without a philosophy.

Graham Greene, *The Lawless Roads*, 1939

And at La Linea while
The night put miles between us and Gibraltar
We heard the blood-lust of a drunkard pile
His heaven high with curses;
And the next day took the boat
For home, forgetting Spain, not realizing
That Spain would soon denote
Our grief, aspirations;
Not knowing that our blunt
Ideals would find their whetstones, that our spirit
Would find its frontier on the Spanish front,
Its body in a rag-tag army.

Louis MacNeice, *Remembering Spain*, 1939

Should we join the international Brigade? All over the country hundreds were being enrolled… We walked slowly along the main footpath. I told [Giles Romilly] that I would go with him as soon as possible, that once decided it was fatal to hang around, letting friends and families intervene. He had already joined the Communist Party in Oxford; our passports were up to date. He became elated, in full flight. This was a different Giles. 'They will take us on. I have been trained in an O.T.C., you are an ex-Guardsman. Both of us can now fight in a militia. We shall have the right to question any orders with which we don't agree.' He shook his fist at Mayfair where his mother was playing Bridge.

T.A.R. Hyndman writing in ed. Philip Toynbee's *The Distant Drum*, 1976

In its claim that religion is a necessary, even inevitable, part of life, Greene's quote echoes that of Bertrand Russell in chapter three. This is an important consideration in this chapter because it preemptively explains the bitter disillusion that marked the experiences of many of the Communist converts. MacNeice's quote summarizes the centrality of Spain in the political life of the young intellectuals, while Hyndman's quote reveals the transformative nature of the war in Spain, albeit written with the cynicism of a disillusioned memoirist.

In this chapter we will develop a prosopographical account of the intellectuals who rejected the traditional role of the clerisy and took up arms in Spain or worked as spies for their new found religion. Out of this account will emerge an appreciation of the Communist sense of vocation, as it was understood by a number of key converts. What is particularly surprising is the transformative power that the life of action was thought to possess. Many of the converts believed themselves completely changed by their experiences in battle. Indeed both the spies and the soldiers, for a time at least, seemed to embody Sante de Sanctis's claim that in his activities the convert 'feels himself surrounded and encouraged by a hidden flame.' (de Sanctis, 1927, pp. 170-171) While many experienced a radical sense of disillusion that developed after the battle was over, quite a number, including the Communist spies, seemed somehow protected from this sense of disillusion by the 'hidden flame' of unshakeable belief.

Introduction

In nineteen twenty eight the French philosopher, Julien Benda, published a seminal work of intellectual history entitled, *La Trahison des clercs*[502] (usually translated as *The Treason of Intellectuals*). Roger Kimball gave a useful sense of this unusual book when he described it as 'an energetic hodgepodge of a book….it is rich, quirky, erudite, digressive, and polemical: more an exclamation than an analysis. Partisan in its claims for disinterestedness, it is ruthless in its defense of intellectual high-mindedness.' (Kimball, 1992) Despite the morass of confusion, Benda's thesis was essentially that the modern intellectual had betrayed his traditional role of pursuing higher and eternal truths for the role of a political agitator. 'Suddenly the men who had acted as a check on the realism[503] of the people began to act as its stimulators.' (Benda, 1969, p.

[502] Benda uses the term clerk which can be read as an alternative to the term clerist.
[503] Realism is Benda's term for expedient and often violent political concerns. He cites Alphonsus Liguori's criteria for a just war and in doing so gives us an example of the old clerist who fearlessly denounces 'the war of him who

45) Benda suggested that, with the decline of Christianity, the idea of Universalist restraints on political passions provided by the intellectual classes had died out. (Benda, 1969, pp. 181-183)[504] This was the essence of their betrayal, that the pursuit of truth would thereafter be subject to political and nationalist loyalties:

> We have to admit that the "clerks" now exercise political passions with all the characteristics of passion ─ the tendency to action, the thirst for immediate results, the exclusive preoccupations with the desired end, the scorn for argument, the excess, the hatred, the fixed ideas. The modern "clerk" has entirely ceased to let the layman alone descend to the marketplace. (Benda, 1969, p. 46)

Obviously *La Trahison des clercs* is far more complex than the simple movement from totally detached speculative reasoning of the medieval period 'nourished exclusively on the disciplines of antiquity' to the political parochialism of the modern thinker, who, to continue quoting Benda's biographer, 'has come down from his mountain to be a citizen of a state, paying taxes and bearing arms'. (Niess, 1947, p. 384) But it is this basic transformation that gives us a better understanding of the modern clerist and the vocation produced by his conversion to political religion.

Benda's immediate concerns were mainly for the increasing nationalism and overt racism of the French intellectuals whom he regarded as the children of German intellectuals like Nietzsche, Fichte and Hegel. However his broad thesis that the role of the clerisy had changed as it had been secularized, that it had become practical, passionately political and increasingly dismissive of the spiritual and eternal, is one that is borne out by the Communist intellectuals in this study. Admittedly, they were generally internationalist rather than nationalist but they were rarely universalist. They were rarely racist and often defended the foreigner, but their prejudices were more generally based on class and they were rarely detached.

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declares war only from ambition and from the desire to extend his dominions beyond their legitimate boundaries…' (Benda, 1969, pp. 112-113) For Benda this is at odds with the modern clerist who would run off to fight in a war for the sake of the party and its narrow concerns.

[504] '…the humanity of Europe in the Middle Ages, with the values imposed upon it by the "clerks," acted ill but honoured the good. It may be said that modern Europe with teachers who inform it that its realist instincts are beautiful, acts ill and honours what is ill.' (Benda, 1969, pp. 182-183)

The evolution of the new "clerks" can be traced out in the lives of the intellectuals emerging from England's elite public schools and universities during the interwar era. The impractical classical education that Benda feared lost[505] appeared to protect the budding clerisy from the pursuit of practical realities. Yet somehow the ivory tower was no longer able to cloister its inhabitants; it was attacked from inside in unhappy memoirs, often for the very reason that it sought to harbour them from the world. With growing frequency and publicity, an education system, widely regarded as elitist and intentionally out of touch with the layman, oversaw a widespread rejection of the spiritual and the advent of a vaguely political rebellion. Often the loss of faith was only very temporary and usually the political passions of these young intellectuals were anything but practical or even, to borrow the term Benda uses, realistic. But the fact remains that the interwar clerisy were far more likely to be political and more likely to throw themselves into action rather than to busy themselves in purely abstract theorizing. And their conversion was so overpowering that their perspective was often limited to that of the party and its relatively narrow concerns. The clerists who committed this treason were, in the words of Virginia Woolf, 'acutely tower-conscious', and thus most concerned to abandon the tower. (Woolf, 1992, p. 168) In their conversion they had discovered the secret plan of the universe and they felt compelled to abandon everything for the sake of that kingdom.

However there were also others who sought action for its own sake. Though not converts themselves, they frequently sought the consolations that conversion brought. The war in Spain attracted many that found in its chaos a clear vocational purpose, and the brief illusion of moral clarity. The primacy of action in their lives, whether devoted to political or traditional forms of faith, is surely communicated by the fact that many sought action without bothering about a political commitment of any kind. Indeed there were those who, like Giles Romilly, sought action for its own sake and emerged from the battle, not with the disillusionment of Orwell, but with fully fledged Communist convictions. The lives of the Communist converts and those who, like Julian Bell, joined them seeking action as an end in itself, reveal the popularity of the

[505] Benda saw classical education as an education in the correct role of the clerisy and the society in which they lived as well as promoting the Universalist perspective which he believed his contemporaries had lost. 'This attitude…seems to me to result from the decline of the study of classical literature in the formation of their minds… Notice that this decline of classical culture in the French writers coincides with the discovery of the great German realists, Hegel and especially Nietzsche, whose genius had the more effect on these Frenchmen because their lack of classical discipline deprived them of the one real barrier which can be opposed to that genius.' (Benda, 1969, pp. 172-173) (Niess, 1947)

'betrayal', to borrow Benda's loaded term, and create a context in which we can better understand the lives of the Cambridge spies.

The Secret Plan of the Universe

When her nephew, Julian Bell, died in Spain, Virginia Woolf 'set down very quickly' what she remembered about him. He was killed on the 18th of July, 1937 and Woolf wrote a 7,000 word memoir which, as his brother Quentin observed, 'illuminates Virginia's own character and personality' perhaps more than it illuminates Bell's. (Q. Bell, 1973, p. 255) What stands out is Woolf's incomprehension regarding Bell's decision to go to Spain.[506] It is this incomprehension that reveals most clearly the divide between the two generations of intellectuals.

> I go on asking myself, without finding an answer, what did he feel about Spain? What made him feel it necessary, knowing as he did how it must torture Nessa, to go? … What made him do it? I suppose it's a fever in the blood of the younger generation which we can't possibly understand. I have never known anyone of my generation have that feeling about a war. We were C.O's in the Great War. And tho' I understand that this is a "cause," can be called the cause of liberty & so on, still my natural reaction is to fight intellectually: If I were any use, I should write against it: I should evolve some plan for fighting English tyranny. The moment force is used, it becomes meaningless and unreal to me. And I daresay he would soon have lived through the active stage & have found some other, administrative, work. But that does not explain his determination… My own feeling then about his going wavers: I'm sometimes angry with him; yet feel it was fine,

[506] In *The Leaning Tower,* a lecture given to the Brighton Branch of the Worker's Educational Association in April of 1940, Virginia Woolf declared that the advent of a classless society would really only come about through reading. Woolf's lecture was a powerful example of her unorthodox thinking; she urged the workers to become critics as a means of escaping their penury. '[*The Leaning Tower*] encapsulates Woolf's resistance to all organizations, committees, governing bodies and so forth, this ideal of freedom – the self alone with a book – becomes universalized, mystified, decontextualised, subject to no economic or educational frameworks…' (Ellis, 2007, p. 152) The solution is for the workers to join her in the ivory tower that has begun to lead down towards them, rather than remaining outside on the muddied plane of legislation and reform; 'that narrow plot of acquisitiveness and desire' as she called it in the essay she wrote for Margret Lellwyn Davies' *Maternity: Letters from Working-Women Collected by the Women's Co-operative Guild*. (Dusinberre, 1997, p. 223) It is little wonder that she struggled to understand the desire her nephew had for action. In the same essay, 'Life as we know it' she admitted that as far as her political activism went, 'If every reform they demand was granted this very instant it would not touch one hair of my comfortable capitalist head. Hence my interest is merely altruistic. It is thin spread and moon coloured. There is no life blood or urgency about it. However hard I clap my hands or stamp my feet there is a hollowness in the sound which betrays me. I am a benevolent spectator.' (Cited in pp. 222-223)

> as all very strong feelings are fine; yet they are also wrong somehow: one must control feeling with reason. (Stansky & Abrahams, 2012, p. 264)

In early 1937, while teaching in China, Bell wrote some *Notes for a Memoir* because he was intending to go to the war in Spain and couldn't be sure of survival. In those notes he made the astonishing claim that 'my life seems to me to have been very unusually happy… in that I have had what I really wanted – except war, which I hope to see before long.' (J. Bell, 'Notes for a Memoir.' In Q. Bell, 1938, p. 10) Bell grew up among conscientious objectors and was heavily influenced by what might be described as the Bloomsburyian religion of George Edward Moore. In his ill-fated dissertation to the fellowship Electors of King's college, Bell explained that 'Professor Moore is, in a sense, my spiritual grandparent… For I was born into, and grew up in a world very largely of his making, the world of "Old Bloomsbury." And the hard, vigorous lucidity of mind, the orderly beauty of that view of the universe, seems to me to have been very much the reflection in life of the teaching of "Principia Ethica."' (Cited in Stansky & Abrahams, 2012, p. 126) Keynes described 'Moore's religion' as the belief that 'one's prime objects in life were love, the creation and enjoyment of aesthetic experience and the pursuit of knowledge.' (Cited in Stansky & Abrahams, 2012, p. 9) It was in reality, the elevation of Benda's ideals of detached high-mindednes to the level of a secular religion. It was a religion that Bell would abandon in favour of political action.

Bell inherited from his parents and their milieu, 'a rational and illuminated world...[which] had a good deal to do with my almost total indifference to religion.' (J. Bell, 'Notes for a Memoir.' In Q. Bell, 1938, p. 11) Yet, despite his secular upbringing he included in his memoir, several religious experiences. 'I was secretly frightened of Jehovah, and even asked to be taught prayers.' (Q. Bell, 1938, p. 10) He learned the Lord's Prayer and even admitted that he was still using it as 'a magic defence against ghosts... and as a soporific.' (Q. Bell, 1938, p. 10) Just as his secularised childhood was very different to many of the converts, so at school, rather than losing faith he actually seemed to become more religious. Bell attended Leighton Park School, a Quaker establishment. It was there that he 'grew vaguely theist'. (Q. Bell, 1938, p. 17) At one point he thought he was going to die and, fearing Judgement, he found himself engaged in a very detailed examination of conscience, attempting to list every animal that he had ever killed.

Another religious experience came on a starry night when he experienced a metaphysical epiphany of sorts.

> 'I suppose [it] was the regulation religious feeling...I managed a purely intellectual but excited belief in creative evolution. And I think I developed a certain aesthetic mystic of God the Artist: I remember the argument – really up to Anselm's standard – that God must exist to have created a universe out of nothing and be an artist, since only Beauty can exist in nothing!' (Q. Bell, 1938, p. 17)

It was while he was studying in Paris with the rabidly anti-clerical Monsieur Pinault, that Bell found his 'religious velleity' blown to shreds. (Q. Bell, 1938, p. 18) This loss of one faith was accompanied by the solidifying of a political religious faith. Pinault 'called himself a Communist, but there was nothing of the modern party line about him.' (Q. Bell, 1938, p. 18) He seems to have been a romantic, auto-didactic Communist and, according to Bell's biographers, 'reinforced Julian's theoretical socialism, adding to it a more romantic continental idea of revolution than he might have acquired at home in England.' (Stansky & Abrahams, 2012, p. 40) By the time that he entered Cambridge, Bell's religious beliefs were remarkably fragmented but 'socialism...then as now was a solid core...' (J. Bell, 'Notes for a Memoir.' In Q. Bell, 1938, p. 16) What makes him such a figure of interest in this discussion is the fact that he subsequently underwent what might be described as a conversion experience. But rather than being converted to Communism[507] or Catholicism, Bell was converted to a religion of Action. As a child of Bloomsbury, it would be the ultimate treason.

In the early thirties, when he was approached to contribute to Michael Roberts' *New Signatures*, Bell wrote a huffy letter that he would be averse to being lumped in with 'a movement' of young poets. But in that letter he announced his creed in fairly confused terms: 'I believe in facts and logic and in nothing else, and about poetry I believe most firmly that what is needed is the most extreme 18th century domination of the intellect over the emotions – and about life and politics too [and so forth].' (Cited in Stansky & Abrahams, 2012, p. 109) This seems like his own,

[507] In fact he worried that the Communist hysteria at Cambridge would be the ruination of the Apostles Society. (Bell Q. , 1938, p. 20)

somewhat puritanical version of Moore's spirituality, but it is in poem 'Arms and the Man' that we most clearly see his growing belief in action.

The poem can be read as a neat embodiment of the interwar concerns of the emerging members of the clerisy. Bell satirises the Press Lords, the Church, war-mongering politicians, industrialists, the Empire and, of course, the public schools.

> We conquered half the world, so now it's best
> We should go on, and conquer all the rest,
> Till all the lesser breeds have owned our rule,
> Till all the world's become a public school
> (Where once again the senior prefect brags
> Of all the beatings that he gave the fags).[508]
> (Roberts M. , 1935, p. 40)

The central theme of the poem is the logical necessity of disarmament in the midst of the suffering caused by the depression. The grim irony of a nation impoverished for the sake of conquest by the greedy industrialist is described in terms of an encroaching and metaphorically agrarian waste land. In essence 'Arms and the Man' was Bell's waste land poem but, rather pointedly, there was no answering poem of Trebizond.

> To those who wander workless through our streets
> What use are all our armies and our fleets?
> Yet, though we do not know what end they serve,

[508] It is interesting that despite his relatively enlightened education at the Quaker run, Leighton Park School, Bell was envious of his friends who had attended the more fashionable (though archaic) schools such as Eton. In his *Notes for a Memoir* he wrote, '…I have always regretted not having had brains and education enough to have gone to college at Eton, as Eddy [Playfair] and others of my friends did…. The professed advantages [of Leighton Park] were the absence of an O.T.C. – I regret this now – of fagging and of beating, and the Quaker education… I got a smattering of Latin, a taste of sciences from chemistry, and kept my French. I made no real friends, though among my fellow-dims I had some allies and acquaintances…' (J. Bell, 'Notes for a Memoir.' In Q. Bell, 1938, p. 14) Bell's disappointment at being protected from the medieval barbarity of Eton suggests that perhaps even among critics of public schools there was still a sense of elitism. For Bell, Leighton Park was just as horrible but without the consolations of elite education or social interaction with the cultured classes. 'Eddy was very much Etonian, in spite of the miseries of his school life – hardly, if at all, less than mine. … I think he did a great deal to civilize me, and give me whatever social graces I possess.' (p. 20)

We spend our money on them, and we starve.

…

Down the black streets, dark with unwanted coal
The harassed miners wait the grudging dole;
The sinking furnaces, their fires damped down,
Depress to poverty the hopeless town;
Or useless cotton, piled in rusty bales.
Waits, unconsumed, th'unprofitable sales;

…

The arable retreating field by field,
The waste advancing as the corn recedes
Where the lean bullocks chew the fallow weeds.
See rotting gates hang by the rusted catch,

…

Here, in a language all can understand,
See plainly told the history of our land.
(Roberts M. , 1935, pp. 43, 44-45)[509]

This is the familiar imagery of decay and chaos corrupting the Georgian landscapes that featured in the poetry of his parents' generation. Bell assumes, as the Communists did, that such inequality can only lead to a revolution or some kind of war.

In war or famine some could still grow fat,
The capit'list then prospered, and the rat:
But that great age is done: now comes the day
When, for their fathers' sins, the children pay…
(Roberts M. , 1935, p. 45)

It is not made clear what form the conflagration will take but Bell's message is for the intelligentsia who attempt to retreat into 'their minds' recesses… / and feebly twist the painted

[509] Also cited in Stansky & Abrahams, 2012, p. 114

strings of art'. (Roberts M. , 1935, p. 46) He urges these Bloomsbury-style aesthetes to abandon their 'toy fantasies' and give themselves over to the action:

> Strike then, and swiftly; if the end must come
> May war, like charity, begin at home:
> Do what we can, and use what power we have,
> Confront the ruin, if we cannot save;
> Nor leave the politicians to their trade,
> To spread the idiot tangle they have made.
>
> …
>
> Then, if no power can yet our good defend
> Unflinching stand, and mark th' approaching end:
> When war shall break across the world once more,
> And force the ancient wilderness restore,
> The arches crumble, and the column fall,
> Through the high places the rough satyr call,
> Empire, and State, and Church their turmoil cease,
> And marsh and forest reassume their peace.
> (Roberts M. , 1935, p. 47)

Where poets like Day-Lewis envisioned a Utopia emerging from the cataclysmic chaos, Bell only sees destruction. It is for this reason that he never wrote his poem of Trebizond. Instead he found Trebizond for himself in the midst of action. It is as if he had accepted the doctrine of inevitable revolution; indeed he seems to have believed in some kind of natural law that would inevitably destroy the wicked, but he had not accepted the more consoling doctrine of an inevitable Communist victory and the emergence of the Worker's Paradise. For Bell, the clerist may as well go down fighting in action against injustice even though the only certainty is destruction and a return to the primitive marsh and forest.

This was not mere romanticism; it was a statement of his political faith. Pointedly, Bell wrote to Lehman after the volume was published, 'I thought *New Signatures* put up a very substantial

show indeed – it's a real, definite achievement for the press. I hope we shall get reviewed by the political, as well as the literary papers.' (Cited in Stansky & Abrahams, 2012, p. 116) In his own collection of poems, *Work for the Winter* published the following year, Bell reiterated his idiosyncratic understanding of Communism. In 'Visualization of Marxism' he agreed that in Marxism one could see 'the species of eternity' but said that he could find no spiritual solace in Marxism's claims, 'no immanent emergence of the Word.' (Bell J. , 1936, p. 14) Indeed the only certainty was, once again, chaos and destruction:

> Why turn, why seek, why question for an end?
> Why hope? Time flows: shows useless to defend
> A cosy corner in the rising flood.
> The tide coming in: the dykes are down:
> War, Terror, Poverty, swing through the town,
> And the cold wind claims to be understood.
> (Bell J. , 1936, p. 14)

For Bell the pacificsm of his childhood had prevented him from joining the heady intellectuals yearning for revolution. In 'Bypass to Utopia' he satirised the claims of Communism which, in a letter to a friend, he had termed 'a dismal religion'. (Stansky & Abrahams, 2012, p. 160) Here the sunlight and that we encountered in the poetry of Day Lewis and Spender becomes a source of mockery.

> With banners flaunting in the sun,
> And a crowning victory won,
> Through showering smiles and flowers you march
> Below the wreathed triumphal arch.
> The workers' city! Splendid there
> The houses mount the golden air;
> There sin and doubt are washed away,
> All pains that clog our world to-day.
> The self-sick heart, the self-hurt mind,
> All the ills of human kind,

....
Perfect in the worker's state
Everyone is good and great,
And perfect life at last you make
With sport and poetry and cake:
And free the naked bodies run
In that city of the sun.
(Bell J. , 1936, p. 17)

Bell understood that 'when the war starts / only a traitor would question to-morrow's victory.' (Bell J. , 1936, p. 17) But he worried that the only result would be the all-too familiar chaos of war, and thus he equates the Communist ideologues with the 'old men' who sent the previous generation to war.

Coldharbour and the Wilderness,
Verdun and Somme and Passchendaele,
The black mud of the battlefields
Settles and waits.
(Bell J. , 1936, p. 17)

Bell echoed the cynicism of the trench poets by arguing that nothing survives the mud of mechanised war and that 'the flaming spirit of the golden town' would be 'gassed, shelled, defeated in the fighting line.' (Bell J. , 1936, p. 18) More than that, Bell, recalling the blackly ironic claims of establishing 'a land fit for heroes,' warns that 'the peace we win is not the golden town,'

...war embittered, at the last is made
By savage fools who kept the talking trade
And carried on as usual – only lost
A set of phrases for another set -
And, half mean spite, and half an abstract ghost,
Restored old tyrannies in their new net.
(Bell J. , 1936, p. 18)

Yet despite his cynicism regarding the utopian claims of his Communist friends, Bell's pacifism was gradually overcome by his desire for action. Action for its own sake would increasingly dominate his thinking and ultimately lead him from his post at Wuhan University in China to the intense fighting around Boadilla in Spain.

When he wrote to his mother, Vanessa Bell, to tell her that he was going to China, he outlined his hope that his time away would allow him to form properly his root realities. 'When I come back I should have got straight internally, and also have seen enough of the world to be pretty clear about that… And somehow I'm convinced that it will produce a kind of peace of mind I now want above all things.' (Stansky & Abrahams, 2012, p. 183) Yet his time in China revealed a growing desire to be a part of the action in Europe and he was soon writing to a friend, 'I don't fancy being stranded out here while everything at home pops.' (Stansky & Abrahams, 2012, p. 225)

It could be argued that Bell's time in China wasn't a straightening out; it was a waiting in exile. His key conversion was the decision to become a man of action. In an unpublished essay entitled, *To My Friends in the Communist Party*, written in the first months of 1935, Bell announced, 'I am proposing to turn myself into a man of action, cultivate my tastes for war and intrigue, conceivably even for town-planning and machines, and, generally for organizing things and running the world.' (Cited in Stansky & Abrahams, 2012, pp. 168-169) This conversion quickly undermined the pacifism that had marked his poetry in 1933. In his introduction to the pacifist compendium, *We Did Not Fight*, he showed that the desire for action moved him from the pacifism of his parents to revolutionary pacificism. 'The most active and ardent war resisters – at least among my own generation, those of military age – are more likely to take the line of revolutionary action than conscientious objection… I believe that the war resistance of my generation will in the end succeed in putting down war – by force if necessary.' (Cited in Stansky & Abrahams, 2012, p. 170)

In another unpublished essay, *Military Considerations of Socialist Policy* he revealed the extent to which his yearning for action overwhelmed his pacific aims. 'Prisoners could be mutilated to prevent further active service: this should be made to appear a reprisal… Prisoners are [also] an important source of information: it may be necessary to use torture to extract it… [though] the

revolutionaries will on the whole profit by a humane war.' (Cited in Stansky & Abrahams, 2012, p. 173) In a letter written to John Lehmann in 1935, he gave perhaps his clearest statement of his new respect, even desire for action.

> I don't mind war as killing, nor as pain, nor utterly as destruction. But it means turning our minds and feelings downwards growing hard (well, no harm, perhaps) but also savage and stupid and revengeful…It's just another "trahison des clercs" to go into the struggle, whipping up enthusiasm and leading it to war… but if there must be violence, there must. But let's be thoroughly cold-blooded and unenthusiastic about it. (Cited in Stansky & Abrahams, 2012, p. 174)

The war in Spain provided Bell with the long desired chance to apply his belief in the primacy of action. In a letter to his brother written in mid-1936 he continued his departure from the Bloomsburyian principles of his boyhood, 'It's too late too for democracy and reason and persuasion and writing to the New Statesman and Virginia signing letters saying it's all a pity. The only real choices are to submit or to fight, and if we're going to fight to do so effectively.'(Cited in Stansky & Abrahams, 2012,p. 235) His position was enunciated most clearly in his essay, *War and Peace: A Letter to E. M. Forster*. Once again he assumed that war and conflict were inevitable and that, as a result, Pacifism and even Liberalism were no longer relevant. '…it is the appreciation or ignorance of this necessity that more than anything divides the generations. And it is ignorance of them, deliberate ostrich ignorance, that preserves intact the virgin cotton-wool of British public opinion.' (J. Bell 'War and Peace: A Letter to E. M. Forster.' In Q. Bell, 1938, p. 338) For a long time Bell had assumed that the privileged life of the upper middle-class intellectual was doomed. In his poem 'Autobiography' he had pondered what would take its place.

> Whatever games there now remain to play
> Of love or war, of ruin or revolt,
> I cannot quite admit that world's decay
> Or undespairing wish it on its way.
>
> For here was good, built though it was, no doubt,
> On poverty I could not live without,

> Yet none the less, good, certain and secure,
>
> …
>
> What can for me replace it good or sure?
>
> (J. Bell, 1936, p. 16)

In a sense it was a question that a convert would have answered. But Bell only got so far as deciding that he would give his life in the effort to prevent Fascism taking its place. Over the course of his typically rambling disquisition on the need for war, he invoked the familiar interwar dichotomy of chaos and order but, being Bell, lay more stress on the chaos. 'If [the Marxian] hypotheses are correct, it is a correct inference that capitalism will be destroyed and succeeded by some other form of society, either barbarism or socialism.' (J. Bell 'War and Peace: A Letter to E. M. Forster.' In Q. Bell, 1938, p.354) The danger of fascist barbarism filling the space was such that men of action were required to fight against the greater evil and ensure that the future belonged to the socialists.

Bell was prepared to support the Communist side because it allowed wholesale Socialist planning an opportunity to restore order to a chaotic economy. He defended Stalinist excesses precisely on those grounds. 'Its great merit – one so great as to compensate, to my mind, for all its defects – is that it does allow engineering socialism a certain opportunity…' (Q. Bell, 1938, p. 375) In spite of his Communist sympathies he was more than a little suspicious of Communist converts, particularly, one senses, the more demonstrative converts from among his own class. 'What I wish is to find some defense from the motions of hate, fear, revolutionary enthusiasm and that longing for self-abasement before the proletarian saviour which is the most repugnant feature of the Communist religion.' (Q. Bell, 1938, p. 384) Bell was too heterodox to be a party worker. He continued to trump realism in the face of Communist Dogma, 'my motto is going to be vive Machiavel, the only way to make sense of Marx.' (Stansky & Abrahams, 2012, p. 228) Ultimately, just as the war in Spain clarified his views on the necessity of war, they also clarified his loyalties. In a letter written on September 24th, 1936, he wrote about the war in Spain, claiming 'in a way I find it rather more inspiriting to have the prospect of finishing off with a decent fight on one's own side than just going phut in a lethal chamber.' ('Letters.' In Q. Bell, 1938, p. 157) The Communists had perforce become his 'own side' despite his obvious disbelief. For Bell the equation had been comfortingly simplified by the war in Spain. By early October he

was writing, 'all is really lost – all decency or sense of moderation.' (Q. Bell, 1938, p. 162) And by the end of that month he was tentatively admitting to his mother that he had discovered a 'freakish vocation' in the war in Spain. (Q. Bell, 1938, p. 167) In the face of the interwar narrative Julian Bell, like so many of his fellow intellectuals, wondered: 'who's going to bother about poetry now?' (Q. Bell, 1938, p. 183) Within six months, almost to the day, of posing that question Bell was dead. The insistent call of action had led him to 'betray' the faith of his childhood, the clerist vocation of his fathers, and demanded that he give everything to the cause.

Bell wrote to Jane Simone Bussy, a fellow child of Bloomsbury,[510] lamenting his new found conviction that war was, for him, inevitable:

> I've made up my mind that there's no longer any real hope of peace, national or international, but only a choice between fighting and surrender. As I don't like the prospect of being tortured in a concentration camp I think there's nothing for it but fighting – and for all my tastes I don't seriously like having to believe in that. (p. 165)[511]

Yet for all his distaste, Bell's open letter to E. M. Forster reveals the public schoolboy's delight in military heroes. Bell cited the Duke of Wellington, Scipio and Sherman as well as his hero, Michael Collins, who was brimming with 'Wellingtonian intelligence'. (Q. Bell, 1938, pp. 381-382) Forster's very gentle reply to Bell suggested that when it came to his military hero-worship, Bell was more than a little guilty 'of that notorious sin, idealism.' (Q. Bell, 1938, p. 392) For all his lamentations about being forced onto the battlefield, Bell had, from an early age, loved military action. He played war games even while growing up in a household of conscientious objectors. 'What is remarkable about the war game [that he played] is that the interest in it should have continued well beyond childhood, and that war and military strategy fascinated Julian until the day of his death.' (Stansky & Abrahams, 2012, p. 22)

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[510] She was the daughter of Dorothy and Simon Bussy and the niece of Lytton and Oliver Strachey.

[511] To Eddie Playfair he wrote, I think I ought to go to Spain as a volunteer, both because I believe I could be more use than most people, and because I want military training and experience, which can only be got if one has first-hand knowledge... I really feel rather jealous about it all, for I can't help feeling it would have been a real chance for anyone who had gone out at the start with some ideas at least about the job.' (Letters.' In Q. Bell, 1938 p. 172) Bell's ruling-class attitude manifested itself in other ways, Roderick MacFarquhar of the Scottish Nationalist Party was astonished to come across Bell when he was organising ambulances at Brunete. Not only was he surprised to see Bell, he was more surprised that Bell was wearing a topee or light helmet that was most commonly found among the colonial officers in India. MacFarquhar later claimed that he never saw another during his entire time in Spain. (See: Hopkins, 1998, ft.5, p. 377)

In a speech to the House of Commons, generally entitled *The Locust Years,* Churchill described November 1936 as the beginning of 'a period of consequences… We cannot avoid this period; we are in it now.' (2004, p. 153) For Churchill the rise of Nazi Germany necessitated practical action but for the young converts action provided something far greater than practical solutions. It was participation in Communism's version of the secret plan of the universe. As it did for Bell, action provided them with a vocation and confirmed their new identity. In Upward's *Journey to the Border* the mystical voice advises the tutor that he must abandon abstract thought for action:

> 'You will have to move out of the region of thinking and feeling altogether, to cross the frontier into effective action. For a short while you will be in unfamiliar country. You will have taken your so-called "plunge in the dark"; but you will not be in the dark for very long. Out of action your thinking and feeling will be born again. A new thinking and a new feeling.' (Upward, 1994, p. 116)

Upward was not alone in seeing action as a mystical experience that transcended the narrow limitations of daily life. David Crook , an intellectual who volunteered in Spain wrote in his diary, 'what could be more creative than shaping history or building society[?] it is like possessing a thousand women in one night.' (Cited in Hopkins, 1998, p. 182)[512] Hobsbawm also described his early taste of political action as being comparable to sex. 'Next to sex, the activity combining bodily experience and intense emotion to the highest degree is the participation in a mass demonstration at a time of great public exaltation.' (2003, p. 73) Indeed, Hobsbawm went on to argue that sex was not as collective or as prolonged as a political demonstration. 'On the other hand, like sex it implies some physical action – marching, chanting slogans, singing – through which the merger of the individual in the mass, which is the essence of the collective experience, finds expression.' (Hobsbawm, 2003, p. 73) Christopher Caudwell,[513] the author of

[512]Though he was English, Crook was a graduate of Columbia University, returning to become a secretary for the left-Labour MP, John Parker. His decision to fight in Spain was based on two separate experiences. Firstly, he had met John Cornford on the latter's recruiting trip back to England and secondly, he had been a witness to the Battle of Cable Street. (Crook, 1991, pp. 3-1 - 3-2) The party only allowed him to go on the strength of his having been in the OTC at Cheltenham and his ability to speak French, both very much Public School virtues. Once in Spain, Crook hoped to find the sort of noble workers that he had seen in Russian films, Crook encountered drunks and thieves but he reassured himself that 'action will elevate and purify them.' (Cited in Hopkins, 1998, p. 182) And later, 'This [is] of necessity a trying time, waiting – waiting for arms and ammunition. Once we get into action the standards are bound to change.' (p. 184)

[513] Caudwell joined the Communist Party in 1935 after complaining to his friends 'Seriously, I think my weakness has been the lack of an integrated Weltanschauung. I mean one that includes my emotional, scientific and artistic

Illusion and Reality who fell at the Battle of Jarama, found a similar ecstasy in Communist action. Having been roughed up by Fascists, he proclaimed to his brother, 'how vivid practical experience is' and boasted that it was the sort of experience that 'not more than a hundred or so Party members have had.' (Cited in Hopkins, 1998, p. 64)

The English writer Laurie Lee spent a year in London[514] where he was a labourer, helping to 'raise three unbeautiful blocks of flats...' (Lee, 2011, p. 30) It was on the building site that he encountered 'the punitive, rasping air of the thirties' in the form of a strike. (p. 33) During the strike Lee was briefly caught up in the intoxicating drama of the workers' movement. 'It was then, for the first time, that I experienced hallucinations of Communism, naïve and innocent as water, a physical sensation rather than an intellectual one like a weekend at a holiday camp.' (p. 35) In the midst of political action he was overwhelmed by untrammeled mystical perceptions:

> I began to see visions of the day when the workers would triumph, and we would be running with flags through the streets, the bosses in flight, the temples of privilege failing, other workers waiting to join us, to inherit a scrubbed new world of open-necked shirts, bare arms flexed in common labour, with perhaps a hint of free love shared with our prettier comrades, and communal nurseries crammed with our gold-haired offspring. (Lee, 2011, p.35)

Lee was soon fired from the job but, as we shall see, his brush with the worker's movement was enough to ensure that he was involved in the war in Spain.

The logical assumption that injustice in the interwar period was such that action was the only acceptable response very quickly became a feature in the poetry written by the men who,

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needs. They have been more than usually disintegrated in me, I think, a characteristic of my generation exacerbated by the fact that, as you know, I have strong rationalising as well as artistic tendencies. As long as there was a disintegration, I had necessarily an unsafe and provisional attitude to reality, a somewhat academic superficial attitude, which showed in my writing as what Betty [the wife of his correspondent] has described as the "lack of baking". The remedy is nothing so simple as a working over and polishing up of prose, but [demands coming] to terms with myself and my environment. This, I think, during the last year or two I have begun to do. Naturally, it is a long process (the getting of wisdom) and I don't fancy I am anywhere near the end.' (Sheehan, 1985, p. 351) For Caudwell his conversion was founded on the experience of encapsulation; an experience he wished to pass on. He cited Lenin's famous aphorism, 'Communism becomes a mere empty phrase, a mere facade, and the communist a mere bluffer, if he has not worked over in his consciousness the whole inheritance of human knowledge' as an epigraph for his work. (p. 351)

[514] During that time he published a single poem and befriended Philip O'Connor another well-known vagrant poet of the period. (Lee, 2011, p. 23)

ironically, had not responded to the call of action. In Spender's *Poems for Spain* the English poet, Herbert (H. B.) Mallalieu, wrote that only action was capable of responding to the tyranny of Fascism and the suffering of the working classes.

> Pity and love are no more adequate
> They have not saved ten thousand who are dead.
> …
> Tears are no use. The suffering mind is mad.
> Let sanity have strength and men unite
> Who in their individual lives are glad
> That what remains of peace may yet prove strong.
> We have the will, then let us show the might,
> Who have forborne and pitied far too long.
> (Spender & Lehmann, 1939, p. 34)

For the Catholic clerist conversion simply meant that where they were formerly a writer they would now become a Catholic writer. But for the Communist, the poet becomes the soldier and the academic becomes the spy. As George Bernard Shaw put it, 'A Bolshevik is someone who does something about it.' (Cited in Hopkins, 1998, p. 46)

In his poem 'The Defenders of Madrid',[515] Richard Church announced that 'We have come with a plan / we will build something new.' (Spender & Lehmann, 1939, p. 26) It is not clear that Church ever went to Spain during the war. However he saw the implicit connection between the war in Spain and the Communist idea of revolution. That 'something new' would be the new world order and he described the builders in overtly mystical terms:

> Our love is another,
> Much greater than one
> For husband, for mother,
> For wife or for son.
> No longer human,
> Compelled by our need,

[515] First published in the *New Statesman* in December 1936.

Neither child, man or woman;
An Act, not a Creed;
The People, the One!
(Spender & Lehmann, 1939, p. 26.)

In this stanza Church really gave the most succinct expression of immanentist salvation that lay at the heart of the Spanish War. Here is described a Communist economy of salvation where personal action has becomes the sacrifice through which the work of redemption is completed. The Catholic allows the work of salvation to be completed within him but the Communist must, in the words of Mallalieu, 'provide the might.' Where the Catholic can continue on with his work, merely uniting it with the work of redemption, the Communist must seek out action in order to ensure redemption for himself and the world. Moreover, in seeking action, as Church claims, the Communists transcend the limitations of their human body, of their all-too human relationships. In that sense the Communist ideal of vocation is more apparently transformative, more radical, than the Catholic ideal.

Joining the Crusade

When General Franco led an insurrection against Spain's Popular Front government in July 1936 it was seen as further confirmation of the chaos that was enveloping Europe. As Hitler and Mussolini came to the aid of Franco and his supporters, so Stalin came to the aid of the Republican government. This was commonly seen in the terms made familiar through the waste land poetry of the previous chapter. The combatants saw themselves as fighting either to protect Christendom or to protect the vulnerable seeds of revolution. In Nancy Cunard's *Author's Take Sides* all the familiar phrases were used. Oswell Blakeston wrote that 'Fascism is what men used to call "original sin." It is the essential core of evil in each of us. If we can rid the world of Fascism, we may know what men used to call heaven. If we do not, we will get our Hell as others have already found theirs.' (Cunard, 1937, p. 6) Sir Peter Chalmers-Mitchell[516] wrote that 'Fascism is a pathological condition, a disease of society.' (Cunard, 1937, p. 7) Cecil Day Lewis saw the war in the same terms as those he had expressed in *The Magnetic Mountain*.

[516] Sir Peter Chalmers-Mitchell was a zoologist of substantial repute during first thirty five years of the 20th century.

> The struggle in Spain is part of a conflict going on now all over the world. I look upon it quite simply as a battle between light and darkness, of which only a blind man could be unaware. Both as a writer and as a member of the Communist Party I am bound to help in the fight against Fascism, which means certain destruction or living death for humanity. (p. 9)

The Scottish writer, Eric Linklater, saw events in purely biblical terms. 'To European civilisation Fascism is as dreary and dreadful a peril as another Flood – and the Ark of the Covenant [the Popular Front Government] has unhappily been scuttled.' (p. 17)

Some writers saw the possibility of salvation in the struggle. Rex Warner supported the Republican Government in Spain 'because it represents the forward movement of humanity and civilisation', while Brigadier General Crozier, who had fought with the Ulster Division in the previous war, detected 'the hand of Christ' in Communism. (pp. 11, 26)[517] It was into this struggle 'between progress, which is an absolute good, and reaction, superstition and tyranny, which are absolute evils' that the clerists threw themselves with an enthusiasm that might have seemed jingoistic in the heady days of 1914. (p. 16)

The letter that was sent to the authors was founded on the premise that neutrality was not an option and that the 'treason' of the intellectuals was unavoidable. 'It is clear to many of us throughout the whole world that now, as certainly never before, we are determined or compelled to take sides. The equivocal attitude, the Ivory Tower, the paradoxical, the ironic detachment, will no longer do.' (Cunard, 1937,p. 3) At the battle of Jarama in February 1937 this new state of affairs was made manifest. British volunteers advanced up a steep hill in order to reach the battlefield. The battle would subsequently become famous for the courage and naivety of the British recruits. They were able to defend what became known as Suicide Hill for seven hours.[518] Thomas estimates that perhaps three-quarters of the British Battalion had never held a loaded weapon in their hands before. (1977, p. 592) They had to face down artillery and machine guns.

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[517] Such was the salvific power of Communism that the architect Clough Williams-Ellis revealed in his answer that he had just made a pilgrimage to Moscow 'because I needed reassurance in this mad and menacing world.' (Cunard, 1937, p. 26)

[518] This was actually Pingarrón Hill in the Jarama Valley. It was famously dubbed 'Suicide Hill' following the mass casualties of February 1937. However, as Gurney pointed out, 'before the end of the war there were 'suicide hills' all over Spain.' (1976, p. 101)

As the men climbed up Suicide Hill they abandoned many personal items. Jason Gurney described the scene in his memoir. The hill was littered with 'books of all kinds – though the Marxist textbooks, which were large and heavy, lay fairly near the bottom of the hill.' The remaining books were very diverse but Gurney noted that the scene was dominated by 'the sort of books which normally fill the shelves of the more serious type of undergraduate. There were copies of the works of Nietzsche and Spinoza, Spanish Language textbooks, Rhys David's *Early Buddhism* and every kind of taste in poetry.' (1976, pp. 112-113) By the end of the battle, only two hundred and twenty five were left from the British Battalion, which several hours earlier had been six hundred strong. (Thomas, 1977, p. 592)

One Welsh working class recruit explained his decision to volunteer by saying, 'over there was action, not words' (Cited in Hopkins. 1998, p. 173) It was a similar sentiment that drove many intellectuals to Spain. Those fluttering textbooks on Suicide Hill make a poignant symbol of the so-called treason of the clerisy as they abandoned their traditional vocation for the life of action. Stephen Spender would later describe the clerists' choice to risk their lives for their political religions as 'perhaps the greatest contribition made by creative writers in this decade to the spiritual life of Europe.' (1977, p. 203)[519]

The Spanish civil war has frequently been seen by those who were involved on the Republican side as an unimpeachable crusade for justice; 'a clear battle between right and wrong.' (Hugh Ford, cited in Hopkins, 1998, p. 2) However, for the people of Spain the war took on a complexity rarely admitted by the English converts who took up arms on their behalf. Reflecting on the complex nature of the conflict, one Anarchist combatant complained: 'whether Negrin won with his Communist cohorts, or Franco won with his Italians and Germans, the results would be the same for us.' (Cited in Radosh, 1986, p. 17) Communist historian Eric Hobsbawm summed up the incongruent visions when he wrote:

[519] Despite their rejection of the tower, the intellectuals still found time to indulge their particular tastes. Bell read a book on Racine during breaks in the intervals because, as he explained it, 'it will sound well when I come to write my memoirs.' (Stansky & Abrahams, 2012, p. 277) Esmond Romilly read a book on snobbishness in the United States while he was being shelled, and in a similar predicament, Orwell read detective fiction. Tom Wintringham filled his spare time by working on a French translation of Chaucer and David Haden Guest carried a copy of Virgil into the battle of the Ebro where he fell. (Romilly, 1971, p. 114) (Orwell, 2000, p. 61) (Coperman, 1948, p. 81) (Haden Guest, 1939, p. 194)

> Outside Spain the Civil War lived on, as it still does among the rapidly diminishing number of its non-Spanish contemporaries. It became and has remained something remembered by those who were young at the time like the heart-rending and indestructible memory of a first and great love. This is not the case in Spain itself, where all experienced the tragic, murderous and complex impact of civil war, obscured as it was by the mythology and manipulation of the regime of the victors... (Hobsbawm, 2007, p. 245)

For the English volunteers such socio-political complexity with deep historical roots was rarely part of their initial calculations. It could not afford to be. The Spanish conflict provided them with a vocation and they treasured it as such. Stephen Spender later explained the volunteers' aversion to complex socio-political realities, 'Their reasons for supporting the Republic (to them simply "Spain") were moral before they were political.' (Spender, 1986, p. 3) For the volunteers, Spain really could not be something as mundane as the most recent fulmination of a hydra of indigenous animosities and grievances that had simmered and spurted for centuries. And thus, as a necessity, 'the intellectuals suffused the conflict with a moral value.' (Vincent Sheean, *New York Herald Tribune*, Cited in Hopkins, 1998, p. 9)

This was not a civil war with the usual cornucopia of confusion, chaos and corruption that such a term implies; this was a crusade. And as a crusade, the war in Spain was more likely to have been beneficial for the volunteers than they could be said to have been for the war in Spain. John Lehman summed it up by explaining that Spain became the crucible of a generation. 'Everything, all our fears, our confused hopes and beliefs, our half-formulated theories and imaginings, veered and converged towards its testing and opportunity, like steel filings that slide towards a magnet suddenly put near them' (Lehmann, 1955, p. 273)

Spain provided the 'immense Pasionaria' that had long been implicit in the poetry and novels of the intellectuals, 'Good and Evil were at last joined in bloody combat.' (Muggeridge, 1989, p. 249) Such a conflict was welcomed by many converts who had grown frustrated by the minutiae of party life and the doubts brought on by infelicitous revelations like those contained in Andre Gide's inconveniently timed (1936) *Retour de L'U.R.S.S.*.

> To those uncertain of their course, doubtful about the Moscow Trials but feeling still that emotional adherence to the Soviet Union which so many 'progressives' wore like a trade union badge, and feeling above all a need to identify themselves with some cause unquestionably good, it seemed like the future of Europe was being drawn on the map of Spain. "The issues are very simple," a young poet said to me at a party. "This is a struggle between the forces of good in the world and the forces of evil." (Symons, 2001, p. 96)

The clarity of moral purpose that accompanied the decision to fight in Spain would be unequivocally mocked by the disillusion that marked the return of the surviving volunteers. In light of a number of cynical memoirs, it is all too easy to forget the moral certainty with which many joined up. As Lehmann continued, 'it is almost impossible to convey the strength of this feeling to anyone who was not subjected to the pressures that preceded the summer of 1936, the mixture of relief and apocalyptic hope that flared up as the struggle began.' (1955, p. 274)

Angela Guest,[520] the sister of David Haden Guest, found a note among her brother's papers that she later described as offering 'the only path' for the interwar generation. (Hopkins, 1998, p. 41) Haden Guest had written, 'there is no passive attitude in politics. If one does not actively oppose a political system… one is supporting it. …to abstract oneself from the human race and leave it to perish while one is engaged in the Higher Speculation of the Finer Arts, is simply monstrous.' (Hopkins, 1998, p. 41) As he had earlier explained in a letter to his mother, 'It has required an incredible effort to concentrate on pure mathematics when the world seems on fire.' ('The International Brigade.' In C. Haden Guest, 1939, p. 175) And, once there in Spain, he felt a genuine relief to have left 'the storm-charged atmosphere of England' and to have arrived in a country where 'the 'downpour' has already started.' (Haden Guest, 1939, p. 183) The demand for action as the expression of genuine conviction united the converts who travelled to Spain. They frequently felt directly compelled to take their place in the struggle. George Orwell, for

[520] She served as a nurse in Spain but was probably most famous for protesting the policy of non-intervention by splashing red ink on the door of number ten Downing Street, declaring it to be the blood of the Spanish people. (Jackson, 2003, p. 162) She was arrested, fined ten shillings and bound over for six months. (ft 4, p. 285,) Although she had no training as a nurse her experiences in Spain helped her eventually become a doctor working for the World Health Organisation. (ft. 12, p. 269)

instance, explained the decision to join the Militia as being, ‘at that time in that atmosphere…the only conceivable thing to do’ (Orwell, 2000b, p. 2)

Jason Gurney appropriated St James’ famous warning about faith without action when he wrote: ‘Too many people were talking too much and I felt that the time had come when any decent man must either put up or shut up. Either I had to shut up – forget about my politics and principles altogether – or I had to join the army in Spain.’ (1976, pp. 36-37) For Gurney ‘this was not a political decision but a question of my own integrity as a man.’(Gurney, 1976, p. 36) As such, he was impressed by the Communist party’s refusal to discuss the conditions of service with the recruits, ‘at the time it seemed almost indecent to ask conditions for the privilege of serving in a crusade.’(Gurney, 1976, p. 38)

Tom Wintringham, a Balliol graduate and a veteran of the First World War, was one of the first to join the Communist Party of Great Britain in 1923. He had been jailed in 1925 and had co-founded the *Daily Worker* in 1930. In short, he was an experienced worker in the cause of revolution. And yet, even he felt his decision to fight in Spain as springing from a deeper, more mystical force than the disillusion that prompted his initial decision to join the party. Describing himself as belonging ‘to a quiet writing desk or the clatter of a print-shop, [or] little rooms where committees met…’ (2011, p. 96) he wondered whether it was ‘irony or dialectic’ that had brought him to the Battle of Jarama. (Wintringham, 2011, p. 97) In the end he concluded, ‘all that lay behind me and, if I lived, ahead of me, led me here… I was here because of all I was and would be.’ (Wintringham, 2011, p. 98) Despite his post-war pacifism Wintringham, ‘the poet who had no time for poems because of the miseries of a world shadowed by war,’ found himself precipitated into military action by a power he could barely put into words. (Wintringham, 2011, p.98)

Both Esmond and Giles Romilly were involved in the Spanish conflagration. While Esmond had never joined the party, he had always sought action. Giles had been studying at Oxford and was a 1920s aesthete living unhappily in the ‘low dishonest decade’ of political activism, before suddenly leaving for Spain. Philip Toynbee, who was friends with them both, argued that both Esmond and Giles needed Spain for reasons that transcended basic political allegiances. Since the dramatic days of his arrest and imprisonment, Esmond Romilly had been defiantly scrabbling

a living independently of his parents. He had sold stockings and advertising space. 'His life had become aimless' and he was threatened with an overwhelming sense of futility. (Toynbee, 1954, p. 86) Spain was a boon for Esmond but he was principally drawn there by the promise of action. '[H]e acted for the sake of action itself and because he was, in himself and unchangeably, an active man.' (Toynbee, 1954, p. 87)

Giles' story was also taken up by T. C. Worsley in his 1971 memoir, *Fellow Travellers.*[521] In the novel Giles Romilly is clearly Gavin[522] and he is described as initially being unable to 'make up his mind about what to live for or what to live *about*.' (1971, p. 108) Worsley went on to describe 'this failure of belief' as the archetypal malaise of the period. Once the young clerists break free of the old beliefs, 'they find they are empty and feel they're useless.' (Worsley, 1971, p. 108) In the book Worsley cites correspondence with Giles in which the latter explains his decision to go to Spain. 'It just seems a solution… It's not the Cause that's taking me there. I can't believe in those sorts of abstracts.' (Worsley, 1971, p. 172 p. 172) For Giles, Spain demanded a commitment, something that the circumstances of his life had not yet required. 'Once you're committed, there you are.' (Worsley, 1971, p. 172) Added to his desire for this commitment was his open preparedness to die; 'If it was to be that I just didn't mind.' (Worsley, 1971, p. 172)[523]

Another relative of Winston Churchill's, Victor (Peter) Spencer, the 2nd Viscount Churchill, also volunteered to serve in Spain. He was one of the many aristocrats whose enlistment seemed to lend such credibility to the Republican cause.[524] His attraction to action rose out of the controversial and complex religious questing of his childhood. Like so many of his interwar

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[521] The author's note explains, 'This is not a novel, it is a memoir, fictionalised only in the sense that I have fused people involved into my characters while the events and happenings, though they actually occurred, have been rearranged and reattributed to suit my pattern.' (Worsley, 1971, p. 7)

[522] 'One of the heroes of the hour at this time was Gavin's brother, Spencer. He had run away from school at a mere fifteen and was lodging in an attic above the Pleaides Bookshop. From there he was editing an anti-Public School magazine...' (Worsley, 1971, p. 73)

[523] One of Spender's biographers confirmed Romilly's preparedness to die. 'Giles Romilly... the nephew of Winston Churchill and brother of the more famous rebel, Esmond (an even earlier volunteer) – had dropped out of Oxford, amazing contemporaries like Philip Toynbee with his determination to fight and die for Socialism.' (Sutherland, 2004, p. 203)

[524] Describing himself as being born during 'the last gasp of the Aristocratic era,' he had been a Page-of-Honour for King Edward the Seventh's coronation, and his father had been a Master of the Robes for King George the Fifth. (Spencer, 1964, p. 9) He had fought in the First World War because he wanted action. 'I did not particularly care if I was with the right people or not. I was part of what was happening and that was that.'(p. 135)

comrades he had rejected confirmation at school, citing his unbelief. Soon after, while staying with an uncle, Spencer discovered Buddhism and later Theosophy.[525] When his mother became involved in Theosophy and Spiritualism, falling under the spell of a number of guides, she eventually left her husband and went into hiding with the children. From the madness of his adolescence Spencer emerged into adulthood with the religion of no religion which was, in essence, a loose collection of Buddhist and Hindu philosophical ideas. (Spencer, 1964, p. 122) For instance, the *Bhgavad Gita* convinced him that 'Action must be performed but it must be performed 'without any regard to the fruits of action'. (Spencer, 1964, p. 136) This later became his mantra when he served along the Western Front.

By 1933 Spencer had abandoned a very successful acting and writing career (and an opium addiction): 'The urge to know and to act made the political theatre a thousand times more worthwhile and exciting to me than the theatre itself.' (Spencer, 1964, p. 151) His conversion to the worker's cause was principally a product of his encounter with Lenin through reading Krupskaya's *Memories of Lenin*.[526] His conversion to Socialism came with the familiar desire for action. 'Now I wanted to do something, to translate what I had learned into action.' (Spencer, 1964, p. 153) When political events came to a head in 1936, and Spain seemed 'the decisive moment of this century' Spencer did not hesitate; 'straight into the storm I went.' (Spencer, 1964, p. 158) In Spain he found a certain clarity that had eluded him in childhood and adolescence.

> The same stresses and strains which had developed in other countries had hit Spain, but in Spain their impact had been more vivid and intense, the clashes were more open, with fewer compromises and less blurring of the edges. …in Spain political theories and ideas common to other countries were liable to take on another and sometimes truer colour. There were fewer disguises and more frequent moments of truth. (Spencer, 1964, p. 159)

[525] He wrote, 'to be a good Theosophist meant being able to swallow quite a lot, and good Theosophists were given quite a lot to swallow.' (Spencer, 1964, p. 87) His capacity for belief was certainly tested because soon he and his mother were caught up in the world of Annie Beasant. The young Spencer was tasked with accompanying Beasant around Europe and being introduced to audiences as a gifted youth with psychic powers. 'I gave my talks in French and answered questions of inquirers sensibly because I was well-rehearsed in Theosophical doctrines. It was quite an impressive performance to look back on. I had a vivid imagination and I enjoyed myself. But who and what was this monkey self of mine that glibly answered questions about former lives and astral doings? Did I believe what I said? Did I invent? I was sixteen; it was probably all of these things at once.' (p. 94)

[526] This was the original edition rather than the revised edition promulgated by Stalin.

It was a seductive vision and, unsurprisingly, Spencer leapt at the opportunity to serve in Spain. With Harry Pollitt's encouragement, he helped form the Spanish Medical Aid Committee and travelled to Spain with the first Medical unit that he could arrange. He was one of the few who emerged without any form of disillusion; 'the longer I was in Spain, the more I realized that faith in human beings as a whole is no faith misplaced.' (Spencer, 1964, p. 166)

The Spanish Civil War began on July 18th, 1936. John Cornford arrived in Spain on the 8th of August 1936, well before the international brigades had been formed.[527] According to a letter that he wrote to his lover, Margot Heinemann, he 'came out with the intention of staying a few days, firing a few shots, and then coming home.' (Cornford, 1986, p. 174) As mentioned in the previous chapter, Cornford found his identity in the midst of action. Such was the intoxication of his first experience of battle that when he briefly returned to England Cornford completed his transformation to a Communist soldier by writing to his college tutor abandoning his place among the clerisy. 'I am writing this letter to resign my scholarships, as by the time this reaches you I shall already be on the way to rejoin the unit of the Anti-fascist Militia with which I have been fighting this summer. I am sorry I did not have time to discuss it personally.'(p. 182) Bernard Knox[528] suggested that Cornford returned from action with a clear sense of vocation. 'He had come back with an idea and a purpose – an idea that was being realized, though we did not know it at the time, all over Europe.' (Sloan, 1978, p. 183) Cornford's vocational call was so convincing that Knox agreed to return to Spain with him 'without a second thought.'(B. Knox, 1998)

Cornford's desire for action was such that, arriving in Spain without any party paper work, he went and joined a P.O.U.M militia because it was a quicker way to get to the battle than waiting around and having his identity as an anti-fascist confirmed through official channels. (Stansky & Abrahams, 1965, p. 317) Cornford was soon taking his place on the Aragon Front despite the fact that it was almost impossible for him to communicate with any of the other soldiers. He was depressed because of 'not yet having been under fire'. But he found that, 'So long as I am doing

[527] Stansky and Abrahams claim that Cornford was the first to arrive from England and the first Englishman to experience action on the front. (Stansky & Abrahams, 1965, p. 314)
[528] The English classicist and critic, most notable for his work as editor of the Norton Anthologies.

anything, however purposeless, I feel fine. It is inactivity that just eats away at my nerves.' (Sloan, 1978, pp. 196, 197)

In this same *Diary Letter from Aragon* Cornford revealed the transformative nature of Communist action. 'The night before last I had a dream. One of the toughest people when I was small at school was the captain of rugger, an oaf called D-. I was in the same dormitory and terrified of him. I hadn't thought of him for years, but last night I dreamt extremely vividly about having a fight with him and holding my own, and I think that's a good omen.' (Sloan, 1978, p. 197) All schoolboy rebellion and cynicism was forgotten in light of their new vocation. Cornford later commented that the loneliness and isolation of the Aragon Front was 'the same loneliness and isolation as the first term in a new school….' (Sloan, 1978, p. 208) Despite their rebellion in going to Spain, almamatricidal writers like George Orwell and Esmond Romilly actually wrote favourably about school from the perspective of battle. Romilly regretted his schoolboy pacifism and lied about being in the OTC. (1971, pp. 26, 29) He described the day on which they were finishing training and being issued with weapons as being as exciting as the last day of school. (p. 55) Orwell compared the militia units unfavourably with English OTCs. And, in the midst of battle, his mind 'leapt backwards twenty years, to our boxing instructor at school, showing me in vivid pantomime how he had bayoneted a Turk at the Dardanelles.' And, far from the usual schoolboy pacifism, Orwell attempted to follow suit. 'I gripped my rifle by the small of the butt and lunged at the man's back. He was just out of my reach.' (2000, p. 73) He also couched much of his writing is what might be called the schoolboy tone. He describes a comrade throwing a bomb as swinging his arm 'like a bowler'. (Orwell, 2000, p. 71) Even the worldly Julian Bell described Spain to his mother in schoolboy language, writing 'all's boy scoutish in the highest.' (Stansky & Abrahams, 2012, p. 266)

As mentioned in the previous chapter, it was during his time with the P.O.U.M that Cornford tried to leave the group but was forced to stay. This was an important lesson to him in the vocational nature of his role as a Communist Soldier. 'You can't play at civil war, or fight with a reservation you don't mean to get killed.'(Stansky & Abrahams, 2012, pp. 199-200) Spain demanded everything of Cornford and, writing of this same period of doubt and loneliness, he noted 'I am beginning to find out how much the Party and the International have become flesh and blood of me. Even when I can put forward no rational argument, I feel that to cut adrift from

the party is the beginning of political suicide.' (Stansky & Abrahams, 2012, p. 208) As discussed in the previous chapter, Cornford's faith was tested and proven in the Spanish crucible. By the end of the experience he could say 'now I'll fight like hell and I think I'll enjoy it.' (Stansky & Abrahams, 2012, p. 209) This was a far cry from his schoolboy letters to his mother in which he asked her gentle questions about her poetry. (Sloan, 1978, p. 68)

Laurie Lee found his sympathy with the worker's movement reignited when, travelling through the South of Spain in September 1935, 'the romantic haze' was disturbed by images of poverty and 'the taste grew more bitter.' (2011, p. 122) A growing awareness of coming trouble dawned on him at Seville[529] and soon he was running errands for the socialists in Almuñécar during the rainy cold of January, 1936.[530] After he was evacuated back to England by the British Navy, Lee began to question his own loyalties. 'Unlike so many of my age, for whom Spain in the Thirties represented one of the last theatres of political romanticism, I hadn't consciously chosen it as a Cause but had stumbled on it by accident...now I began to feel shameful doubts at having turned my back on events so easily.' (Lee, 2011, pp. 190-191) He was moved to return by the guilt of an affair with a wealthy married lady; instinctively assuming that noble self-sacrifice would palliate 'the feeling of overindulgence and satiety brought on by too much easy and unearned pleasure.' (Lee, 2011, p. 191)

In December 1937, Lee was back in Spain and was almost immediately imprisoned as a spy by the Communists. He would be imprisoned and threatened with execution by his own side on three separate occasions. And yet he never doubted his decision, describing it as 'the chance to make one grand, uncomplicated gesture of personal sacrifice and faith which might never occur

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[529] The realisation was one based on the idea that the stark inequality that he saw in the south *must* give rise to violent upheavals. 'I'd seen the fat bug-eyed rich gazing glassily from their clubs, men scrabbling for scraps in the market, dainty upper class virgins riding to church in carriages, beggar-women giving birth in doorways. Naïve and uncritical, I'd though it part of the scene, not asking whether it was right or wrong. But it was in Seville… that I got the first hint of coming trouble.' (Lee, 2011, pp. 133-134)

[530] Untroubled by doctrinaire loyalties Lee presents a candid view of complex loyalties of the Spanish poor. This was particularly evident when he described the changing fortunes of the Catholic Church in Almuñécar in Andalusia. The local Communist leader excitedly announced that 'they've done it at last,' and they joined the town in watching the burning church. A week later came a Feast Day, and a quick change of heart. The smoke blackened church was filled with lilies. The images of Christ and the Virgin were brought out into the sunlight and loaded as usual on to the fisherman's backs... As the procession moved by, a peasant tore off his cap and threw himself on his knees with outspread arms. 'Holy Mother, Maria, intercede with your Son!'... It was a day of tears and breast-beating, a day of contrition. The invincible Christ had risen again – the private Christ of Almuñécar, scorched and defiled, yet returning to his sons... Profanity, sacrilege, had been a passing madness. This was the Faith as it had always been. Then, a few days later, the church was fired again, and this time burnt to a shell. (Lee, 2011, p. 168)

again.' (1991, p. 46) When he was facing the possibility of an execution for the second time, his principle irritation was that being shot in prison would prevent him from dying in action. 'I had come to support a cause, to give my life to it, I supposed; but not to be rubbed out in a backyard...' (Lee, 1991, p. 68) His desire for action seemed to outweigh any feelings of betrayal or even qualms about the methods being employed by his superiors.

While guilt sent Lee into action, there were many who were unable to take their place in the crusade for civilisation and as a result were racked with guilt. Hugh Ford suggested that for the clerists who had not yet come into the marketplace, the guilt of non-involvement was directly comparable to the privations and pain of battle. (1965, p. 129) Jack Lindsay suffered the pain of 'a bad conscience' because of his non-involvement. (Cited in Ford, 1965, p. 129) In his poem 'Looking at a Map of Spain on the Devon Coast' he explained the call of vocation which he felt forced to ignore.

> Oh, watch the map of Spain
> and you can see the sodden earth of pain,
> the least blood-trickle on the broken face,
> and hear the clutter of the trucks that bring
> the Moorish firing-squad along the village street,
> and through the frantic storm of shattering guns
> the child's small wail. You hear it in your heart.
> louder than all the roaring. An accusation
> that shall be answered.
> (Spender & Lehmann, 1939, p. 63)

Cecil Day Lewis felt the heavy accusation of cowardice imposed on his Communist conscience, admitting in his memoir: 'The International Brigade was formed, and I believed I ought to volunteer for it, but I lacked the courage to do so.' (Day Lewis, 1960, p. 219) Many of those who didn't fight joined committees, wrote articles and protested against non-intervention but it wasn't the same. As Worsley put it, 'I think, in the minds of us who were single and free, there was the nagging question – should we not, instead of merely demonstrating, join the International Brigade and fight?' (1971, p. 121) Some of these went to Spain on fact-finding missions but

often found their humiliation magnified. The soldiers whom Stephen Spender met along the front near Madrid, made him feel ashamed. Part of his shame was undoubtedly the fact that he 'was frightened and wanted to get away as soon as possible.' (1977, pp. 223-224) Toynbee expressed something similar following his visit to the front lines during the defence of Madrid. 'And what a shit I felt, leaning elegantly against the wall with a glass of wine in my hand and watching these others do the fighting.' (1976, p. 156) Unable to fight, Toynbee worked to convince himself that obeying Party orders to go home and continue his work as a student organizer was itself 'an act of heroism'. (Toynbee, 1976, p. 150) Jacob Bronowski, who at that time was teaching at the University of Hull palliated his guilt at not enlisting by resolving to speak on behalf of those who had.

> What is my pity worth? I fret
> no frozen body, but my mind;
> and if tremble, all my rage
> weighs nothing in the bite of wind.
>
> Forgive me, men at posts, who stiffen
> for furies such as kings' or mine;
> and suffer me no more than speak
> the words your lips will never form…
> (Spender & Lehmann, 1939, p. 85)

Whilst Spain was sometimes called a writers' war, it was only a war for the writers who had completely abandoned the tower and given over their vocation to the cause of soldiering. For Bronowski, as for Toynbee, Day Lewis, Worsley and Spender Spain became an accusation; a vocational call they had not answered.

Yet for all the mystical logic that inspired the choice to volunteer or tortured those who failed to volunteer, the actual story of the international brigades is relatively dreary. Far from being a spontaneous outbreak of working class solidarity, the formation of the International Brigades can be traced to a single decision reached at a meeting held by the Executive Committee of the Communist International on the 18th September, 1936. The leaders of Comintern had approved the 'recruitment of volunteers having military experience among workers of all countries, with

the purpose of sending them to Spain.' (Kowalsky, 2006, p. 687) Douglas Hyde's long derided claim that 'when cannon-fodder was needed, one Party organizer's job was to go around the Thames Embankment… looking for able-bodied down-and-outs',[531] was subsequently supported by a letter Andre Marty sent to Harry Pollitt complaining about the policy: 'Drunkards, down and outs, criminals and others of this character are not wanted here. There should be a stop to recruiting in hostels and parks, Embankments (sic.) etc.'[532] (Baxell, 2014, p. 16)

The accepted myth, promulgated by many of the volunteers and "journalists" who later turned out to be working for the Communist Party, was that the International Brigade 'arose spontaneously in the minds of men.' (Kowalsky, 2006, p. 688) But even Kowalsky concludes, it was Comintern who 'converted this unorganized trickle into a well-directed flood of new cadres…'(Kowalsky, 2006, p. 688) What is intriguing is the fact that so many of the volunteers who must have either been actively recruited or met men who had been recruited, would so doggedly insist on the narrative of spontaneous volunteering. It is highly likely that for many of the converts, spontaneous self-sacrifice was the reason that they had elected to travel to Spain in the first place but their need to assume it was the reason that the Brigades themselves had formed shows a naive reproduction of propaganda.

By the time of the Nazi-Soviet non-aggression pact, the intense desire of the clerists to serve in the Spanish Crusade would seem almost tragic. Most of the memoirs were written in that period and therefore begin with optimism only to conclude with the slide into disillusion. In fact, apart from the heat of Spain, most of the memoirs rapidly became almost indistinguishable from the memoirs produced by the Western Front. What are interesting for our purposes are the

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[531] NWUM's Will Paynter, also confirmed the veracity of Hyde's allegation. Paynter admitted that a number of volunteers 'were recruited in rather rotten circumstances. One or two we had that were recruited on Trafalgar Square at about two o'clock in the morning, but they weren't much bloody good to us.' (Baxell, 2014, p. 16)

[532] In public Andre Marty (the Political Commissar of the International Brigades) was very keen to promote the legend of the spontaneous formation of the brigades. Writing in the *International Press Correspondence* Comintern's monthly magazine, he wrote, 'Between October 1936, and February 1937, thousands of anti-fascists of all countries hurried to Spain. About 15,000 men of all ages and professions. They came from very country of Europe and America, from democratic countries and fascist countries. They represented every tendency of the working class movement and the democratic movement, even the most moderate. Veterans of the great war of 1914-8 rubbed shoulders with young anti-fascist fighters. They came to Spain to put their military ability and experience of the anti-fascist struggle at the disposal of the Spanish people and its Government of the People's Front. Their aims? Only one; to help the Spanish people to win the war. Every one of them understood quite well that the fate of all progressive and civilized mankind was at stake in Spain. Their claims? Only one; to be sent to the most dangerous, to the most decisive spots. Nothing more.' (Marty, 1938, p. 585)

volunteers' initial experiences in Spain. Like the original crusaders there was an element of pilgrimage in their journey and they were emboldened by their first experiences in Spain. After talking of Communist utopias for so long, many found in Barcelona the Commuinst Jerusalem, the first stop after crossing the Pyrenees. (Hopkins, 1998, pp. 321-322)

Once in Barcelona Jason Gurney discovered 'the glorious feeling of optimism' that the city inspired. '[T]he conviction that anything that was not right with society would assuredly be put right in the new world of universal equality and freedom that lay ahead… it was heady stuff to a young man who was by nature a romantic, and I drank deeply of it.' (1976, p. 49) Toynbee discovered 'a carnival atmosphere' and 'felt wildly excited and yet so wretched at being only a 'student delegate'. (1976, p. 150) John Cornford wrote home to Margot Heinemann that '[i]n Barcelona one can understand physically what the dictatorship of the proletariat means. …the place is free – and conscious all the time of its freedom. …it's as if in London the armed workers were dominating the streets…' (Sloan, 1978, pp. 198-199) For these crusaders the initial glimpse of the city gave them a mystical experience that they later needed to sustain them in the midst of battle.

The brief mystical experience soon emerged as a trope in the popular fiction of the day. Nicholas Monsarrat's[533] Marcus Hendrycks, whose conversion to Communism was discussed in an earlier chapter, naturally went to fight Fascism in Spain. He too was partly motivated by guilt, having thought about sleeping with Julian Wingate's lover Denise while Wingate was volunteering in Spain. For Hendrycks, the attraction of purifying action was also important. 'I don't really want to go, because I am afraid of being killed. But I must. Spain is now one of the places where one can fight against Fascism instead of just talking about it.' (Monsarrat, 1943, p. 236) In Barcelona he was swept up in a mood that 'transcended political feeling altogether coming almost within the realm of religion.' (Monsarrat, 1943, p. 250) Though he had to admit that the city was shaped by 'the Anarchist feeling', Hendrycks was mesmerized. It was 'a state of mutual tolerance and

[533] Monsarrat lived for a time in the Lawn Road Flats, a modernist building that was also home to Agatha Christie and the Soviet recruiters Arnold Deutsch and Theodore Maly. As a recent book by David Burke reveals 'no less than thirty two agents or sub-agents lived at or were connected with the Lawn Road Flats. These included the infamous Melita Norwood and Edith Tudor Hart and the philosopher Cyril Joad who was a sub agent. (Burke, 2014, pp. 224-225) On one level the flats represent a truly remarkable coincidence. Yet on another, they represent the ease with which Soviet agents and their recruits were able to integrate into polite society, in significant numbers, and all the while 'German residents were routinely investigated before being interned by the authorities.' (Burke, 2014, pp. 224-225)

co-operation, an instinct of goodwill so ingrained and sacrosanct that no rule of law was needed to enforce it: was not this the precise model of the first Christian community, as well as the natural Zenith of human perfectibility.'(Monsarrat, 1943, p. 251) Monsarrat only visited Spain briefly but he was quick to adopt the overtly religious language used by many of the volunteers in describing their visit to Barcelona.[534]

Orwell opened his memoir with a similar belief that he had discovered the truly revolutionary city. 'I recognized it as a state of affairs worth fighting for… Above all, there was a belief in the revolution and the future, a feeling of having suddenly emerged into an era of equality and freedom.' (2000b, p. 4)[535] This was in December of 1936. By June of the following year Orwell was hiding in the same city while the POUM was being suppressed. 'It was queer how everyone expressed it in almost the same words: 'The atmosphere of this place – it's horrible. Like being in a lunatic asylum.''(Orwell, 2000b p. 159) By the time Laurie Lee travelled to the front in 1938 he was being shunted over the barren plains in a freezing train, 'no gold path of glory, this, for youth to go to war, but a grey path of intense disquiet.' (1991, p. 56) Whilst the dream of the Utopian City was one of the major victims of the internecine fighting in Barcelona in mid-1937, it had provided many of the volunteers, with the sense, however brief, that they weren't simply fighting for freedom they were looking to preserve an embryonic paradise.

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[534] Other towns were discussed in similarly edifying terms. Ralph Fox wrote home about Albacete. 'The whole atmosphere is revolutionary, the very streets are full of the people, few signs of any bourgeoisie, and out of all this talking, gesticulatory, variegated crowd, the energy of the workers will surely create something firm and stable.' (Lehmann, Jackson, & Lewis, 1937, p. 16) In an article that Auden wrote for the *New Statesmen*, entitled 'Impressions of Valencia' he proclaimed that 'a revolution is really taking place… In the last six months these people have been learning what it is to inherit their own country, and once a man has tasted freedom he will not lightly give it up.' (W. H. Auden, 1996, p. 384) In reality though Auden was disgusted by what he had seen in Spain but somehow, despite his experiences, still felt a strong compunction to produce propaganda for the *New Statesman*.

[535] The widespread belief that Spain was home to the long predicted utopian city made it a useful propaganda tool for the Communist party. Claud Cockburn, writing under the name Frank Pitcairn wrote seemingly objective reports for the *Daily Worker*. Cockburn wrote movingly about the nation that was being built in the republic. For instance, in his description of Madrid he wrote that 'for the first time in history the problem of beggars was being taken in hand' and that 'never in the history of Madrid had the children been so well taken care of.' He described the orphans' laughter 'which rose in the sun and shade of the children's settlements' before pointing out that 'gentlemen in London and Paris had decided' that the revolutionary city must be left to die. (Pitcairn, 1936, pp. 72-73) Pitcairn's journalism, though movingly phrased, was never to be trusted. In a story redolent of his cousin's novel, *Scoop*, Cockburn was famously the first eyewitness to write about the anti-Franco revolt in Tetúan (Morocco), despite never having been there. Sitting in a Parisian hotel and using a handful of guidebooks for verisimilitude, Cockburn and Otto Katz wrote what Cockburn later cynically described as 'one of the soundest, most factual pieces of war correspondence ever written.' (Cited in Preston, 2009, p. 60)

Salvific Action

To one reading the memoirs that emerged from Spain, it is abundantly clear that there were two basic accounts of the war. The first account was very similar to the popular accounts of the Western Front that had been published in the years before the Spanish War.[536] The journey to the front was full of enthusiasm but cynicism soon set in as the volunteers felt mistreated by the officials, encountered hopeless incompetence in battle and finally abandoned the struggle because, in the words of Jason Gurney, 'this was no longer my war.' These accounts frequently featured a chapter on the loss of faith that characterized their (often surreptitious and sometimes violent) exit from the country. Against these must be set the accounts of those who retained their faith as they emerged from the war or, were the brief accounts written by those who had died in battle, usually completed by political friends at home. These accounts usually bear the imprint of the party line; blaming Western European governments for the loss and doggedly defending the idea of military action as an ennobling, even purifying force that was sought out by heroic volunteers. A. J. P. Taylor wrote that Spain was transformed into an ideological battleground because 'what men believed at the time was more important that what was actually happening.' (Taylor, 1992, p. 395)[537] But that same ideological battleground is therefore capable of giving the historian a clear insight into what it was the men actually believed. From the reasons that were given for enlistment, as well as the descriptions of action given by those who had not yet lost their belief in the cause, emerges a clear sense that the authentic Communist life had to be lived in action.

In his defiantly positive account of his time in Spain, Tom Wintringham 'came across a military crime that was fairly common to the Brigade. …It was 'desertion to the front.'' (Wintringham, 2011, p. 136) Wintringham was a committed Communist and his memoir is characterized by shameless propaganda and is contradicted by almost every other account written by his contemporaries. However there was one recruit who did desert to the front, Giles Romilly.

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[536] One veteran of the Western Front admitted to Romilly that in the Great War things had been bettered organised, the men had been better supplied and treated with greater dignity, while 'here it is chaos but we believe in it.' (1971, pp.145-147)

[537] Also cited in Baxell, 2014, p. 18. Taylor, who understood the interwar period so well, was writing in the mid-sixties with a certain skepticism of the converts' enthusiasm. 'The rebellion was generally supposed to be part of a coordinated Fascist conspiracy against democracy, with Franco as Mussolini's or Hitler's puppet. The belief was in fact unfounded. Franco was nobody's puppet. He had acted without prompting from Rome or Berlin and displayed later a remarkable obstinancy in asserting Spanish independence.' (Taylor, 1992, p. 395)

Returning from a visit to Spain, Stephen Spender inadvertently told Giles Romilly's mother that her son was fighting in the Civil War.[538] She, in turn told her brother in law, Winston Churchill who organized for a British Cruiser to bring the elder Romilly home. When he proved intransigent, Churchill somehow organized for him to be kept safe in official duties. Giles' response was to desert to the front. He turned himself into the authorities in Valencia, hoping they would punish him by sending him into action.[539] After a short stint in prison Romilly was sent to the front and made significant contributions in the battle of Brunete in July 1937. (Sutherland, 2004, p. 223) Worsley described how Romilly, a fairly depressive character, found genuine happiness in the midst of action.

> I simply couldn't make [Giles] out at all. Who would have thought that he, of all people, would have found whatever satisfaction he was seeking in the firing line? He didn't seem to think it needed explaining… He just seems to have found a place where he no longer is filled with anxieties and doubts… whatever it is, it's worked a sort of miracle and I've never seen him so happy and carefree. (1971, p. 235)[540]

Such was the transformation that Giles Romilly returned to England as a 'ruthlessly enthusiastic Communist.' (Toynbee, 1954, p. 93) Romilly's return in August 1937 was also filled with controversy, because he kept insisting that it was only for a brief rest and that he was going back. When he was prevented from doing so he immediately moved into working class lodgings in Poplar and, for some time, lived a life of Party work and abject poverty. (Ingram, 1985, pp. 169-170) It is a testament to the ideology that informed the war in Spain that, where many in the Great War lost faith in the cause and felt themselves destroyed by their experience of action,

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[538] Accompanied by T. C. Worsley, Stephen Spender had travelled to Spain to try and help release his former lover, Tony Hyndman out of a Communist prison.

[539] He would undoubtedly have heard that the Republicans often disposed of soldiers in battle. Indeed one of the men with whom he had joined, Bert Overton was killed in this manner. Having lost his head at Jarama, Overton was tried for misconduct (he was not present). Then he was sent to a forward position near Brunete where he was hit by a shell. 'Some wondered if putting Overton in harm's way wasn't simply an expedient means of getting rid of a soldier who had become a dangerous embarrassment.' (Hopkins, 1998, p. 268) This was by no means an isolated incident George Wattis later revealed that if something sufficiently incriminating was discovered about a volunteer NKVD policy took care of it quickly. 'On those cases where it would cause a scandal for the man to be executed secretly arrangements are made for him to be disposed of during an action.' (Cited in Hopkins, 1998, p. 287) And yet, undoubtedly sensing the danger of his decision, Romilly still pursued action regardless of what it could cost him.

[540] This can be contrasted with Christopher Isherwood's description of Giles when he left for Spain with Tony Hyndman, Both [Tony] and Giles appeared tragically vulnerable – Giles because he looked physically fragile, boyishly pretty.' (Isherwood, 2012, p. 271)

Spain could produce veterans who found political faith confirmed and strengthened in the midst of action.

Romilly was not the only one to be changed by his experiences in action. During the Battle of Jarama, Tom Wintringham claimed to have become 'someone other than myself;' he had become the man he wanted to be. (Wintringham, 2011, p. 73) In the same battle, David Crook was gripped by an intense joy. 'It never occurred to me that I might be killed or wounded – not till the end of the day. I felt exhilarated, almost drunk.' (Crook, 1991, p. 13) Crook was later removed from action and became a spy for the Communist party. One of the first people he spied upon was George Orwell before the latter escaped from Spain.[541] Somewhat counterintuitively, as soon as he was safe in France, Orwell wanted to be back in Spain. 'I cannot record the feeling [that those months in Spain] have left me with.' (Orwell, 2000b, p. 194) Orwell's *Homage to Catalonia* had more in common with the memoirs that emerged from the mud of Flanders with its descriptions of military incompetence and intense boredom. And yetOrwell looked back fondly on the visceral experience of action:

> It is all mixed up with sights, smells, and sounds that cannot be conveyed in writing: the smell of the trenches, the mountain dawns stretching away into inconceivable distances, the frosty crackle of bullets, the roar and glare of bombs; the clear cold light of the Barcelona mornings, and the stamp of boots in the barrack yard, back in December when people still believed in the revolution... (Orwell, 2000b, p. 194)

Peter Davison who edited Orwell's letters, argued that Orwell had 'a tremendous ability to delude himself', but it must be said that his twinge of nostalgia for the sights and sounds of battle was part an experience that seemed common to many of those crusaders who fought for the International Brigades. (Davison, 2008) Esmond Romilly later recalled that when he was being bombed he felt joy. 'I did not think of the wickedness and frightfulness and horror of air bombardments – I was wildly excited.' (Romilly, 1971, p. 38) And later, during the defence of Madrid he found that he too had changed. Comparing himself to when he was still at Wellington College he wrote: 'It seemed I wasn't the same person now – I had different senses and feelings, if any at all; perhaps I could go on forever like this.' (Romilly, 1971, p. 81) In the memoirs

[541] Crook was so effective that he was sent to Shanghai to continue his work for the Soviet Union.

written by the disillusioned and the true-believers alike, there was a common theme that action itself was transformative and, far from being hellish, was a source of nostalgia.

After the earliest days of the conflict the volunteers knew that there was a very good chance that they would end up in a mass grave but there was something about action that drew them on. (Hopkins, 1998, p. 11) In one of the last letters he ever wrote, Christopher Caudwell suggested that in action lay a completely different life; 'England seems centuries away, and we are yearning to get to the front.' (Caudwell, 1937, p. 10) Writing to his mother in late June, 1937, Julian Bell lamented that he had not gotten as close to the action as he would have liked but concluded that 'it's a better life than most I've led.' (Stansky & Abrahams, 2012, p. 270) Friends of Bell's found that he was much changed by his experiences in battle. Archie Cochrane, who had known him at Kings, felt brightened by Bell's exuberance and vitality. Richard Rees, who served with Bell for most of his time in Spain, believed him to be 'having the most wonderful time of his life.' (Stansky & Abrahams, 2012, pp. 275-276) After Bell was killed at Boadilla, Rees wrote to Vanessa Bell claiming that in action her son had achieved an equilibrium not to be found elsewhere. 'I do believe he reached a perfection in life and action which is very seldom achieved in the longest of normal lives.' (Stansky & Abrahams, 2012, p. 282)

Hopkins cites the Welsh Communist, Billy Griffiths as an intellectual of whom it could be said, 'the Party possessed a theological claim on his soul.' (Hopkins, 1998, p. 290) As the war effort became more desperate the Party increased its reliance on Political Commissars in an effort to make claims on more souls. More and more, morale was tied to political conviction. Griffiths recalled, 'One had to believe that this fight was inevitable, it was dictated by the logic of history, and the final victory must be ours…. I was ready to die for it.'(Hopkins, 1998, p. 309) The civil war came to rely heavily on the kind of commitment felt by true believers and, what is more, these men certainly existed.

It would be too easy to explain away the experiences of converts in the midst of action as mere propaganda, designed to add luster to a cause that was really comprised of a series of military disasters. However, in Esmond Romilly's memoir, we find a portrait of Lorrimer Birch that is entirely in keeping with the Communist ideal of the revolutionary fighter who seeks action for

the sake of the Party. By the time he came to write his memoir Romilly was certainly not a Party propagandist. His description of the death of his working class friend, Joe Gough reads like the prose of Remarque. 'I felt I was in the presence of something horrifying. I didn't think about where we were, or the bullets – I didn't think about Joe being dead – I just thought it was all wrong Joe's head being like that.' (Romilly, 1971, p. 191) Romilly's doubts, born of distress and even trauma, are contrasted with the unflinching determination of Birch, a 'Real Communist'.

Romilly used the term 'Real Communists' to describe Birch and John Cornford, whom he ran into in Madrid. (Romilly, 1971, pp. 182-183) The definition was Romilly's own. 'To fit it you had to be a serious person, a rigid disciplinarian, a member of the Communist Party, interested in all the technical aspects of warfare and lacking any such selfish motive as fear or reckless courage.' (p. 64) In other words, your will had to be in submission to the cause and your role as a soldier really had to be seen in terms of a vocation to which you would give everything. Lorrimer Birch fitted this definition. He had graduated from Cambridge and begun work as a research scientist. He abandoned the tower for the battlefield and maintained throughout the madness of war an unshaken faith in Communism. He was the saint that others found impossible to live with.

> I could see Birch was not only hypercritical and demanding an impossible standard in others (I had always though he did this), but was genuinely miserable and disappointed. His single aim sincerity amazed me. I could see he would never begin to allow himself sympathy with those who couldn't keep his own high standard. Who else, I thought, was so unaffected? (Romilly, 1971, p. 131)

Birch went to Spain expecting to find revolution and was briefly distressed to find that 'it's nothing but a – war.' (Romilly, 1971, p. 107) But the real blow came when he was not chosen for dangerous missions. This made him 'bitter and almost cynical.'(p.143) It was only when he was in the midst of action that Birch felt any kind of peace, admitting to Romilly that he had a propensity to be too hard on his comrades. (p. 185) Yet for all that he was genuinely grieved that people kept deserting, not being able to understand why people wouldn't want to fight. Romilly saw Birch for the last time in the middle of battle. 'I called out to him and he didn't hear… and then I never saw him.'(p. 193) It was the end Birch had long desired. As Romilly had concluded while they were in training, 'Lorrimer Birch possessed all the qualities of a revolutionary. He

had that cold intellectual force which enabled him never to swerve from one straight path; he had the qualifications of a Communist martyr.' (p. 166)

The Communist Party understood the value of genuine belief in Communism in producing soldiers as devoted, and therefore as compliant, as Birch. For that reason political commissars accompanied each company. They were the trusted Party members who played the role of Communist chaplains; they instructed the men in party doctrine, encouraged them in their morale, chiefly by explaining that the dialectic of history was with them and that victory was assured. When the men were sick the Commissars visited them and helped with the minutiae of army regulations like pay and leave. Their role was to maintain a 'constant influence over the masses of combatants… never losing the notion of the spirit that must rouse every last combatant in the fight for freedom'. (Matthews, 2013, p. 86)[542] One Commissar was reported to be so effective that, when equipped with loudspeakers, he lured many deserters from Franco's lines. (Barthel 'Commissars at Jamara' In F. Ryan, (Ed.). 1975, p. 119) The Commissars were there to maintain the faith of the volunteers in the midst of the chaos. By late 1938 it was fairly clear that more guns were not coming and so the political faith had become even more important. Activist movements were initiated which John Peet,[543] another Public School volunteer, described as having 'no relation to reality.' (Cited in Ryan, (Ed.). 1975, p. 291) Activist groups were tasked with abolishing illiteracy, developing special military training and, as always, looking for any evidence of defeatism among the comrades. (Ryan, (Ed.). 1975, p. 291) The need for recruits who fitted Romilly's definition of the 'Real Communists' had become so pressing that the link between their soldiering and the Communist utopia of tomorrow had to be made more obvious.

[542] The propagandist value of the commissars was confirmed by the fact that the nationalists were much more likely to shoot Commissars if they were captured and, for that reason, the Commissars frequently avoided wearing their distinctive uniform. (Matthews, 2013, pp. 92-93) They were mostly remembered for their speeches. In November 1937 the average unit Commissar delivered 174 speeches; almost six per day. (p. 93) The commissars also spied on their own men, looking for any 'Fascist elements in the ranks.' (p. 100) Unsurprisingly this kind of power soon led to Commissars being reprimanded for summary executions in the front lines because they suspected some men of imminent desertion. (p. 95) The effectiveness of the Commissars had been discovered in Russia during the Revolutionary War and their role was maintained at the Soviet Union's intelligence training school at Balashikha, near Moscow, where recruits were given lectures on the CPSU, history, philosophy and religion as a means of reinforcing their ideological orthodoxy before sending them into Western Society. (Andrew & Mitrokhin, 1999, p. 89)

[543] Peet had converted to Communism in the 1930s while a student at a series of Quaker Boarding Schools. He became disillusioned with the British Communist Party because of 'its lack of revolutionary energy and its insistence on him paying his party dues.' (Berger & Laporte, 2004, p. 51) Peet was a journalist working in Berlin at the end of the war before disappearing. He emerged in 1950 having defected to East Germany and, until he retired in 1975, he ran a journal entitled *Democratic German Report* which promoted a positive vision of East Germany.

Death or Dishonour

Only Party members were ever promoted to positions of leadership among the International Brigades due to a belief that heroic Communists were all that was needed in the struggle with Fascism. While this may have provided inspired copy for Comintern's propagandists like Arthur Koestler and Willi Münzenberg it also ensured that military inadequacies and tactical bungling were consistently papered over. Thus, when it was asked why so many Englishmen had fallen at Jarama, the reply given by the commander of the battalion was, 'because every one of them was a hero.' (Caudwell, 1937, p. 10) Frank Pitcarin wrote gushingly of the 'Steel Companies':

> These shock troops swore an oath to one another that that they would never retreat except under orders, and that every one of them would shoot any comrade who broke the first part of the oath. The men of the Steel Companies never did retreat. Of the first four hundred of them who went into the line, only eighty returned alive, the majority of them more or less seriously wounded. (1936, p. 104)

John Gates, the Commissar of the XVth Brigade, later maintained that 'it would be difficult to explain how poorly armed men could fight a much more powerful army for so long and so well, if it were not for their political convictions.' (Hopkins, 1998, p. 164) The problem was that the Spanish War was fought with 'indifferent commanders' and the military limitations were frequently sanitised with abject propaganda. (Alpert, 2013, p. 263) There was a constant dearth of operational weapons, the number of operational units was grossly exaggerated and in the midst of battle promised air and ground support frequently failed to materialize. In these conditions, Jason Gurney was forced to conclude, as Bell had already concluded, that the idealism of the conscripts and the relentless politicization of the campaign was a weakness. 'In reality the conflict between purely military and purely political decisions frequently arose and the resolution of them was seldom satisfactory. … There was no lack of courage or firm intent amongst the rank and file but events were to prove that this was not enough.' (Gurney, 1976, pp. 84, 85) It was often only the survivors who ever publicized this realization. Where their accounts are marked by the familiar lions-led-by-lambs narrative from the Western Front, the closely edited volumes of remembrances that were hurriedly assembled in the wake of the deaths of men like Ralph Fox, John Cornford and David Haden Guest are filled with an unshakeable belief in the heroic nobility of their sacrifices. All three men died in failed military operations, Fox and

Cornford died in the attempt to take Lopera and Guest in the failed attempt to take Hill 481, and yet none of their pious obituarists ever questioned the necessity of these deaths.[544]

In his memoirs Gurney lambasted officers like Galicz, and Copic who gave arbitrary orders like 'counter-attack regardless of circumstances' and reinforced them with threats of execution.(Gurney, 1976, p. 109) His experiences helped him conclude that the reality of war 'was just plain horror.' (Gurney, 1976, p. 116) Orwell admitted that his expectations of war had been shaped by the accounts of the previous war. (Orwell, 2000b, p. 18) His memoir is suffused with the now-familiar discussions of hygiene at the front, the boredom of the soldiers and the respect that began to develop between the two lines. He described the first casualty he saw as being 'characteristically self-inflicted.' (Orwell, 2000b, p. 18) He quoted his commander, Georges Kopp who said 'this is not a war; it is a comic opera.' (Orwell, 2000b, p. 34) Later he noted that Kopp had been arrested after having sacrificed everything for the cause, including his family, his career and even his right safely to re-enter his home country of Belgium. While he never regretted his decision to fight, Orwell was keenly aware that 'any public school OTC in England is far more like a modern army than we were.' (Orwell, 2000b, p. 35) After experience in battle, Esmond Romilly concluded that 'it was ridiculous that we should be doing this.' He and his comrades were reasonably incompetent and were rarely supplied with the necessary weapons or support. 'I somehow could never really believe the enemy were occupying themselves with *us*; we were only playing at soldiers, we were only amateurs.' (Romilly, 1971, p. 113) By the time Laurie Lee arrived the war was moving closer to its gloomy conclusion. He noted that the political commissar who 'plumped up the dry demands of Communist dialectic into a nourishing picnic of idealism and love' was clubbed to death in a back street by his own men.' (Lee, 1991, p. 76) While he was in Abacete he encountered veterans of the Aragon offensive who warned him, 'we were set up, goddam it. Lambs for the slaughter.' (Lee, 1991, pp. 80-81) On the frozen plains of Teruel he concluded that the dream was dead. Stuck with a group

[544] There is a theory promoted by Peter Kerrigan, that Fox had very sensitive papers on his person when he died and that several men had died in the attempt to retrieve the papers and then later the bodies. It has been suggested by Francis Beckett in his history of the British Communist Party, that Cornford was one of those who died in the attempt. (Simkin, 2014) Whilst the evidence for this claim is hardly definitive, it is not difficult to see why few questions were asked about his death. Cornford was the touchstone of the movement for so many young converts. Cornford quickly became a 'martyr of mythic power' who became 'a symbol of and for his generation, explicitly projected as such.' (Morgan, Cohen, & Flinn, 2007, p. 240) Allegations of foolhardy incompetence would only have sullied the symbolic role that Cornford was destined to play in the years after his death.

of Spanish soldiers who gave him a gun so that he could shoot himself, the situation was hopeless. 'They had no field telephone, the place seemed to have no purpose; and their leader...said he had no idea what his men were supposed to be doing.'(Lee, 1991, p. 159) Lee's disillusion was such that he returned to 'love without honour', to the affair that had initially sent him to Spain. (Lee, 1991, pp. 177-178) Even Nicholas Monsarrat's earnest Marcus Hendrycks soon underwent the familiar experience of disillusion. He had briefly experienced the 'blissful hatred' that came with killing the enemy. (Lee, 1991, p. 265) However he was soon weeping over the dead body of a fifteen year old Spanish comrade and wondering 'what cause was worth that?' (Lee, 1991, p. 273)[545]

For Gurney the disillusion of the surviving volunteers emerged out of the distance between their faith in the cause and, in many cases, in Communism itself, and the actual experience they encountered in the midst of action.

> The prime difficulty was the demoralization of the men – they had been so stuffed with propaganda that they could not believe that the disasters which had befallen them could have occurred without active treachery in the command. The doctrinaire clichés of the Political Commissars failed to satisfy them, and they were mutinous to a point where they threatened to march out of the line. All kinds of promises were made, cigarettes, food and mail made a miraculous appearance, unpopular faces were whisked away and everyone settled down to a grumbling acquiescence. (Gurney, 1976, p. 129)

Soon desertion was the chief topic of conversation (Gurney, 1976, p. 141) For Gurney this precipitated a major loss of faith in the secular religion that had led him to Spain and the disconcerting experience of sudden non-belief. 'The nobility of the cause for which I had come to Spain was clearly a fiction and now the sudden and absolute conviction that life was an experience with absolutely no past and no future, merely ending in annihilation, left me in dire confusion.' (Gurney, 1976, p. 152) For him and many others, ennobling action had proved to be

[545] He returned back to the bed-sit and blithely began contemplating another conversion; this time to a Christianised Pacifism. 'Does Christianity cover it? We've been hanging priests where I've come from... But real Christianity – the *man's* teaching, without the officialdom and the myths and the conjuring tricks – that might be the answer.' (Monsarrat, 1943, p. 280)

illusory. It had seemed, to many of the survivors, that they were kept in Spain only because they were still of use to the Republican Army.

For those who died in the midst of action it was easier for their loved one ones to maintain a belief in the idea that the death had been a martyrdom in the cause of freedom. Michael Straight was both a friend of John Cornford and Margot Heinemann, and was charged with breaking the news to Heinemann. Over the following days, Straight kept thinking of Cornford's poem on the assassination of Kirov, cited in the previous chapter. (Straight, 1983, pp. 97-98) This poem's insistence that 'only in constant action was…constant certainty found' really captures the perspective of the party faithful who remained at home. It was the reason that Heinemann was able to write to Straight only a few days after Cornford's death, 'I feel good about it now and I hope you will. I am absolutely all right and very proud.' (Straight, 1983, p. 99) It was the reason that Cornford's close friend Pat Sloan was able to show a similar revolutionary detachment. Straight told him, 'I don't know what I believe in anymore.' To which Sloan replied, 'There are only two things that you must believe in... The certainty of the ultimate victory and the necessity for continuous, organized, disciplined struggle.' (Straight, 1983, p. 99) The death of the 'real Communists' was able to be understood in the context of the birth pains of the New Jerusalem. Where others found disillusionment in action, Cornford believed one would find constant certainty. Not unnaturally his friends and family wanted to believe, or did in fact believe, that he had. Such was the strength of that conviction that Straight was recruited by Blunt two weeks after Cornford's death. Blunt was not above reminding him that Cornford had given his life for the sake of the Communist International. 'Remember that' Blunt urged him. (Andrew & Mitrokhin, 1999, p. 64) Thus, having meditated on Cornford's poem and his martyrdom in Spain, Straight, as so many others had before him, sought constant certainty in constant action.

Ralph Fox was remembered in glowing terms similar to those used for Cornford. In death he was remembered as 'a man alive' (Sillen, 1945, p. 24) Michael Gold[546] celebrated Fox as 'the writer who has purged himself of the poisonous drug of bourgeois complacency, and has come out of the rancid atmosphere of the Ivory Tower into the strong winds of nature and society…' (Lehmann, Jackson, & Lewis, 1937, p. 10) He concluded by declaring Fox's death to be a

[546] The pen name for Itzok Isaac Granich.

meaningful sacrifice that would contribute to the salvation of the world. 'So long, dear Ralph; some day Jerusalem will be born in England's green and pleasant land, and the People will name their children proudly after you, who died that they might be free.' (Lehmann, Jackson, & Lewis, 1937, p. 12) Hewlett Johnson,[547] writing on the death of David Haden Guest, cautioned against seeing the deaths as wasted lives. 'They are seed dropped in the ground, seed of immense potency, and the day will come when the things for which they died will triumph and in that triumph I, for one, am firmly convinced they will consciously share.' (Lehmann, Jackson, & Lewis, 1937, p. 173) It is these voices, the voices of believers in the cause who can be contrasted with the voice of Virginia Woolf unable to understand why Julian Bell had even gone to Spain let alone died. (Stansky & Abrahams, 2012, p. 264) In the end it was perhaps Richard Rees who put it best when he wrote in a letter to Vanessa Bell, 'he was struck down suddenly and without time for morbid regrets or disillusionment, when he was at the very height and perfect fulfillment of his most unusual combination of gifts.' (Stansky & Abrahams, 2012, p. 282) It was the measure of the treason of the intellectuals and the central importance of political action that Julian Bell's brief foray into action was represented as the complete fulfillment of his clerist promise.

The Redeemer Classes

In his memoir of his father's communist life, Martin Amis facetiously described left-wing activists as belonging to the 'redeemer classes'. (Amis, 2003, p. 11) Such a description certainly fits the intellectuals who became spies during the last years of the interwar era. The source material that relates to the so-called Cambridge Spies has large gaps and is therefore unable to produce in-depth insights into the motivations of the spies. Indeed the history of the interwar

[547] Johnson made a carefully planned journey to Spain during the war in order to ascertain whether or not there were any attacks on Religious Freedom in Spain. The statistics established by Julio de la Cueva in the 1950s reveal that 6,832 members of the Catholic clergy were killed, including 13 bishops, 4172 diocesan priests and seminarians, 2363 monks and friars and 283 nuns. The violence was particularly savage in certain places such as Barbastro where 88% of the secular clergy were murdered. Moreover, it was not uncommon for victims to suffer torture including various forms of genital mutilation. 'Finally irrespective of the type of death they had suffered, the corpses of clerics were likely to be dragged through the streets, exposed in public places or desecrated in many other ways.' (de la Cueva, 1998, pp. 355-356) In 1937 Dean Hewlett Johnson and his fellow investigators worked hard and found no evidence of attacks on religious freedom. (Butler, 2011, pp. 70-71) Johnson's findings, that reports of the atrocities were entirely unfounded, were in common with the findings of many fellow-travellers. Hewlett Johnson revealed the crucial point of the investigations in his 1968 autobiography when he explained that the fact-finding mission was organised by the Republican government with the explicit purpose of combating the propaganda 'that the legitimate government of Spain was anti-religious.' (Johnson, 1968, p. 143)

spies[548] is so mired in claims and counterclaims that it becomes very difficult to write about them in terms of intellectual history. Sheila Kerr summed up the situation in her study of Donald Maclean, 'To date, the historical evidence cannot support exact or certain conclusions, but it is adequate to generate hypotheses to which we attach different degrees of credibility.' (Kerr, 2002, p. 114) It is for this reason that our focus on the interwar spies is somewhat cursory in comparison to our focus on the volunteers in the International Brigades. However, the extant source material certainly reveals a powerful confidence in the efficacy of their treason in promoting Communism's immanentist redemption.

Perhaps the most telling point to make of the interwar spies is that they were not motivated by the desire for money. If we contrast the American 'walk-ins' who worked for the Soviet Union from the sixties until the fall of Communism, and the British spies that worked for them during the thirties and forties and into the fifties, a fairly obvious distinction emerges. Men like Rick Ames, David Henry Barnett, David Sheldon Boone, Thomas Patrick Cavanaugh, Robert Hanssen, Robert Lipka, Jim Nicholson, Richard Miller, Ronald Pelton, Earl Edwin Pitts, George Trofimoff and John Anthony Walker were largely mercenary and were often motivated purely by the financial needs incurred by marital failures or sexual irregularities in their personal lives. Walker wandered into the Soviet Embassy in Washington in 1967 and announced, 'I'm a naval officer. I'd like to make some money and I'll give you some genuine stuff in return.' (Andrew & Mitrokhin, 1999, p. 205) The British spies worked for non-financial reasons and, while there are records of expense payments and the repeated offer of bonus payments following an important haul, there was no consistent system of payment for the information. They worked 'on an ideological basis.' (Modin, 1994, p. 43) In fact they often liked to prove their ideology by explicitly rejecting the money that their handlers would offer them. (Cecil, 1988, p. 36)

The political conviction of the interwar spies was such that even the word recruit is misleading. Christopher Andrew told Goronway Rees' daughter that 'they weren't so much recruited as dying to volunteer. It was such fun.' (Rees, 1994, p. 270)[549] They were desperate for

[548] There were so many more than the five Cambridge men that this is the only appropriate term for our purposes.
[549] It well be argued that the spies formed a club even more exclusive and, at the time, more secretive than the Apostles. Perhaps it was for that reason that they initially blackballed John Cairncross dismissing him as somewhat boorish, '[he] hadn't a clue how to behave in company, nor any idea how to get on with people socially.' (Modin, 1994, p. 105) It was therefore James Klugmann who had to be sent off to recruit him.

involvement. Straight believed the popular logic of the interwar spies was founded on an historical necessity; it was the only way they could fulfill their salvific mission. 'The historical era in which we live imposes hardships of many kinds upon those who participate in its decisive events. The roles to which we are assigned may seem questionable to us, but, in the end, our actions will be measured by the general happiness that will be shared by all mankind.' (Straight, 1983, p. 73) Ironically the intensity of their vocational commitment led to the situation whereby their handlers believed they were simply too good to be true. For that reason many of the documents they handed over were not analysed in detail, if at all, and for a long time they were assumed to be double agents. (Andrew & Mitrokhin, 1999, pp. 85, 113, 118)[550] For example Philby was long suspected by his Soviet handlers as a British plant because the documents that he handed over did not contain evidence that supported their assumptions that Britain was planting numerous agents in the Soviet Union. (Andrew & Mitrokhin, 1999, pp. 113, 118) Elena Modrzhinskaya, the NKVD analyst who headed the British department in Moscow, was convinced that no one would be so doctrinaire as to take such 'incomprehensible risks' merely out of devotion to the cause. (Macintyre, 2014, p. 71) But, like Laurie Lee awaiting death in his Spanish cell but hoping to die on a battlefield, incomprehensible devotion to the cause was the product of genuine belief.

Robert Lipka, a clerk at the National Security Agency who handed over secrets between 1965 and 1967, constantly demanded more money and eventually broke off contact because he was not being paid enough. In contrast, the British spies continued to work hard even after their supervisors had abandoned them in the chaos of the Stalinist purges. (Andrew & Mitrokhin, 1999, pp. 79, 205) Even when the illegal residency in London was being decimated by Stalin's paranoia, its network of spies was actually growing thanks to Burgess's sedulous recruiting. (Andrew & Mitrokhin, 1999, p. 79) When the Nazi Soviet pact disillusioned some of the most committed Party members, the interwar spies mostly continued in their work. In constant action

[550] She was also famously suspicious of British incompetence. Could the British *enemy* really be considered such a fool? Was it possible that SIS still hadn't detected the leak of such precious information? Was it really possible that the people who worked there were so irresponsible and unprofessional that they failed to notice that Soviet agents were carrying out documents from SIS by the suitcase? Was it possible that they didn't check an individual's past thoroughly before accepting him for secret work? And if they did run a check on him, how could they have given access to top-secret documents to Kim Philby with his Communist views, his participation in the Vienna events, his Austrian Communist wife? No this was all too incredible.' (Borovik, 1994, pp. 212-213) What Modrzhinskaya didn't realise was that Philby's educational pedigree was enough to create these possibilities.

they had found constant certitude. Or, to use Christopher Andrew's more cynical analysis, 'they had become sufficiently indoctrinated, often self-indoctrinated, in Stalinist double-think to perform the intellectual somersaults required to sustain their commitment to the vision of the Soviet Union as the world's first worker-peasant state, the hope of progressive mankind.' (Andrew & Mitrokhin, 1999, p. 85) It is particularly telling that none of the interwar spies abandoned the cause in 1939 when the Soviet Union invaded Finland, an event which caused significant public outrage in Britain, or again, in 1948 when Soviet forces blockaded Berlin from the Western Allies. The faith of the spies seemed to last. Even at the end of his life when he was asked if he would like to be buried in England as Burgess and Maclean had been, Philby replied, 'Certainly not. Put me in Russian earth!' (Modin, 1994, p. 47)

Perhaps one of the reasons that the interwar spies remained so committed to the cause was the fact that, as Anthony Blunt told David Cecil, 'we did not think of ourselves as working for Russia… we were working for Comintern.' (Cecil, 1988, p. 33) The history of Comintern suggests that this distinction is entirely spurious but it reveals much about the commitment of the spies to world-wide revolution rather than a particular country or regime. Like the Pacifists who did not see their calls to weaken their own nation's forces as treachery, so the interwar spies claimed to see their actions, which others would regard as treachery, as a deeper, more lasting commitment to the entire human race.

It was at the request of Comintern that Burgess, Blunt and Mclean chose Communist action over a life in the ivory tower as Dons. (Driberg, 1956, p. 17)[551] Maclean and Burgess both abandoned post-graduate research under the influence of their handlers. Burgess did so claiming that he was 'honored and ready to sacrifice everything for the cause.' (Andrew & Mitrokhin, 1999, pp. 60,61) Their handler, Arnold Deutsch, had himself abandoned a promising career as an academic chemist, maintaining instead the cover of being a part-time psychology student at the University of London. (Andrew & Mitrokhin, 1999, p. 56, 582 ft.10) He would ask his charges to commit a similar intellectual treason and find work that gave them the best chance of gaining access to significant information. (Holzman, 2013, p. 60) Instead of academics, they were to become deep-penetration agents.

[551] Philby was probably the least academic of the five however, somewhat symbolically, he spent his Trinity College Prize of £14 on the collected works of Karl Marx. (Knightley, 1988, p. 38)

Philby was dedicated to action from the very beginning. He emerged from Cambridge with the belief that his life 'must be devoted to Communism.' (Andrew & Mitrokhin, 1999, p. 58) This vocational conviction led him to Vienna in 1933, at the behest of the French Comintern. There he worked for the International Worker's Relief and ran messages for the underground Communist organization. Like the volunteers passing through Barcelona, he was inspired by what he saw in Vienna. '[It] seemed as if the master's texts were springing to life before his eyes.' (Knightley, 1988, p. 39) Philby took his place among the chaos of revolution and played a small role. He gained an exciting share of underground action, gallantly married a local Communist in order to save her from the gallows before returning to England where, in the same manner as those who fought in Spain, he trundled off to Cambridge and gave a speech to raise money for the cause. (Knightley, 1988, p. 45)

In England Edith Tudor Hart[552] arranged for Philby to meet Deutsch in Regent's Park. Deutsch convinced him that he would be serving the revolution in a 'real and palpable way.' A gushing Philby later declared that the 'future looked romantic' and he memorized Deutsch's instructions 'like poetry.' (Macintyre, 2014, p. 41) It was during this meeting that Philby was allegedly told that he was to do 'more important work… than dying for Communism on some foreign field.' (Knightley, 1988, p. 2) It was this certainty that they were serving the cause of world revolution that united the spies with the volunteers in Spain. More than that, the more solitary vocation of spying was viewed as being more urgent and, consequently, disillusion was much slower to set in among the interwar spies than among the volunteers in Spain.

Soon Philby was in Nationalist Spain,[553] ostensibly as a correspondent for *The Times* but in reality spying on Franco's forces. His handler in Paris reported on Philby's commitment. 'He works with great willingness [and] always knows what might be of interest to us. He never asks for money. He lives modestly.' (Knightley, 1988, p. 46) Philby's articles for *The Times* were such that former friends from Austria were genuinely worried by his new attitude. To one of them he felt impelled to send his reassurances, 'I'm exactly what I have always been.'

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[552] Austrian-born photographer and Comintern spy. Her photography became famous during the Second World War.
[553] Philby was wounded in Spain when a shell hit the car in which he was travelling on 31st December, 1937, while covering the battle of Teruel. The two journalists travelling with him were killed but he survived. There was, for a long time a rumour, unsubstantiated, that Philby had killed the two journalists by getting out for a smoke and casually tossing in a grenade. It was believed that Ernest Richard Sheepshanks was about to blow his cover. (Burns, 2010)

(Knightley, 1988, p. 66) Philby was sent to Spain[554] with the express order to assassinate Franco but that by the time he was in a position to carry out the mission Comintern were more concerned with executing suspected Trotskyites on the republican side and the mission had been abandoned. (Andrew & Mitrokhin, 1999, p. 67) The fact that Philby took on such a mission from which there was almost no chance of his survival reflects his level of commitment to the cause. Esmond Romilly reported that the Germans of the Thälmann Battalion were described as wanting to beat their breasts and die. (1971, p. 119) Philby clearly also possessed a preparedness to die in the heat of action. In fact, according to Theodore Maly,[555] he arrived back in London after his first attempt, 'in a very depressed state' because he had failed. (Andrew & Mitrokhin, 1999, p. 67) Years later Philby would describe these early escapades as his baptism into the world of action. (Philby, 2002, p. 200)

In 1940 Philby was taken on by SIS (Secret Intelligence Service, MI6). In this role he would begin a journey to the upper ranks of the British intelligence services. At one point he was being considered as a potential head of MI5. The volume of secrets that he was able to divulge was, of course, extraordinary. Moreover he was repeatedly in a position where he was able to hand over lists of names or dates of operations which directly led to ambushes and assassinations. Philby was not merely handing over secrets; he was orchestrating the deaths of his political enemies in what he saw as an ongoing war. To take one example, Philby handed over a list of Catholics involved in the German resistance to Hitler. The list had been compiled because it was hoped that these Catholics would play a leading part in post-war Germany. After the war Allied officers

[554] When the NKVD defector, Walter Krivitsky was debriefed he revealed that an English agent had been sent to Spain to pose as a journalist and assassinate Franco. It was later revealed that the agent was Philby. According to Foreign office files that Maclean got a look at in February 1937, there were three agents who posed as anti-Communists and entered Spain with the express purposes of killing Franco. (Andrew & Gordievsky, 1990, pp. 176, 600, ft. 169)

[555] Maly was a former Hungarian priest who had been captured by the Russians after working as a Chaplain during World War One. He emerged from the camps as a Communist. 'I saw all the horrors, young men with frozen limbs dying in the trenches … I lost my faith in God and when the Revolution broke out I joined the Bolsheviks. I broke with my past completely … I became a Communist and have always remained one.' (Andrew & Mitrokhin, 1999, p. 64) During the terror many of the illegals (agents operating in foreign countries) were recalled to Moscow and executed. What is amazing is how few of them chose to defect or even go into hiding. The overwhelming majority who were recalled obediently made the journey back to Moscow and disappeared. Of his own recall, Maly said 'I know that as a former priest I haven't got a chance… but I have decided to go there so that nobody can say 'that German priest might have been a priest after all.' (p. 78) His major experience of Russia had been its prison camps and yet he genuinely wanted to finish his life in Russia. 'If they don't kill me there, they will kill me here… better to die there.' (Knightley, 1988, p. 47) The startlingly supine obedience of these NKVD operatives reflects their level of commitment and it is unsurprising that they were able to work so fruitfully with the interwar spies who were themselves equally radical ideologues.

went in search of these Germans who had been both anti-fascist and anti-Communist. They found none. Those who had survived the war did not survive the Soviet liberation. 'All had been deported and liquidated.' (Macintyre, 2014, pp. 86-87) For our purposes the astounding factor was not so much the work that Philby completed but his attitude to that work. When, in 1944, he received a reward from the Soviet Union he was meekly grateful. 'I have never been so deeply touched as now with your gift and no less deeply excited by your communication [of thanks].' (Andrew & Mitrokhin, 1999, p. 125) Later that same decade, between 1947 and 1949, Philby was head of the British station in Turkey. During that time he was without a handler but, rather than taking a break from such a stressful existence, Philby simply sent back information through Guy Burgess. (Andrew & Mitrokhin, 1999, pp. 154-155) It was during this year that he was able to ensure the deaths of a significant number of British and American agents. For Philby his work was everything and when after his defection he was abandoned by the KGB, he drank heavily, even desperately. (Knightley, 1988, pp. 234-235) At one point he even attempted suicide by slashing his wrists. (Macintyre, 2014, p. 285) By 1977 Philby was re-employed by the KGB and, along with the stability occasioned by his fourth marriage, he returned to some sense of equanimity. Philby's career has been shrouded in disinformation, restricted access to key documents and conflicting accounts. Yet despite all this it is clear that his commitment to spreading the revolution through action never wavered. As he once chided his biographer, Philip Knightley, 'only a fool would deny me my faith.' (Knightley, 1988, p. 257)

In the statement they made to the press in Moscow, 11th February, 1955, Guy Burgess and Donald Maclean explained that their work for Comintern was a natural continuation of the activism they had begun at Cambridge and that it reflected a vocational commitment to their Marxian religion.

> At Cambridge we had both been Communists. We abandoned our political activities not because we in any way disagreed with the Marxist analysis of the situation in which we still both find ourselves, but because we thought, wrongly it is now clear to us, that in the public service we could do more to put these ideals into practical effect than elsewhere. (Driberg, 1956, p. 121)

On the surface Burgess was too much of a compulsive hedonist to be an effective spy and yet Deutsch realized that it was this very assumption that would protect his young charge. The depths of dissolution would place him above suspicion. (Andrew & Mitrokhin, 1999, p. 61) When Burgess and Maclean emerged in Moscow in 1956, Goronway Rees, who had been recruited by Burgess, wrote an anonymous article for *The People* in which he described Burgess as 'quite exceptionally gross and coarse in his approaches to other men'. In short, he was 'completely promiscuous, physically dirty, notoriously untrustworthy and unreliable, a reckless and irresponsible public servant.' (Rees, 1994, p. 195) Whilst this was a fairly self-serving account, since Rees was hoping that he could pre-emptively discredit any statement by Burgess that might implicate him, it is also fairly accurate. The incredible thing was not that Burgess was debauched but that he was able to work as a highly effective Communist agent for so long. When he was in Russia and slowly drinking himself to death, he declared to a startled Francis Haskell that the room they were in was bugged. Pointing to the device he suddenly shouted, 'I hate Russia, I simply loathe Russia. I'm a Communist, of course, but I'm a British Communist, and I hate Russia.' (Carter, 2001, p. 441) Even at this late stage when his commitments had cost him so much, Burgess could not abandon his faith in Communism itself. He would still declare his loyalty when most of the British Communists had abandoned theirs.

Burgess's loyalty to the cause was demonstrated when, in 1940, contact had been broken and the NKVD residency had been disbanded. He still tried to give documents to Litzi Philby and Edith Tudor Hart, hoping that they could get them to Moscow on his behalf. He even couriered documents to Paris on behalf of the other NKVD moles. (Andrew & Gordievsky, 1990, p. 237) When he was in the United States that same year, having failed to join the staff of the Embassy in Moscow,[556] he tried to get Michael Straight to help him re-establish contact with his handlers. (Andrew & Mitrokhin, 1999, pp. 587, ft. 100) During this same time when he was being ordered by MI6 to infiltrate the Communist Party in Britain and to mount small operations against the Soviet embassy, he lamented in a letter to a friend, 'What torments me most…is the fact that my

[556] This had been Valentine Vivian's idea, thinking that Burgess' knowledge of Communism might make him a reliable and valuable agent of MI6 establishing contact with Comintern and sounding them out on supporting British War efforts in the event that France fell. Yuri Modin claims that Burgess did not want the mission (see Modin, 1994, p. 84) However, in the account given by Isaiah Berlin, Burgess seems committed to the venture. (Holzman, 2013, pp. 147-148) It is more than likely that Burgess was desperate for any means of re-establishing contact with his NKVD handlers.

former comrades, the people I worked with in the Communist Party, believe I've betrayed the cause. They think I've forsaken militant Communism for my work as a civil servant.' (Modin, 1994, p. 84) And yet they had no right to. Burgess was always looking for a way to serve the cause. While he was working as a producer for the BBC[557] in 1941 and 1942, he gave many fellow-travellers the opportunity to speak, including Ernst Henri, who was a Soviet agent working in London under the cover of being a journalist. (Andrew & Gordievsky, 1990, p. 269) It has been suggested that Burgess simply enjoyed the thrill of espionage but his ideological loyalty clearly shaped his work even when direct espionage was no longer an option.

While he was working for the press department in 1944, Burgess was particularly unhappy, as Modin put it, 'he couldn't bear to be unproductive.' (Modin, 1994, p. 130) He was soon Hector McNeil's sectary in the Foreign Office and was able to 'bring gigantic files with him' when he would meet with his handler. (Modin, 1994, p. 130) By 1947 Yuri Modin was his handler and he was working for the Foreign Office's Far Eastern section. Modin's impression was of a committed worker in the revolutionary vineyard.

> From the start, Guy Burgess saw himself as a consummate secret agent. … [But] his task, he believed, was finer and nobler. He wasn't working for the Soviet Union as such; he was in the vanguard of world revolution. Guy Burgess believed that world revolution was inevitable. Like his Cambridge friends, he saw Russia as the forward base of that revolution. There was no alternative, of course; he might have his reservations about Russia's domestic and foreign politics… but in the end he saw the Soviet Union as the world's best hope. (Modin, 1994, p. 153)[558]

[557] Burgess like all the spies was somewhat reluctant to take money from the NKVD but he was more than happy to take money from the BBC. Documents released from the BBC archives reveal that Burgess was stinging the corporation for expenses while he worked hard making contacts which would ultimately help him to be a more productive spy rather than producer. Without knowing the half of it, his bosses were appalled by his behaviour. One memo gives an insight into Burgess's priorities, 'office hours are very flexible -- he is rarely here before 10.45am and spends most of the rest of the day out of the office making contacts' while another notes that Burgess was claiming on entertainment what today would be as much as £1,200 per month. (Malvern, 2009, p. 21) It is a reflection of Burgess's sense of loyalty that not only did he try to save the NKVD money but that he also tried to make the Corporation pay for his espionage work.

[558] In fact his faith in Russia was such that Andrew Boyle asserts he was personally distraught when Stalin backed away from the precipice and ended the Berlin Blockade. Burgess appeared 'to go to pieces' as Stalin suffered this reverse. (Boyle, 1979, p. 317)

When he was working in the Foreign Office's press department he was handing over so much information that Moscow were confused by the breadth and abundance of papers available to such a lowly figure. (West & Tsarev, 1998, pp. 171-172) Though he had often been drinking before the exchanges were made, and dropped his documents on more than one occasion, by October 1944 Burgess had 'become the most productive source…' (West & Tsarev, 1998, p. 172) To cite a few examples, between early November and early December 1946, he handed over 336 Foreign Office documents. On December 7th 1949, in a single drop, he handed over 168 documents totaling some 660 pages. (Andrew & Mitrokhin, 1999, p. 154) By the end of the war he had handed over 4,605 documents despite not having access to documents while working at the BBC. (West & Tsarev, 1998, p. 171) And yet, according to Modin, he suffered 'agonies of remorse' that he wasn't doing enough to help the cause. (Modin, 1994, p. 160)[559] From his recruitment to his defection, as Arnold Deutsch put it in a report, 'the essence of his existence was his clandestine work for the cause.' (West & Tsarev, 1998, p. 175)

Guy Burgess' productivity as an intelligence agent is all the more remarkable because his personal life was always in disarray, and his character, as an individual, could have been described as self destructive. It is surprising that he could hold down even one job, much less two. Guy Burgess did not have the ambition and social conformity of Anthony Blunt or Kim Philby. Rather, he outraged convention in every way, by being a flamboyant homosexual who also drank heavily on all occasions. His upper-class manners and charm seems to have ensured the loyalty of a small circle of friends, while otherwise, his superiors in the Foreign Office, where he worked from 1944 onwards, seem to have been exasperated but tolerant of his outbursts. After Guy Burgess turned up intoxicated, and wearing cosmetics, to a diplomatic meeting in Paris in 1948, he was described by the leader of the delegation as a person of 'innocent eccentricity.' (Sir Alexander Cadogan, cited by Costello, 1988, p. 539) When he was finally reprimanded and sent overseas in 1949, Burgess celebrated his departure with a party where he invited senior diplomatic officials, and also several rent boys. (Costello, 1988, p. 538)

[559] When Burgess had graduated to genuine alcoholism and been shifted off to Washington, the centre wanted to give him a break and limit contact but Modin warned them that 'he would merely work that much harder.' (Modin, 1994, p. 182)

The career of Guy Burgess contradicts everything we know of the conservative social values of mid-twentieth century Britain and suggests that class prejudice trumped any other.[560]

Donald Maclean was contemplating a PhD but abandoned the tower and sought a more influential career in the Foreign Office, initially planning to remain active in the Communist Party. It was, according to Philby, he who talked Maclean into taking on the subversive career of a double agent. 'If you are going to sell the *Daily Worker* there, you're not going to be there very long…. But you can carry out special work there for us.' Maclean immediately asked if he 'would be working for the Soviet Government or the Comintern.' (Costello & Tsarev, 1993, pp. 186-187) Maclean's earnestness reveals the strong commitment of the revolutionary rather than simplistic prejudices of dilettante Russophile. He chose action because he was committed to its ends. Modin argued that after he defected he chose to teach English to Russian children because he believed that the world revolution would come and that it would be predominantly carried out in English. (Modin, 1994, p. 95) Among his first duties in the Foreign Office, he was heavily involved in the work of the non-intervention committee. Robert Cecil argued that the Government's refusal to join in the anti-fascist action would have reaffirmed Maclean's decision to engage in covert action for the Communists. (1988, pp. 45-46) Later, he worked in the League of Nations during its final years and again, he undoubtedly saw the need for 'the dishonoured jungle path of espionage'rather than dithering diplomacy that seemed to substitute appeasement for action. (Cecil, 1988, p. 53)

Maclean was clearly not cut out to be a spy. From the beginning he was nervous and showed signs of strain. But he was committed. Modin declared him a loyal servant of the revolution until his death. 'He believed completely in the truth of Marxism-Leninism.' (1994, p. 95) It might well be argued that it was this commitment that motivated Maclean. During the war Maclean worked for the Foreign Office in London, dealing with economic matters. Despite the Nazi Soviet Pact, despite being nearly unmasked, despite the death of his brother in the war, despite a slowly developing drinking problem, he maintained a steady stream of information for the NKVD. Indeed nothing seemed to interrupt his work; it was his constant certainty. In 1942 alone, Maclean provided more than forty five volumes of information for the centre archives. (Andrew

[560] Burgess's unabashed homosexuality anticipated the 'out and proud' movement of 1970s homosexual activists by thirty years.

& Mitrokhin, 1999, p. 113) The sheer volume of material that Maclean passed to the Soviets gives an indication of his commitment. He was constantly challenging the centre's ability to handle the information being passed their way. In 1940 he had handed over 4,419 documents and this level was maintained throughout most of the war. In 1945 he was still working to that same level, handing over 4,593 documents. (West & Tsarev, 1998, pp. 171, 214)[561] What made this level of espionage extraordinary was was that in 1940 Maclean was nearly unmasked by the Soviet defector, Walter Krivitsky, who had identified a mole in MI5, 'a Scotsman of good family' educated at Eton and Oxford. It was only the inaccurate information about his education that saved him.[562] (Cecil, 1988, pp. 64-65) Maclean only learnt of this after Krivitsky turned up dead in a Washington hotel room. The fact that the following year he delivered even more documents suggests that he prioritised his work over any threat to his safety.[563]

Maclean was most influential when, in 1944, he was moved to the British Embassy in Washington, as the First Secretary.[564] The information that he passed along emboldened the Soviets in their negotiations with Churchill and Roosevelt, and Maclean became such a figure of respect among his handlers, that he was frequently asked for his personal assessment of the situation. (Boyle, 1979, p. 294) By 1945 Maclean was appointed joint-Secretary of the

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[561] During the period of 1941-54, John Cairncross was able to remove 5,832 documents from Bletchley park and SIS. (West & Tsarev, 1998, p. 171)

[562] As mentioned earlier he went to Gresham's School and Cambridge.

[563] The KGB archives have not revealed much of Maclean's work, only saying that he 'gave them access to British secrets and insights into the predilections of policy makers.' (Kerr, 2002, p. 112) Among the items that he purloined during the war were complete minutes of the Imperial Defence Committee meetings, British War Books and information on British codes and ciphers. (p.112)

[564] Perhaps the high-point of Burgess Philby and Maclean's influence came during the Korean War. It is widely believed that Burgess and Philby working in Washington (and Maclean the head of the Amrican desk in London) they were able to give valuable information to the Soviets which was then given to the Chinese. At the heart of this allegation is the suggestion that information about Truman's refusal to allow MacArthur to invade China was used by the Russians to embolden the Chinese into crossing the Yalu River without fear of serious reprisals. William Manchester suggests that the information being given to the Chinese was so detailed that it wasn't until MacArthur was improvising in retreat that he was able to match the enemy in a more equal struggle. (1978, pp. 597-598) More recently these allegations have been challenged by Callum McDonald who argued, as so many historians have, that we simply cannot be sure how the information was used by the Russians and Chinese. (Macdonald, 1996, p. 111) As is often the case when it comes to intelligence history, much like intellectual history, one is frequently reliant on educated speculation rather than incontrovertible proof. What is more certain is the fact that Maclean's Stalinist perspective not only shaped the reports that he was sending to Moscow and feeding Russian paranoia, but he even allowed this perspective to influence the notes he wrote in the margins of official documents. On one he openly denounced the imperialism of American finance and said that there was some point to the argument that the American economy needed a constant state of war in order to avoid a recession. (Andrew & Gordievsky, 1990, pp. 325-326) The fact that he felt compelled to put such sentiments into writing despite the fact that they could draw suspicion, reveals the level of his commitment.

Combined Policy Committee which coordinated Anglo-American-Canadian nuclear policy. This role, combined with involvement in a number of vital areas of work in the embassy, made Maclean a highly valuable agent for his handlers. The secret of his success, even with his own government, was his total commitment. Maclean worked extremely hard for the Foreign Office in order to be of more value to the Revolutionary cause. 'No task was too hard for him; no hours were too long. He gained the reputation of one who would always take over a tangled skein from a colleague who was sick, or going on leave, or simply less zealous. In this way he was able to manoeuvre himself into the hidden places that were of most interest to the NKVD.' (Cecil, 1988, p. 74) When Maclean and Burgess had finally defected, the US Joint Chiefs of Staff made an assessment of the scope of their activities:

> In the fields of US/UK/Canadian planning on Atomic energy, US/UK post-war planning and policy in Europe all information up to the date of defection undoubtedly reached Soviet hands… All UK and possibly some US diplomatic cables and ciphers in existence prior to May 15, 1951 are in possession of the Soviets and of no further use. (Andrew & Gordievsky, 1990, p. 323)

As Christopher Andrew pointed out, this was an alarmist analysis but it reveals the level access Maclean and Burgess enjoyed. Their professional accomplishments and determination to ingratiate themselves into influential circles had been so successful that the Chiefs of Staff struggled to think of areas of diplomatic life that hadn't been compromised.

By the time he was posted to Cairo in 1948, Maclean had been spying for more than fourteen years and the strain was too much. At no point in that time had he attempted to abandon the cause. At no time had he sought to break off contact. Even in the midst of a mental breakdown in Cairo he begged his handlers to take him to Russia rather than simply seeking to break with them. (Modin, 1994, p. 164) For him the dream of teaching in Russia was still alive in 1950. Maclean's ability to work efficiently in the midst of mental turmoil was such that when, by 1951, he was no longer being given papers that seemed worthy of passing along, he immediately realized that he was now under surveillance and that he needed to defect. It was here that Guy Burgess, an alcoholic of eccentric habits, roused himself to efficiency and was able to organize the defection smoothly. By all the traditional standards of international espionage, both Maclean

and Burgess were unsuited to the life of a secret agent and yet both were able to be very effective, providing reams of documents in the name of international revolution. Irrespective of the gaps in our understanding of the interwar spies, the only satisfactory explanation for their sustained motivations must be ideological. As Maclean once explained to the shocked wife of a Dutch diplomat during a dinner in Cairo, 'If Alger Hiss[565] felt as he did about Communism, he was quite right to betray his country.' (Cecil, 1988, p. 96)

Of all the spies Anthony Blunt was the one who remained in the tower for the longest. Blunt became one of the leading art-historians and critics of his generation and yet even in his work there were glimpses of his real priorities. In one essay, in much the same terms as those used by the volunteers in Spain when describing their peers who had remained behind, he criticized the artists who remained in their towers, cut off from their own class and the class struggle.

> Now that the class struggle has grown more acute and has become the dominating factor in the world situation, any artist who cuts himself off from his class is automatically excluded from the possibility of taking part in the most important movement of his time and is therefore forced to take to some sort of escape, to find some consolation in his art for the reality with which has lost touch in life. ('Art under Capitalism and Socialism,' 1937, cited in Penrose & Freeman, 1986, p. 155)

For Blunt the desire to play his part in 'the most important movement of his time' was relentlessly paramount. His work at Cambridge was repeatedly put in jeopardy by his activities as a talent-spotter and recruiter. His position as the surveyor of the King's pictures and his prestigious posts, first at the Warburg Institute and then later as the director of the Courtauld, were continually imperilled by public meetings with his Soviet handlers in which he not only handed over whatever he and his recruits had managed to filch, but acted as a courier for both Burgess and Philby.

[565] Maclean knew Hiss and worked closely with him in Washington but it is unclear if he was aware of Hiss's loyalties. However they coordinated the British and American responses to the Soviet Union's demands through the UN that member states declare the number and location of forces maintained on the territory of non-enemy states. (Cecil, 1988, p. 75) This itself was one of the more direct methods the Soviet Union used to elicit information from their Cold War enemies.

His handler, Yuri Modin described him as a man who 'matched his deeds to his words.' (Modin, 1994, p. 163) He saw him as a committed ideologue who gave whatever he could in the service of the great cause. He was repeatedly offered money for several years and only ever accepted a single payment at the end of the war. Many of their Soviet colleagues considered the interwar spies as 'ideological shit,' but Modin was clearly impressed by their commitment. (Carter, 2001, p. 302) In particular he admired Blunt who continued to work for the cause despite his reservations concerning the Soviet Union's post-war expansionism in Eastern Europe. '… Blunt, collaborated with us not because he agreed with Soviet Policy but because, like his friends from Cambridge, he believed in one overriding truth, that the happiness of humanity could be accomplished only in the wake of a world-wide revolution.' (Modin, 1994, p. 179)

Blunt is possibly the most difficult of the interwar spies to write about because he is such a complex character. The one thing that unites every account of this complex and difficult figure is the industriousness of his espionage. While he was with MI5 Blunt would steal swathes of documents, spending his lunchtimes 'searching colleagues desks and, and looking up specific classified files from the registry, MI5's archive, at the Soviet's request.' (Carter, 2001, p. 285) When it became too risky to steal the actual documents, Blunt began to stay late into the night compiling his own reports. (Carter, 2001, p. 285) In addition to this Blunt made visits to his recruits like Leo Long, even when the latter was posted to Berlin in 1945.[566] After the Soviets had instituted the practice of providing the spies with lists detailing what they wanted, Blunt, like Burgess, was still so productive that Modin instituted the practice of using suitcases to exchange documents; recorded and coded for a fresh haul. (Modin, 1994, pp. 142, 175) In a single year during the war, Blunt filled 327 rolls of film and brought at least a hundred documents to each meeting. (West & Tsarev, 1998, p. 162)

When Virginia Woolf met Blunt in early 1935 she described him in her diary as a member of an anti-fascist committee. (Carter, 2001, p. 128) And yet he had worked for Comintern during the Nazi-Soviet Pact, volunteering for military service in 1938 at the behest of his controllers and passing secrets to the Soviets that might well have then been passed on to the Germans. (Penrose

[566] Long was a working class boy with a scholarship in modern languages to Trinity College, Cambridge. Blunt supervised his work and got him elected to the Apostles. He was able to recruit Long because he was compassionate and they 'shared deep belief in the Communist cause.' (Andrew & Gordievsky, 1990, p. 175)

& Freeman, 1986, pp. 215, 250) Blunt was defiantly committed to the revolution and though his work was largely unacknowledged, and unspeakably dangerous, he had sought action at every opportunity despite what it might have cost him. When he died, his brother Christopher tried to explain that Blunt's spying had sprung from his idealism. '[H]e believed that he had acted rightly. He was convinced that he had done the right thing at the time.' (Penrose & Freeman, 1986, p. 546)[567]

Despite the infamy of the Cambridge spies they were not without their defenders. In fact, according to Margret Heinemann, the most committed Communists were united in their 'rejection of established values and codes of conduct.' (Cited in Morgan, Cohen, & Flinn, 2007, p. 132)[568] Consequently there was little outcy among the party faithful when Burgess and Maclean were finally exposed. In a remarkable essay, Victor Kiernan[569] cited Roger Garaudy's argument to explain why the treason might be viewed as simply a product of the time: '[w]e were fighting absolute evil: how, then, could we not feel that our cause was the cause of absolute good?' Though he agreed that the sense of absolute good was illusory he added, 'our ideals and aims were valid, and mean as much now as they did then. If we have not been invariably right, our opponents have been almost infallibly wrong, in anything where public morality or human progress is concerned.' (Kiernan, 1987) Kiernan's attitude to Burgess was 'he did what he felt it right for him to do; I honour his memory.'(Kiernan, 1987) In many ways this was the Communist viewpoint, they were taking action that needed to be taken. As Maclean explained his work for the NKVD to an English visitor in Moscow, 'It's like being a lavatory attendant; it stinks but someone has to do it.' (Cecil, 1988, p. 77) What was truly remarkable was the way in which the interwar spies were sustained by religious Marxism and driven by their commitment to

[567] Just before he returned to civilian life in 1944, in an extraordinary outburst made to his MI5 colleague Colonel 'Tar' Robertson, Blunt shouted, 'Well, it's given me great pleasure to pass on the names of every MI5 officer to the Russians.' (Andrew & Mitrokhin, 1999, p. 140) Given that Blunt *did* pass on names it is difficult to know how to interpret such an declaration beyond suggesting that the issue weighed on Blunt's mind and that he was clearly aware of the practical realities of his work.

[568] George Barnard, a contemporary of Burgess' at Cambridge actually felt guilt when the latter was revealed to have been a spy. Hearing that Burges was working for the Conservative Central Office, he had dismissed him as a typical member of the intellectual classes who had briefly slummed it among the Communists for the sake of amusement. Upon hearing that Burgess had gone into conservative circles in obedience to NKVD orders, Barnard concluded, 'I always felt that I owed him an apology.' (Morgan, Cohen, & Flinn, 2007, p. 133)

[569] Also cited in Morgan, Cohen & Flinn, 2007, pp. 132-133. Kiernan was a Communist graduate of Cambridge and friend of Kluggman, Cornford and Burgess. He left the party in disgust after the supression of the Hungarian Revolution in 1956.

the cause. Though outwardly they were not obvious candidates for a life of espionage, they found a 'constant certainty' in the midst of constant, if clandestine, action.

Conclusion

One of W. H. Auden's most quoted lines came from his poem, 'In Memory of W. B. Yeats' where he wrote: 'poetry makes nothing happen' (1991, p. 248). It is tempting to read this as evidence of Auden's own rationalization for the Trahison des Clercs, but the poem was written in 1939 while he was in New York, far removed from the fascist maelstrom now shaking all of Europe. A subsequent essay published in the *Partisan Review* that same year entitled 'The Public v. the Late Mr William Butler Yeats' reveals Auden admired the clerist's detached attitude.

> ...there is one field in which the poet is a man of action, the field of language, and it is precisely in this that the greatness of the deceased is most obviously shown. However false or undemocratic his ideas, his diction shows a continuous evolution towards what one might call the true democratic style. The social virtues of a real democracy are brotherhood and intelligence, and the parallel linguistic virtues are strength and clarity, virtues which appear ever more clearly through successive volumes by the deceased. (2002, p. 7)

Writing at the end of that 'low, dishonest decade' Auden had grown suspicious of taking sides. For him, the only solution was the return to the clerist vocation and even then it must be as an aesthete. The tawdry pragmatism he had encountered in Spain had compromised his poetry and his brief betrayal had sent him hurrying out of the marketplace and back into the ivory tower.

In the heady days of 1935, while teaching at the Downs Malvern, Auden had edited an anthology of poetry with John Garrett, a teacher from Whitgift School. Entitled, *The Poet's Tongue* the anthology was designed to detach poetry from the academic stranglehold and rejuvenate interest among students. In the oft-quoted introduction, Auden revealed that he was still skeptical of the trahison des clercs.

> The propagandist, whether moral or political, complains that the writer should use his powers over words to persuade people to a particular course of action, instead of fiddling while Rome burns. But Poetry is not concerned with telling people what to do, but with

> extending our knowledge of good and evil, perhaps making the necessity for action more urgent and its nature more clear, but only leading us to the point where it is possible for us to make a rational and moral choice. (Auden W. , 1996, p. 108)

Writing to E. R. Dodds, Auden explained his decision to go to Spain as being a product of the time. 'I am not one of those who believe that poetry needs or even should be directly political, but in a critical period such as ours, I do believe that the poet must have direct knowledge of the major political events.' Then, appropriating the explanation that Wilfred Owen gave his mother[570] when returning to the frontline, Auden wrote, 'I shall probably be a bloody bad soldier but how can I speak to / for them without becoming one?'(Auden W. , 1996, p. 207)

In his 'Letter to Lord Byron', written in 1936 while he was travelling in Iceland,[571] Auden wrote to the archetypal treacherous clerist wondering what the poet's response to the period should be; 'Byron, thou should'st be living at this hour! / What would you do, I wonder, if you were?' (W. H. Auden, 1991, p. 94) Auden saw the same force that drove Byron to fight for the Greeks in their war against the imperialist Ottomans, as driving his generation into the killing fields of Spain.

> You never were an Isolationist;
> Injustice you had always hatred for,
> And we can hardly blame you, if you missed
> Injustice just outside your lordship's door:
> Nearer than Greece were cotton and the poor.
> Today you might have seen them, might indeed
> Have walked in the United Front with Gide....
> (W. H. Auden, 1991, pp. 94-95)

Auden is concerned by 'the ogre, dragon, what you will' who represents the forces of reactionism, '...rear[ing] up to defend / Each dying force of history to the end.'(W. H. Auden,

[570] The letter was cited by Sassoon in the introduction that he wrote for the post-war edition of Owen's poems. 'My nerves are in perfect order. I came out again in order to help these boys; directly, by leading them as well as an officer can; indirectly, by watching their sufferings that I may speak of them as well as a pleader can.' (Owen, 1921, p. vi)

[571] And published as part of his *Letters from Iceland*

1991, p. 95) In the face of this ageless dragon, ‘Art feels a trifle sick.’ (p. 105) Auden believed that Rome was burning, and suddenly extending mankind’s knowledge of good and evil didn’t seem enough. As a result he muses on the proper role of the intellectual ‘with millions suffering from malnutrition.’ (p. 89)

> A child may ask when our strange epoch passes,
> During a history lesson, ‘Please, sir, what’s
> An intellectual of the middle classes?
> Is he a maker of ceramic pots
> Or does he choose his king by drawing lots?’
> What follows now may set him on the rail,
> A plain, perhaps a cautionary, tale.
> (W. H. Auden, 1991, p. 105)

Auden then sets out the story of his own life as that cautionary tale. For him conformity to the status quo is the real totalitarian force and he argues that the real ‘treason of the clerks’ is the temptation not to rebel, instead supporting conventionality and producing literature that is a mere consumer product.

> Goddess of bossy underlings, Normality!
> What murders are committed in thy name!
> Totalitarian is thy state Reality,
> Reeking of antiseptics and the shame
> Of faces that all look and feel the same.
> Thy Muse is one unknown to classic histories,
> The topping figure of the hockey mistress.
>
> From thy dread Empire not a soul’s exempted:
> More than the nursemaids pushing prams in parks,
> By thee the intellectuals are tempted,
> O, to commit the treason of the clerks,
> Bewitched by thee to literary sharks,
> But I must leave thee to thy office stool,

I must get on now to my public school.
(W. H. Auden, 1991, p. 108)

Auden believed that the threat of the ogre required the higher calling of rebellion while his cautionary life had taught him '...the rather tame conclusion / that no man by himself has life's solution.' (W. H. Auden, 1991, p. 112) This was really the cry of the convert. Auden felt the need to join the larger forces of anti-Fascism and go to war against the ogre by enlisting to fight in Spain. Though he drove ambulances there is no doubt that Auden was prepared to fight as a soldier if required, and was keenly aware that he might die. He wrote to Christopher Isherwood, 'I'm going to Spain in early January, either ambulance driving or fighting. I hope the former… in case of accidents remember that you and Edward are executors.' (Isherwood, 2012, p. 270)[572]

In later years Auden almost never spoke of his experiences in Spain. However the poetic expression of this period in his life was forever captured in the now infamous poem *Spain*. The poem is mostly remembered now for the revisions that Auden made before republishing it in 1940 in *Another Time*. However the poem, as originally published by Nancy Cunard and Pabalo Neruda immediately after Auden's return from Spain, reflects his genuine belief in the call to action.' (Fuller, 2000, p. 283) 'Yesterday all the past… but today the struggle.' (W. H. Auden, 1937) At the heart of the poem lies the Communist prayer of the poor who, in the midst of the interwar narrative, can only call on the dialectic of history to save them.

And the poor in their fireless lodgings, dropping the sheets
Of the evening paper: "Our day is our loss. O show us
    History the operator, the
Organiser. Time the refreshing river."
(W. H. Auden, 1937)

Auden accepted his place in the struggle and accepted, initially anyway, the harsh reality of the conflict where, according to Marxist logic, the ends justify the means. 'To-day the deliberate increase in the chances of death, / The conscious acceptance of guilt in the necessary murder'. (

[572] Also cited in Carpenter 1981. p. 207.

W. H. Auden, 1937)[573] This was really the expression of his own, brief betrayal; his own acceptance of excess and preoccupation with desired ends, to use Benda's terms.

It was a powerful irony therefore that Spain provided Auden with the first stirrings of his reversion to Christianity. He was distressed at the closure of the churches in Barcelona and began to contemplate the limitations of the life of action.

> 'I found as I walked through the city that all the churches were closed and there was not a priest to be seen. The feeling was far too intense to be the result of a mere liberal dislike of intolerance, the notion that it is wrong to stop people from doing what they like, even if it is something silly like going to church. I could not escape acknowledging that, however I had consciously ignored and rejected the Church for sixteen years, the existence of churches and what went on in them had all the time been very important to me.' (Cited in Carpenter, 1981, pp. 209-210)

In January 1938 Auden travelled to China with Christopher Isherwood. According to Humphrey Carpenter, it was 'a second chance' after the disaster of Spain (Carpenter, 1981, p. 225) Auden went as a detached observer with a clear sense of the absurdity of his position. Where *Spain* was the poetic expression of his treason, the book that he wrote with Isherwood, *Journey to a War*, is the poetic expression of his repudiation of that treason. Here partisan politics are replaced with a universal perspective.

Pointedly it is dedicated to Julian Bell's old foe, E. M. Forster. Like Bell, Auden recognized Forster as a symbol for the Clerisy who had not exchanged their vocation for action. Where Bell had rejected the clerist life and had been killed in Spain, Auden clearly felt his views beginning to change and began the book with by honouring Forster and all that he represented.

> Here, though the bombs are real and dangerous,
> And Italy and King's are far away,
> And we're afraid that you will speak to us,

[573] Surprisingly this was not the line that caused Auden the most trouble. He was more apologetic about the final lines 'History to the defeated / May say alas but cannot help nor pardon.' When he was discussing the revised edition of this poem for the 1966 publication of his *Collected Shorter Poems* he wrote, 'To say this is to equate goodness with success. It would have been bad enough if I had ever held this wicked doctrine, but that I should have stated it simply because it sounded to me rhetorically effective is quite inexcusable.' (Carpenter, 1981, p. 416)

You promise still the inner life shall pay.
(1972, p. 10)

In discussions of Auden's poetry his contributions to *Journey to a War* have too often been ignored. Evelyn Waugh enunciated the common response in a typically hostile review, describing *Journey to a War* as predominantly Isherwood's travel memoir with some of Auden's poetry at the end. (E. Waugh 'Mr. Isherwood and Friend.' In E. Waugh 1983, p. 251-252) Yet it is in his poetry that Auden reveals a new skepticism with political perspectives that are absolute. This is particularly clear in the poem comprising 'In Time of War: A Sonnet Sequence with a Verse' and 'Commentary'. In both the political struggles are viewed through the lens of salvation history and traditional wisdom.

Where earlier Auden proposed an image of mankind called to action, he now presents a somewhat chastened anthropological vision of a fickle mankind 'who by the lightest wind was changed and shaken, / And looked for truth and was continually mistaken'. (Auden & Isherwood, 1972, p. 259) Central to this vision is man as the poet and contemplative; 'Little upon his little earth, man contemplates / The universe of which he is both judge and victim'. (p. 289) But Auden was concerned with mankind as a whole rather than a particular class. Moreover his focus has moved from prosperity to the life of the mind.

Auden later reissued the poems, shocked at how carelessly he had written them, but the original twenty seven sonnets reveal the passionate expression of a rapidly changing intellectual landscape. Auden's repudiation of the life of action in the service of the dialectic of history was founded on a belief in Original sin. Where before he saw 'the poets exploding like bombs' in an effort to 'build the just city,' (Auden W. H., 1937, p. 10) now he was skeptical of such immanentist aims, believing instead that 'the way back by angels was defended / Against the poet and the legislator.' (Auden & Isherwood, 1972, p. 260) The poem concludes with the assertion that '[poets] are articled to error… / And will never be perfect like the fountains'. (Auden & Isherwood, 1972, p. 285) For Auden the lure of action for the sake of the perfect city has been replaced by a wary skepticism. 'We dwell upon the earth; the earth obeys / The intelligent and evil till they die.' (Auden & Isherwood, 1972, p. 272) The clerist's life of action can no longer be thought of as purely redemptive.

For Auden, despite the fallen world, the poet-figure is drawn on by the search for truth, the inner life, as he expressed it in the dedicatory sonnet. He presents an image of the poet who:

> …fell in love with Truth before he knew her,
> And rode into imaginary lands,
> With solitude and fasting hoped to woo her,
> And mocked at those who served her with their hands.
>
> But her he never wanted to despise,
> But listened always for her voice; and when
> She beckoned to him, he obeyed in meekness,
>
> And followed her and looked into her eyes;
> Saw there reflected every human weakness,
> And saw himself as one of many men.
> (Auden & Isherwood, 1972, p. 264)

The clear contrast between those who serve with their hands and those who seek truth in an effort to discover themselves is a far cry from his earlier poetry like 'Brothers Who When the Sirens Roar' in which he sought to serve the working classes. It is this desire for truth that sees Auden conclude the poem with a clearer sense of his clerist role, 'We live in freedom by necessity / A mountain people dwelling among mountains.' (Auden & Isherwood, 1972, p. 285)

In Spain Auden was concerned by the impurity of the cause, claiming later that he found the politics to be 'particularly unpleasant.' (Carpenter, 1981, p. 209) In the Sino-Japanese war Auden felt that he had discovered a just cause:

> But ideas can be true although men die,
> And we can watch a thousand faces
> Made active by one lie:
>
> And maps can really point to places
> Where life is evil now:

Nanking; Dachau.
(Auden & Isherwood, 1972, p. 274)

However the cause is not just enough to make him forget the lessons of Spain. He himself refuses to fight, so his role is that of an observer, it is that of the clerist. In the Sonnet Sequence he places these events into the context of salvation history rather than partisan politics. In the 'Commentary' that follows the sonnet sequence, Auden describes the ruthless Japanese invasion, not as the threat of Fascism but as 'the invader' engaged in 'this material contest' (Auden & Isherwood, 1972, p. 291) He concludes that this is but 'one sector and one movement of the general war'. (p. 292) And, where the Communist writers saw the outbreak of Fascism as part of the reaction against Communism, or the price of progress, Auden, by 1938, saw the battle as involving the search for virtue.

The issue is the same. Some uniforms are new,
Some have changed sides; but the campaign continues:
Still unachieved is *Jen*, the Truly Human.
(Auden & Isherwood, 1972, p. 292)

Jen is the fundamental Confucian virtue which the English writer John Fuller compares with the Christian notion of Agape. (2000, p. 242)Where earlier injustice had demanded political and military action, for Auden, it now demands moral conversion. The 'Commentary' ends not with the advice of Marx or Freud or D. H. Lawrence but with the advice of the Invisible College of the Humble.

Now in the clutch of crisis and the bloody hour
You must defeat your enemies or perish, but remember,
Only by those who reverence it can life be mastered;

Only a whole and happy conscience can stand up
And answer their bleak lie, among the just,
And only there, is Unity compatible with Freedom.
(Auden & Isherwood, 1972, p. 299)

For Auden the call to action had been replaced by the call to moral conversion and from within him emerges ‘the voice of Man’ and it is a voice of plaintive prayer, ‘O teach me to outgrow my madness.’ (Auden & Isherwood, 1972, p. 300) The detachment of the clerist had been restored and seemingly ennobled by the call to conversion and the deeper life of *Jen*/Agape. This realization preceded his own reversion to High-Church Anglicanism, his final conversion destination. For Auden, as for so many of the volunteers, the vocational life of action was hard to live. Admittedly most found it a source of embittering disillusion but, for the converts to Communism, the life of action was, for a time at least, the most profound expression of their political religion.

Chapter Nine: Sub Specie Aeternitatis

Under the Aspect of Eternity

The new years walk, restoring
Through a bright cloud of tears, the years, restoring
With a new verse the ancient rhyme. Redeem
The time. Redeem
The unread vision in the higher dream
While jewelled unicorns draw by the gilded hearse.

T. S. Eliot, *Ash Wednesday* (1930)

The other great fact which…makes the whole work religious instead of merely philosophical is that…great surprise which makes Job suddenly satisfied with the mere presentation of something impenetrable. Verbally speaking the enigmas of Jehovah seem darker and more desolate than the enigmas of Job; yet Job was comfortless before the speech of Jehovah and is comforted after it. He has been told nothing, but he feels the terrible and tingling atmosphere of something which is too good to be told. The refusal of God to explain His design is itself a burning hint of His design. The riddles of God are more satisfying than the solutions of man.

G. K. Chesterton, *Introduction to the Book of Job* (1916)

I have felt for His wounds
in nozzles and containers.
I have wondered for the automatic devices.
I have tested the inane patterns
without prejudice.
I have been on my guard
not to condemn the unfamiliar.
For it is easy to miss Him
at the turn of a civilisation.

David Jones, *A,a,a Domine Deus* (1938)

In the mid-1970s David Jones commented to his old friend, William Blissett that many of his friends were caught up in the political religions of the 1930s, most notably Fascism, and that he was even temporarily caught up in a police raid on a Social Credit bookshop. (Blissett, 1981, p. 138) In his contribution to *The London Magazine's* symposium 'Looking Back at the Thirties' he explained why he had maintained only 'a somewhat peripheral position to the major 'movements' of that time.' (Jones, 1978, p. 41) The major reason that he gave was similar to the reason Chesterton gave in his *Autobiography*, namely the relatively fragmented nature of these movements: 'I did not wish to be committed to truths that, however valuable, were not the whole truth.'(Jones, 1978, p. 42) Jones was clearly aware of the chaos and sense of decay that many artists responded to, however he described it in terms of utilitarian science and technology rather than simply bread lines and baton charges. '...[T]here was in the 1920s and becoming more obvious in the 1930s an objective 'newness', not brought about by, or from within, the activity we call 'the arts' but from a civilisational change, causing, I should think a greater metamorphosis than any historic or proto-historic change known to us.' (Jones, 1978, p. 44) This new civilisation was 'running counter to the presuppositions of 'man-the-artist''. (Jones, 1978, p. 45) For Jones the role of the modern artist was much the same as the bards of the Celtic tribes and indeed the artists of all ages;

> …that is, a carrying forward of the making of works that are 'significant', that (unlike the, often superb, contrivances of our technocracy which have as their end pure utility) can be justified *only* as signs of something other, are evocative, incantative and have the power of 'recalling', of 'bringing to mind' – are in fact one with that whole world of sign or Sacrament, whether it be the flowers sent to Clio on her birthday or the profound intention of the art of the man at the Altar, the work known as anamnesis, 'an effectual re-calling'. (Jones, 1978, p. 47)

This notion of re-calling something of significance came to be the central concept that linked the work of the Catholic authors. In *A,a,a Domine Deus*, a poem published not long before his death, but first written in 1938, Jones dealt with the difficulty of finding the living God in the midst of impersonal modernity. As he explained in the quote above, it was easy to miss 'Him' in the chaos of the interwar period, the turning of 'a civilisation.':

> I have watched the wheels go round in case I might see the living creatures like the appearance of lamps, in case I might see the Living God projected from the Machine. I have said to the perfected steel, be my sister and for the glassy towers I thought I felt some beginnings of His creature, but *A,a,a Domine* Deus, My hands found the glazed work unrefined and the terrible crystal a stage-paste …*Eia, Domine Deus.*[574]
> (1995, p. 9)

Writers like Evelyn Waugh, Graham Greene and David Jones would undertake a search for the Living Lord, the hard core to be found among the detrius of modern chaos. Their work, building on their own experience of searching for the Lord God (Domine Deus) among the 'unrefined…and terrible crystal' of the modern waste land, would celebrate his recovery and mourn his absence. To borrow from *Ash Wednesday*, they would write new verses in the ancient rhyme, 'redeem the time.' (1991, p. 90) Their work would be filled with a confidence in the attractions of mystical religion, embodying Chesterton's dictum that 'The riddles of God are more satisfying than the [political] solutions of man.' (Chesterton, 1916, xxii-xxiii)

Incarnational Art among the Ruins

As seen in the previous chapter, it did not take long for the romanticism of the Spanish war to dissipate among the volunteers. Swathes of propaganda that boasted of the invincibility of a people's army, suddenly undermined by the clinical nature of Franco's victory, were finally eradicated by Stalin's sudden burst of realpolitik. The treaty of non-aggression between Germany and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, signed in August 1939, put a sudden end to the notion of a united front against Fascism. For so many, the Soviet Union's inability to find a reason to separate itself from Nazi Germany destroyed the clarity of their root realities.[575]

In the face of a Fascist triumph and a cynical reappraisal of the German threat as merely a 'capitalist war' the Spanish crusade to save Europe from the terror of Fascist hordes seemed

[574] Lord God. Eia is simply an exclamation.
[575] This had to be one of the most significant examples of the stresses to root realities cited by Max Heirich. Namely: 'if respected leaders publicly abandon some part of past grounding assumptions, that step should either weaken their authority or encourage basic re-examination by others.' (1977, p. 675)

suddenly pointless. One English Communist shop steward summed up the existential confusion nicely, 'Bugger Uncle Joe, bugger Molotov, bugger the whole bloody lot of them! How the hell am I to explain this to the factory tomorrow?' (Moorhouse, 2014, p. 218) In the light of Moscow's about-turn, the Spanish war was quickly re-evaluated and the romantic tones that surrounded its early days was replaced with tragedy.

> 'It is easy to see now that the Spanish Civil War was, from the very beginning, the tragic, drawn-out agony of a political epoch. Once the Generals had made their revolt, they would eventually win it: once they had won it, a world war would be fought *against* Fascist aggression, but not *for* anything we had hoped for in 1936. And even at the time there was some sense that this was the last chance for the politics of Attempting the Good, as opposed to the subsequent politics of Avoiding the Worse.' (Toynbee, 1954, p. 90)

Philip Toynbee made that summation in the mid-fifties. However, his 1943 novel about the Spanish Civil War, *The Barricades*, better captures the uncertainty in which the conflict was mired in its immediate aftermath.

Toynbee's novel is depressing in its ham-fisted symbolism of rooks sheltering in trees when the characters refuse to become involved in politics and then suddenly flying free when they impulsively give vent to their instinctive political loyalties. The landscape of the dead, apolitical world is yellow; a colour that links the churches, the dissipated bodies and the house that briefly ensnared Markham, the young man who eventually fights in Spain. Yet Toynbee's heavy handed prose cannot mask the novel's ability to capture the attitudes of the period. Writing in the 1940s, Toynbee presents the war in Spain as an inevitable defeat. However the question of involvement still remained the central question in the lives of the young characters. Even the completely otiose intellectuals felt compelled to explain why they rejected political action. When Rawlins, the cynical protagonist, is in Paris he is caught up in a Front Populaire demonstration and a Communist speaking on Spain fills him with 'growing shame, and a sense of personal humiliation.' (Toynbee, 1943, p. 145) Death was likely and failure certain.Even Rawlins is overcome with admiration for the soldiers amassing at the foot of the pyranees ready to sneak into Spain. He falls back overcome with a 'sad adoration' for the brave men and 'the appalling

seriousness of their resolution – to fight, to be killed….' (. p. 247) The reason for his admiration was based on his belief that it was only in self-sacrifice and dedication to the cause that individuals could attain certainty about their life and thereby 'really know what they're doing.' (p. 252) Spain has, for Toynbee and the other disillusioned converts, taken on the role of a tragic martyrdom for the sake of righteous action, regardless of its effect.

Early in Toynbee's novel Rawlins remarks, 'I support the republican government… surely any reasonable person must.' (Toynbee, 1943, p. 23) This was also Rose Macaulay's view. Her contribution to Nancy Cunard's *Authors Take Sides* was a very simple and very emphatic, 'AGAINST FRANCO!' (Cunard, 1937, p. 17) Three years later, she published *And No Man's Wit*. Though largely forgotten, her novel, like Toynbee's, accurately reflects changing attitudes in the wake of the Spanish Civil War. Where Toynbee had been a convinced Communist, Macaulay had only ever been sympathetic to a soft-socialism and so her rejection of the Spanish war was far more complete. Where Toynbee rejected the possibility of victory while maintaining that the conflict was inherently noble, Macaulay rejected the entire conflict as foolish. Indeed her novel is really a rejection of Toynbee's anthropological vision. He promotes homo-politicus, . Markham ultimately returns to the political struggle because it is the only possible life for a man. 'So the blood-red dawn is ahead of me, and all its glories! Though, to be frank, I'm so not very enthusiastic. But I had to do something. It had become impossible. And, after all, a good cause like this is much better than the river.' (Toynbee, 1943. p. 222) Macaulay, on the other hand, presents a vision of modern man motivated by more simple prejudices and hatreds and searching for something that transcends politics. Within her novel the political figures are revealed as being essentially religious and Toynbee's homo-politicus gives way to Macaulay's homo-religiosus.

The title of the poem comes from John Donne's poem *First Anniversary: An Anatomy of the World*. The specific quote comes from the portion of the poem in which Donne meditates upon the corrupted world and, although he was writing in 1611, could almost describe the experience of intellectual fragmentation in the secular age.

> And new philosophy calls all in doubt;
> The element of fire is quite put out;
> The sun is lost, and th' earth, and no man's wit

> Can well direct him where to look for it.
> And freely men confess that this world's spent,
> When in the planets, and the firmament
> They seek so many new; they see that this
> Is crumbled out again to his atomies.
> 'Tis all in pieces, all coherence gone,
> All just supply, and all relation.
> (Donne, 1896, p. 111)

For the characters in Macaulay's novel the new philosophies have failed and they are left in a world in which all coherence is gone. The novel is set in the chaos of post-war Spain. Dr. Marlowe is a liberal activist, described with gentle irony by Macaulay as a person who self-importantly sends her congratulations to world-leaders whenever they pursue any policy that is in accordance with her own views. In 1939, she has rushed to Spain in order to search for her son, Guy, a volunteer, missing and presumed dead. She is accompanied by her other children Betsey and Hugh, her son's working-class comrade Ernie and her son's fiancée, Ellen. They approach Ramón Del Monte, a Marquis from Aragon, for help. Ramón knew Guy at Oxford and, along with his wealthy French friend, Armand, this mismatched group scour Spain for Dr. Marlowe's son, all the while heatedly discussing their very different attitudes to European politics in general and the situation in Franco's Spain in particular.

Ramón and his ultra-conservative family present an obvious foil to the liberal idealism of the Marlowe family and the extensive historical perspective that they provide seems to diminish the importance hitherto attached to the Spanish conflict. Armarand explains, 'there will be plenty more occasions, my dear, for liberating Spain by means of generals. Spain is liberated so often, and always, always, for so short a time.' (Macaulay, 1940, p. 154) Ramón introduces the activists to a Spain that is connected to the deep past and possessed a complex myriad of ancient prejudices and parochial suspicions that, in many ways, were inured to the simplistic party sloganeering of the volunteers. Dr. Marlowe felt her own liberalism slipping in the face of the real Spain.

> Oh what was the use? Each day, as Spain's strange, illiberal impenetrability daunted her a little more, she sank into a drearier skepticism, not only as to finding Guy, but as to the very foundations of her faith and his, the roots from which their life sprang. More and more she was and would be lost in a waste of strangeness, of doubt, of futility, of disillusion and defeat. Spain was a cenotaph of lost causes and slain hopes: its parched plains, rocky peaks, lean flocks, high walled cities, clanging bells, inscrutable olive faces, mocked the stranger and repulsed hope. (Macaulay, 1940, p. 210)

Her interest in international politics diminishes and she 'found that she cared less and less what anyone said about anything, except it should throw light on Guy's whereabouts.' (Macaulay, 1940, p. 295)

Ramón reveals that while he supported Franco, he did so only because it was in his interests. His only real political loyalty is to his people, the Aragonese, and to his family's lands. To the Marlowes this seemed reactionary in the highest degree. 'International Fascism…seems to us, you know, to be everyone's concern.' (Macaulay, 1940, p. 52) By the end of the novel many of the characters abandon that struggle and focus on the localized concerns. They join the ranks of those 'who prefer to cultivate [their] gardens.' (p. 380) One of the men who escapes from Spain with Guy tells him that 'it is the wild beast that we must fight and kill in ourselves before we can be great.' (p.367) This becomes the sanest position among the many that are argued in the book. Guy's brother Hugh represents the unthinking homo-politicus who ignores his garden and lives entirely for the party and, in consequence, is more deluded than any other character. His explanation of the Moscow show trials is simply the party line, 'it had been because of their vile Menshevik natures, and because they were the lowest of Trotzkyite vermin; they simply couldn't help themselves, they had to wreck all they saw.'(p. 298) Thus, he concludes that the POUM man who shot Ernie must have been motivated by nefarious political ideas. Actually it was because he thought that Ernie had taken his girl. In other words, it was a parochial concern. Dr Marlowe returns to England in view of the approaching war. She has grown older and, far from being a political activist, 'she wished to see no one.'(p. 313) When pressed for her opinion on the coming war she argues that 'war is horrible and cruel and grotesque, of course, and belongs to the dark ages' but she also worries that pacifism seems absurd.(p. 315) In the end she concludes,

‘you see, I simply don’t know what I think; one’s altogether confused.’(p. 316) Politics can no longer explain reality for Dr Marlowe, it seems to be only a platform for advocating violence.

In an insightful essay on this novel Stan Smith argued that a key event was when Betsey, while staying in Ramón’s house, accidentally smashed a statue of St Teresa. He notes that this links with the novel’s epigraph, ‘tis all in pieces, all coherence gone.’ (S. Smith, 2005, p. 22) Smith argues that the deligitimisation of homo-politicus results from the reflection that a coherent explanatory system is forever lost. ‘No man’s wit can put together again an all-embracing system from the scattered fragments of belief and disillusion. It lies as irreparably shattered as that statuette of St Teresa.’ (Macaulay, 1940, p. 27) Spain is the cenotaph of the great ideologies but there is a complicating religious factor in the novel that most critics have struggled to explain. One critic dismissed it as ‘a note of irrelevant fantasy’ and ‘a preposterous conceit [that] might be her way of informing us that that the whole novel must be taken *cum grano*.’ (Dangerfield, 1940, p. 7) However Macaulay is never one simply to satirise. Amidst all the political failure she presents a new anthropological vision; one in which a fallen man, dissatisfied with the petty and violent political life, yearns for the mystical life. Homo-politicus is revealed as homo-religiosus.

Macaulay stresses the idea of inheritance throughout the novel. Indeed the action of the novel is broken three times to explain the histories of the three families. The assumption of each explanation is that the actions of the forbears shaped the lives and predispositions of the descendants. The strangest of these historical flashbacks, with a note of magical realism, concerns the character of Ellen Green. It is revealed that she has mermaid blood and every few generations it asserts itself in one of the daughters. As Ellen swims in the ocean with Ramón, he is ‘perplexed and rather frightened’ when he perceives the supernatural in her ability to sing underwater and to stay indefinitely submerged. (Macaulay, 1940, p. 319)

> To the ordinary Aragonese peasant few things were strange; and their lords and masters often shared with them a vague hinterland of acceptance where anything might happen; even the sophisticated such as Ramón, educated abroad, a frequenter of foreign cities, had between themselves and this hinterland a door that would open if pushed. Ellen’s performances were pushing it now; it stood ajar, and through the crack flowed strange suspicions, crazy dreams. (Macaulay, 1940, p. 320)

The imagery of the frightful hinterland and the door connects the terrifying recognition of the supernatural in Ellen with the supernatural that Ellen herself recognizes and fears in the Cathedral of the Transfiguration of the Lord in Huesca. Betsey and Ernie 'came down the church looking smug and pleased with themselves' but Ellen refuses to enter. (Macaulay, 1940, p. 169) Like Ramón, she recognizes that this is a place of mystery and is appropriately afraid.

> Incense and garlic and musty air, dimness and coolness, the great spacious nave and apse, the blaze of candles on the high altar, the dark boxes round the walls, the suffering Christ in picture and image, the black-habited priests, sacristan and worshippers scattered about, they belonged to a fantastic, alien world. Ellen stood at its edge…she felt lost and bemused, a strayed creature, not knowing what people did or why, nor what it was all about, nor what she wanted herself.' (Macaulay, 1940, pp. 168-169)

This question over her desires that arise in the coolness of the Cathedral connects with Ellen's mysterious attraction to the coolness of the sea. There is a sense of mysterious longing that emerges in the characters of the novel. It is a longing that, for a handful of the more philosophical characters, can no longer be satisfied by political struggles, while the less philosophical characters seek to satisfy their longings in superficial counterfeits like cinema-going where 'one escaped through a door into a fantastic kingdom of ordered riot.' (Macaulay, 1940, p. 171)

Donne's poem *First Anniversary*: *Anatomy of the World* was written on the anniversary of Elizabeth Drury's death, she being the daughter of his chief patron. The argument that Donne makes in that work is that Drury's death is proof the world is completely corrupted. If a wonderful, innocent young girl, a picture of goodness can die suddenly then all 'coherence is lost.' (Love, 1966, p. 129) In Ellen abandoning the world for the ocean, another 'fantastic kingdom of ordered riot', Macaulay seems to be making a similar argument to the one made by Donne. This is a fallen world that cannot satisfy the mystic. 'Like the unicorn, like the centaur, like the basilisk, they had perished out of a world too alien. As she herself must perish, for the earth too marine, for the sea too earthly, from both expatriate… of this world she could make nothing.' (Macaulay, 1940, p. 328) Ellen becomes a symbol for the mystical yearnings that, in

the other characters were merely faint and undecided promptings. And fittingly, she stays in Ramón's heart 'like an unattained dream.' (Macaulay, 1940, p. 342)

That unattained dream also lurks within the bosoms of the Marlowe family. It is there when Dr. Marlowe wonders what difference her telegrams are making. It is there in the 'traitor whispers' that recalled A. E. Housman's humanist appropriation of Psalm 62, 'Be Still, My Soul, Be Still' to her mind. In her turmoil Dr. Marlowe haphazardly quotes Housman's vague religious questing: 'be still, my soul, be still, the arms you bear are brittle, let us endure an hour and see injustice done, high heaven and earth ail from the prime foundation, all thoughts that rive the heart are here, and all are vain, horror and scorn and hate and fear and indignation... all are vain.' (Macaulay, 1940, p. 186) Her desire for peace and her rejection of earthly concerns reflects her movement away from a purely political life and her desire for the life of the spirit.

A more pressing symbolism comes in the final chapters when Guy finally escapes out of Spain; he is wanted for murdering a prison guard, which is why couldn't get in contact with his distressed family. He had been one of the volunteers who had 'rush[ed] into war like thirsty men after a drink.' (Macaulay, 1940, p. 51) Defeated, on the run, and completely alone, Guy has his convictions tested by this moment in the mountains, even more than the war itself. 'It grew colder; he shivered in the small wind that sighed over the waste. The lost and difficult waste of Spain which held him, which held defeat and hate and bitterness and over a million trapped, imprisoned and enslaved Spaniards, who would not…escape tomorrow.' (pp. 352-353) In this waste land Guy quotes Donne's meditation on the limitations of worldly creeds and concludes, 'perhaps only individuals were worth troubling about…' (p. 355) At this point he is lost in the chaotic landscape, caught between France and Spain, between the dangerous life of action and the life in which individuals, rather than whole movements, are his concern. Macaulay, foreshadowing the direction of her later novels, has a Spanish priest find Guy and lead him out of the waste land.

> The party trudged along, led by the priest, taking a course quite different from that which Guy had believed to be the most likely. It led them first higher, then down across a ravine, then along by the jut of a great cliff, with a sheer precipice on their other side, so

> that Olivar,[576] who had a weak head and was greatly exhausted, turned giddy, and the priest gently took him by the arm.' (Macaulay, 1940, p. 361)

In this simple description Macaulay gives a subtle portrait of a newly discovered spiritual life. The political convert is suddenly taking a new and, from his Communist perspective, unlikely path. The priest guides the men through heights of apprehension and on through the perilous descent with its dizzying drops into the darkness. Guy finds in this Basque priest the same thing that Markham found in the volunteers about to cross the Pyrenees; '…he was so quiet, so unassuming, yet so sure of his physical, spiritual and political ground.' (Macaulay, 1940, p. 361) Macaulay did not have Guy convert, that wasn't the point of the novel. In 1940 Macaulay herself was estranged from the Church. However in *And No Man's Wit* she suggests that more is needed than purely secular religion. She describes a questing that remains unsatisfied and frustrated by purely worldly concerns.

As mentioned in chapter seven, Macaulay would not write another novel for ten years and when she did it was *The World My Wilderness* (1950), a novel that was explicitly concerned with the search for the mystical. In her final novel written nearly twenty years after *And No Man's Wit*, she would discover that all embracing system among the seemingly irreparable ruins of Trebizond. Where the world and its secular religions seemed to falter in 1939, agreeing with Donne that ''Tis all in pieces, all coherence gone,' the Catholic and Anglo-Catholic writers were able to represent[577] a mystical coherence among the perceived ruins. For this reason, where the soldiers and spies were the 'redeemer classes' seeking to save the world, the Catholic writers were working, in the words of Brideshead's Charles Ryder and Lord Sebastian Flyte, 'contra mundum.' It was this rejection of worldly (and most explicitly political) logic and the explicit search for 'the living God' that became the defining quality that united the work of the Catholic converts. (Jones, 1995, p. 9)

Writing in 1938 Cecil Day Lewis confidently predicted that religion was about to disappear and would soon be replaced with psychoanalysis. 'If, as many believe, man cannot yet live satisfactorily without religion, then it may well be that from the revelations of [Freud] this great

[576] A soldier of the republic on the run like Guy.
[577] Or, as Jones would have it 're-present'. (1959, p. 155)

unbeliever the new religion will spring. If it does, one can be sure of two things. It will be a religion of enlightened love: and literature will be its handmaid.' (Day Lewis, 1938, p. 14) For Day Lewis such changes were all part of the chaos of capitalist collapse.

Amidst this chaos he reasonably concluded that there would be a 'revolution in writing.' His argument was based on the assumption that it was a climate in which writers must inevitably take sides. In the face of working class suffering writers would have to become more 'concerned with the relations between masses and less with the relations between individuals.' (Day Lewis, 1938, p. 11) He argued that writers would either promote revolution, psychology or pure entertainment.[578] The first two categories would be concerned with 'a guide to action' and he called this 'morality writing'. (Day Lewis, 1938, p. 11)

> On the one hand, morality writing – conveyed through fairy tales, allegory, satire, and perhaps a new kind of semi-religious drama based on the revelations of recent psychologists. On the other hand a form of writing somewhat akin to music, depending on highly elaborated sounds, intense verbal subtlety and complex patterns of association. I believe a revolution in writing is taking place. (Day Lewis, 1938, p. 17)

What must have been astounding to Day Lewis was the fact that a generation of writers not only refused to take their place in these categories but they actively promoted a religious vision that was based on a traditional conception of the supernatural. It is fascinating to think that in the midst of a religious revival among the leading writers of the time, Day Lewis could so confidently assume that traditional religions, and in particular Christianity, were spent forces and that a growing number of talented writers would compel 'an alien tradition [classical English poetry] into their service' and the service of the revolution. (Day Lewis, 1938, p. 44) One can only wonder at the astonishment he felt when he contemplated the popularity of Waugh and Greene, the mystical poetry of David Jones and, finally, the growing religiosity of his friend, W. H. Auden.

T. S. Eliot had long argued that writing, in common with the society that produced it, had become increasingly secularized. In an essay entitled, Religion and Literature' he argued that this

[578] He believed that new inventions like interactive cinemas would soon replace the entertainments, traditionally designated as literature. (Day Lewis, 1938, p. 11)

constituted the most significant change in literature since the 19th century. 'What I do wish to affirm is that the whole of modern literature is corrupted by what I call Secularism, that it is simply unaware of the primacy of the supernatural over the natural life: of something which I assume to be our primary concern.' (Eliot, Selected Essays, 1999, p. 398) The American Catholic writer Flannery O'Connor described this secular literature as being the triumph of a meaningless world; the triumph of the waste land. 'In twentieth-century fiction it increasingly happens that a meaningless, absurd world impinges upon the sacred consciousness of author or character; author and character seldom now go out to explore and penetrate a world in which the sacred is reflected.' (O'Connor, 1969, p. 158) The alternative was, of course the literature of 'Ash Wednesday'. This was not mere apologetics. They were for the controversialists and pamphleteers, who were purely concerned with religious conviction. For the Catholic novelist the focus was on a work of art that captured the anagogical drama of salvation.[579] '…the greatest dramas naturally involve the salvation or loss of the soul. Where there is no belief in the soul, there is very little drama.'(O'Connor, 1969, p. 167) When we re-call Day Lewis's three types of writing, the revolutionary the psychological and the entertaining, it is not difficult to see that for Catholic novelist, convert or not, the dramatic scope is much greater, indeed it is infinitely greater. As O'Connor goes on to explain, 'The Christian novelist is distinguished from his pagan colleagues by recognizing sin as sin. According to his heritage he sees it not as sickness or an accident of environment, but as a responsible choice of offense against God which involves his eternal future.'(O'Connor, 1969, p. 167) This was the anthropological vision that was so at odds with the vision presented by a writer like Toynbee who saw man as being either in the socio-political 'struggle' or outside of it. For the Catholic writer there was an unutterable complexity about man in relation to God. It was for this reason that Waugh concluded, 'you can only leave God out by making your characters pure abstractions.' ('Fan-Fare.' In E. Waugh, 1983, p. 302)

[579] In her essay 'The Nature and Aim of Fiction', O'Connor defines the term anagogical thus: 'The medieval commentators on Scripture found three kinds of meaning in the literal level of the sacred text: one they called allegorical, in which one fact pointed to another; one they called tropological, or moral, which had to do with what should be done; and one they called anagogical, which had to do with the Divine life and our participation in it. Although this was a method applied to biblical exegesis, it was also an attitude toward all of creation, and a way of reading nature which included most possibilities, and I think it is this enlarged view of the human scene that the fiction writer has to cultivate if he is ever going to write stories that have any chance of becoming a permanent part of our literature. It seems to be a paradox that the larger and more complex the personal view, the easier it is to compress it into fiction.' (1969, pp. 72-73)

The other side to this anagogical drama involves the workings of grace in the individual or the merciful reach of God. In that sense, the Catholic writers really worked against the progress of secularization that sought to distance God. This central apprehension had often precipitated the converts towards the church and it certainly remained crucial in maintaining their faith. Evelyn Waugh's Guy Crouchback summed up the perspective of these writers when he said to the chaplain at a mess dinner of the Royal Corps of Halberdiers, 'do you agree, that the Supernatural Order is not something added to the Natural Order, like music or painting, to make everyday life more tolerable? It *is* everyday life. The supernatural is real; and what we call "real" is a mere shadow, a passing fancy.' ('Men at Arms.' In E. Waugh, 1994, pp. 71-72) This apprehension of a mystical revolution that occurred in the lives of individuals was central to the writings of the converts, and it was what set them apart from Day Lewis's 'revolution in writing.'

Evelyn Waugh announced in a 1946 article he wrote for *Life* magazine that the explication of this apprehension of the Divine would henceforth be the prime focus of his work. '…in my future books there will be two things to make them unpopular: a preoccupation with style and the attempt to represent man more fully, which, to me, means only one thing, man in his relation to God. ('Fan-Fare.' In E. Waugh, 1983, p. 302) As he said earlier in the same article the problem with modern novelists is that they ignore the salvific drama that plays out in the lives of most individuals. 'They try to represent the whole human mind and soul and yet omit its determining character – that of being God's creature with a defined purpose.' (E. Waugh, 1983, p. 302)[580] It was this mystical apprehension, this perception of the eternal, that united the writing of the literary converts.

In his discourses on the University John Henry Newman said that the biggest deficiency of Catholic writers was their anonymity. More than that, he predicted that it would always be so, 'Catholics must do as their neighbours; they must be content to serve their generation, to promote the interests of religion, to recommend truth, and to edify their brethren today, though their names are to have little weight, and their works are not to last much beyond themselves.' (Newman, 1996, p. 199) Ian Ker pointed out that, somewhat ironically, Newman received Gerard

[580] In a lecture that he gave in 1937 he lamented that writers who made politics their chief concern were incapable of producing anything that wasn't 'ideological writing.' (Patey, 2001, p. 81) Day Lewis's assumption that the only writing able to survive scientific inventions was either psychological or revolutionary seems to justify this observation.

Manley Hopkins into the Church. Hopkins then played a significant role in the complete destruction of Newman's prophecy, over the course of the next hundred years. (Ker, 2003, pp. 2, 12, 203) Writing in the interwar period, Calvert Alexander, a Jesuit literary critic, described the sudden emergence of Catholic workers into Britain's literary fields as giving rise to 'the promise of a newer and higher type of fiction envisioned by the Catholic ideal…' (Alexander, 1935, p. 332)[581] This was the literature of Waugh, Greene and Jones.

Waugh's oeuvre contains a surprisingly coherent and profoundly Catholic thread of logic that unites his pre-conversion novels with those written afterwards. Greene's novels, all written after his conversion, do not have the same coherence. As we shall see, he has written novels of belief, novels of doubt but also novels that might be described as comedies or as 'entertainments', to adopt the term he himself used. Some of the novels of doubt and the entertainments do not concern the Catholic faith in any way, instead focusing on temporal concerns like the search for adventure or passion. For this reasons this chapter will present a detailed overview of Waugh's work, while restricting itself to a briefer overview of Greene's writing. Jones' poetry is almost exclusively Catholic. However his major poem *The Anathemata* is so complex that a thoughtful exposition would require at least a chapter.[582] Because of its complexity and because of the obviousness of its Catholicity, Jones' poetry will be discussed in brief at the conclusion of the chapter.

Waugh: Contra Mundum

Waugh's novels and stories can be roughly divided into three categories: the novels of chaos, the novels of conversion and the novels of vocation. Firstly, we consider the waste land novels that make sport among the ruins. When reviewing *Vile Bodies* for the *Fortnightly Review*, Nancy Mitford argued that Waugh was the last word in the waste land literature of the interwar period:

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[581] Alexander saw the novel as the 20th century contribution to the Catholic revival that had begun in the mid-19th century. Where poetry had been the principal product of the 19th century conversions such as those of Coventry Patmore, Francis Thompson and Gerald Manley Hopkins, the great Catholic novel was more likely to be produced by 20th century converts writers like Waugh and Greene. (1935, pp. 332-333)

[582] Despite the hundreds of footnotes Jones used to make the poem accessible, it has always required companion volumes of explanation. In 1977, René Hague published a 260 page commentary on *The Anathemata*. Henry Summerfield published a shorter guide two years later. Neil Corcoran published his study of the poem in 1982, *The Song of Deeds: A Study of The Anathemata of David Jones*. It was just shy of two hundred pages. By the time that Thomas Dilworth's *The Shape of Meaning in the Poetry of David Jones* (a further 100 pages on the poem) was published ten years after Hague's, a modest cottage industry had been born explicating this relatively obscure but perpetually rich poem.

> The contemporary literature of disillusionment' that had begun with Eliot's *The Waste Land*, developed in the pessimistic prose of Aldous Huxley, before culminating in the torturous journey of Adam Fenwick-Symes [*Vile Bodies*] across the channel to post-war England and later back again to the relative peace of Europe once more consumed by Total War. (Stannard, 1987, p. 196)[583]

Waugh's novels of chaos are best exemplified by *Decline and Fall, Vile Bodies, Black Mischief, Scoop* and *A Handful of Dust*. In his essay, 'Tread Softly for you Tread on My Jokes' Malcolm Muggeridge contrasted modern satirists like the writers of *Private Eye* and the 1960 comedy revue, *Beyond the Fringe*, with the great English satirist, Jonathan Swift. 'When his trumpet sounded the walls of Jericho really did tremble. The trouble with the young satirists is that the walls have already fallen; their trumpets sound across the resultant debris.' (Muggeridge, 1966, p. 21) Waugh's early satires certainly contain something of the meaningless sound echoing across the debris of the waste land. The discordance is comprised of the 'confused roaring' of the Bollinger Club in *Decline and Fall* and by the roar of the engine and Miss Runcible crying 'faster, faster' in *Vile Bodies*. (E. Waugh, 2003a, pp. 5, 352) It is enlarged by the hand-drums throbbing and pulsing and the dancing that was 'faster and faster, oblivious of fatigue', under the influence of which Basil Seal, Waugh's arch-rake, inadvertently eats his lover in *Black Mischief*. (E. Waugh, 2003b, p. 190) The chorus of this chaotic hymn is provided by Uncle Theodore singing 'Change and decay in all around I see' from the window of his dilapidated ancestral home in *Scoop*. (In E. Waugh, 2003b, p. 213) While the climax is reached with deafening finality in 'the all- encompassing chaos that shrieked about [Tony Last's] ears' in *A Handful of Dust*. (E. Waugh, 2011a, p. 192)

Douglas Patey pointed out that for Waugh the word modernist did not mean what it meant to the writers who have described him as such. The use of modernist in a literary sense was a product of the 1960s. For Waugh, modernist (as per the Anglican and Catholic variety) was primarily a theological term concerned with an increasingly subjective view of doctrine. (Patey, 2001, p. 52) The result was impermanence in the intellectual landscape. Patey cites an unsigned manifesto

[583] Its power to give voice to the pervading beliefs of the period was such that it was reprinted eleven times before the end of the deade, selling around 22,000 hardback copies in Britain and about the same number over seas. (Soffer, 2012, p.55)

from the first edition of Harold Acton's *The Oxford Broom*, a publication to which Waugh contributed stories: 'The exquisite chaos of modern thought offers this one incomparable opportunity – the creation of new absolute values. Recent intellectual sap has yet to vitalize any adequate forms of existence, and an imaginative apathy is still in vogue. But what sporadic imagination has survived is inevitably God-seeking.'(Patey, 2001, p. 51) This was the intellectual landscape that inspired Waugh's early novels. He was both fascinated and, in a sense, terrified by 'the general disillusionment with the notion of absolutes, whether moral or metaphysical.' (McCartney, 2004, p. 2) In response Waugh produced satires that gave one 'a glimpse of the abyss guaranteed to unsettle everything one had taken for granted.'(McCartney, 2004, p. 5)

As mentioned in chapter five, *Decline and Fall* tells the story of Paul Pennyfeather who, while studying for the Church at Scone College, is so infelicitously caught up in the confused roaring of the Bollinger club; the embodiment of modern barbarity.[584] They strip him naked and he is precipitously thrust into the outside world. Pennyfeather's world is one of soft, 19th century liberalism in which Polish plebiscites discussed in the League of Nations Union were the way to ensure stability and order. His encounter leads him meekly to denounce the barbarians, 'God damn and blast them all to hell' but, unsuited to the role of prophet, he is at once ashamed. ('Decline and Fall.' In E. Waugh, 2003a, p. 10)

Ian Ker wrote that the subtitle to *Decline and Fall* should be the biblical dictum, 'the children of this world are more astute than the children of the light.' (Ker, 2003, p. 162) This sums up the world that Pennyfeather encounters. Every bastion of civilisation, 'all that was sonorous of name and title' seeks to destroy him. He is 'the solid figure of an intelligent, well-educated, well-conducted young man' and yet the church won't have him on account of the scandal and he is expelled from his college because it isn't likely he can contribute any fines to the dons' table. ('Decline and Fall.' In E. Waugh, 2003a, p. 104)

[584] They destroy a painting by Matisse, a grand piano, some manuscripts of poetry and a collection of china. Pennyfeather's chief attacker, Lumsden of Strathdrummond, is linked with the pagan past in an effort to emphasise his barbarity and the barbarity of the world that would destroy people like Paul Pennyfeather. He sways across his victim's path, 'like a druidical rocking stone.' ('Decline and Fall.' In E. Waugh, 2003, p. 8) Waugh, like Macaulay, bases his understanding of the present on an understanding of the deep past.

It must be remembered that Waugh himself had failed to find civilised life on emerging from Oxford. His first attempts at a career were ignominious failures. 'After an inglorious career at the university I tried to be a painter, and went daily for some months to an art school… Heavens, how badly I drew!' ('General Conversation: Myself…' In E. Waugh, 1983, pp. 190-191) When he gave this up he turned to teaching because 'one may be fresh from prison or a lunatic asylum [but] one can always…teach the young.' (E. Waugh, 1983, p. 191) Waugh's career as a schoolmaster was terminated when he was reported for propositioning the matron.[585] His life as a teacher had merely been in the breaks between the parties with the bright young things. Waugh was only ever a satellite figure but in 1928 he married Evelyn Gardner and a few months later published *Decline and Fall*. These twin achievements pushed him into the centre of the smart set, his penury and obscurity seemingly at an end.

Stannard argued that 'Waugh probably felt a closer association with [Pennyfeather] than might at first be apparent.' (Stannard, 1986, p. 171) Certainly Waugh had felt the same sense of persecution that he attaches to the less wealthy, educated middle classes in his interwar satires.[586] Paul Pennyfeather, the anti-hero of *Decline and Fall*, is typical of this. Waugh describes Pennyfeather as:

> a man who could be trusted to use his vote at a general election with discretion and proper detachment, whose opinion on a ballet or a critical essay was rather better than most people's, who could order a dinner without embarrassment and in a creditable French accent, who could be trusted to see to luggage at foreign railway stations, and

[585] After teaching he also tried carpentry but despite making an 'indestructible mahogany table' that even survived the fire he accidentally lit in his father's house, Waugh gave it up. Soon he 'settled[ed] down to the humble rut which fate had ordained for me.' ('General Conversation: Myself…' In E. Waugh, 1983, p. 192)

[586] Another innocent thrown to the lions is William Boot. He writes a column for the *Beast* entitled lush places. In his column he writes about, among other things, rodents 'he was particularly attached to them'. ('Scoop' In E. Waugh, 2003b, p. 213) When he returns from his misadventures in Africa Boot takes up the pen again in the name of *Lush Places* and writes of maternal rodents who 'pilot their furry brood through the stubble.' But the final image of the novel serves as a metaphor for William Boot's place in the world, 'outside the owls hunted maternal rodents and their furry brood.' (p. 400) A similar sense of chaos unleashed against the innocent pervades the novel *A Handful of Dust*. This is ably summed up in the final pages in which Tony Last's ancestral home is given over to his cousins who immediately breed foxes on the estate that, in a more civilised time, was given over to fox-hunting. The forces of destruction now reign. Discussing Tony's funeral service Teddy asks, 'how long will the show last? I've got to run over to Bayton and get some more rabbits for the foxes. Chivers says he's got about fifty waiting for me. We can't shoot enough here. Greedy little beggers.' (E. Waugh, 2011a, p. 309) Tony Last, William Boot and Paul Pennyfeather are all rabbits defeated by the carnivorous charlatans of modernity.

> might be expected to acquit himself with decision and decorum in all the emergencies of civilized life. (‘Decline and Fall.’ In E. Waugh, 2003, p. 104)

The novel reveals that civilised life is the last thing Pennyfeather finds upon his emergence from the university.

Like Waugh, the unlucky Pennyfeather also seeks work in education and discovers that it is entirely illusory, ‘Oh, I shouldn't try to teach them anything, not just yet, anyway. Just keep them quiet.’(‘Decline and Fall.’ In E. Waugh, 2003, p. 29) He is manipulated by the society beauty he loves and wrongfully imprisoned by the legal system. His freedom is only secured when the powers of civilisation, somewhat capriciously, resolve to secure it. The scheme, ‘approved by the Home Secretary,’ is set in motion by Margot Beste-Chetwynde and orchestrated by Dr. Fagan, at whose school Paul worked, and Sir Alastair Digby-Vaine-Trumpington, one of the Bollinger club barbarians who so ignominiously exposed him in the quad at Scone and who, more recently, had usurped Paul’s place as Margot’s ‘young man.’ (pp. 171, 185)

The lesson that Pennyfeather learns is that earnest discussion and open debate have no place in the modern world. The only people who are successful are all charlatans. The irrepressible Grimes is a rapacious pedophile who fakes his own death and travels in disguise before being arrested and jailed for bigamy, despite his hatred of women. Dr. Fagan is a sham academic who later runs a medical sanatorium before settling down to write a book entitled *Mother Wales*. It is the sort of liberal study detailing hospital statistics and the like to which the interwar period was so prone. However, even this compassionate activism is a pretence, Dr. Fagan having already disclosed his theory to Paul that the Welsh were dirty, inbred and instinctively mendacious. (‘Decline and Fall.’ In E. Waugh, 2003, pp.55-56)

Margot Beste-Chetwynde is a social climber whose fortune is built on the earnings of numerous brothels. She marries Sir Humphrey Maltravers who is soon given a peerage and so she becomes Lady Margo Metroland, named after the modern suburbs of north-west London; truly a child of modern civilisation. Waugh’s subsequent novels, *Vile Bodies*, *Black Mischief*, *Scoop*, and *Put out More Flags*, feature Margot as the centre of London society. She is the queen of this new civilisation. Whilst he does not rise to the same heights as Margot, Philbrick the butler plays numerous roles in the novel, viz career criminal, ship-owner, and guilt-ridden novelist, before

being finally revealed as Arnold Bennett.[587] By the end of the novel Pennyfeather has come full circle and is back in his rooms at Scone on the night of a Bollinger Club dinner. He is now convinced that the world of chaos exists all around him, embodied for the moment 'in the [now familiar] confused roaring and breaking of glass.'('Decline and Fall.' In E. Waugh, 2003, p. 183) He has learned that in this waste land it is only the deceitful and the radically amoral who not only survive but actually flourish. Therefore he retreats. Defeated by the modern barbarians, he retreats into the past to fight for the permanent things against the long-dead heretics, the ancient modernists of the second century. 'There was a bishop in Bithynia, Paul learned, who had denied the Divinity of Christ, the immortality of the soul, the existence of good, the legality of marriage, and the validity of the Sacrament of Extreme Unction. How right they had been to condemn him!' ('Decline and Fall.' In E. Waugh, 2003, p. 182) And later, 'So the ascetic Ebionites used to turn towards Jerusalem when they prayed. Paul made a note of it. Quite right to suppress them. Then he turned out the light and went into his bedroom to sleep.' ('Decline and Fall.' In E. Waugh, 2003, p. 186) In the end, Paul Pennyfeather, like the Dons in the opening pages, is safe only in self-imposed darkness, protected from the chaos outside but incapable of actually fighting against that chaos.

Within that landscape there is really only one genuinely religious figure and he, fittingly, is an imprisoned lunatic. Like in much of England at the time, the outward signs of Christianity are preserved but belief is absent. At Llanabba Castle the morning prayers are described as being entirely devoid of any form of devotion or belief. 'The Doctor advanced to the table at the end of the room, picked up a Bible, and opening it at random, read a chapter of blood-curdling military history without any evident relish. From that he plunged into the Lord's Prayer, which the boys took up in a quiet chatter.' ('Decline and Fall.' In E. Waugh, 2003, p. 28) Mr. Prendergast is the novel's only clergyman but he is struck down by a profound existential doubt that prevents any form of religious belief whatsoever, '*I couldn't understand why God had made the world at all*… Once granted the first step, I can see that everything else follows – Tower of Babel, Babylonian captivity, Incarnation, Church, bishops, incense, everything – but what I couldn't see, and what I

[587] Even within his complex lies there is the same assumption that only the dishonest can survive and prosper in the waste land. Another example comes with Toby Cruttwell, named after Waugh's erstwhile tutor. In this novel Cruttwell is a viscious career criminal who wins the VC in the Dardanelles and becomes a conservative M.P. 'for some potty town on the South Coast.' ('Decline and Fall.' In E. Waugh, 2003a, p. 45)

can't see now, is, why did it all begin?' ('Decline and Fall.' In E. Waugh, 2003, p. 27) Later he turns up in prison as the chaplain, having discovered that there is 'a species of person called a "Modern Churchman" who draws the full salary of a beneficed clergyman and need not commit himself to any religious belief.' ('Decline and Fall.' In E. Waugh, 2003, pp. 120-121) It is in prison that Paul meets the lunatic, a giant of a man who has visions. This man explains that his imprisonment is a product of the Bible.

> 'It's all in the Bible,' said the big man. 'You should read about it there. Figuratively, you know,' he added. 'It wouldn't be plain to you, I don't suppose, not like it is to me.'
> 'It's not an easy book to understand, is it?'
> 'It's not understanding that's needed. It's vision. Do you ever have visions?'
> 'No, I'm afraid I don't.'
> 'Nor does the Chaplain. He's no Christian.'
> ('Decline and Fall.' In E. Waugh, 2003, p. 151)

Waugh wrote this while still an atheist but it is clear that he understood the modernist clergyman was lacking mystical apprehension or 'vision' and for him this seemed to be a very weakened faith. Later the lunatic decapitates Mr. Prendergast and the death of the clergyman is discussed by the prisoners while singing the hymn in chapel. The irony of Prendergast's violent death providing the new lyrics to Isaac Watts' hymn, 'O God, Our Help in Ages Past', is a clear product of Waugh's understanding of what religion should be and what it had become. The traditional lyrics of the third stanza celebrate the Ageless Deity:

> Before the hills in order stood,
> or earth received her frame,
> from everlasting thou art God,
> to endless years the same.
> (Monk, 1874, p. 136)

These lyrics are replaced by a discussion of the sudden murder of Prendergast which was directly caused by the equally insane progressive ideas of Lucas Dockery who gave the lunatic a carpentry set in an effort to restore him to sanity. The contrast between an immortal God and the violence of modern chaos are a triumph in black irony.

‘Who let the madman have the things?’

‘The Governor; who d'you think?’

‘He asked to be a carpenter,

He sawed off Prendy's head.’

(‘Decline and Fall.’ In E. Waugh, 2003, p. 157)

In the fifth stanza the discussion is concerned with the passage of time and the transitory, even ephemeral nature of life in view of the eternal but is interwoven with a particularly gratuitous description of Prendergast’s final moments in which time passes slowly.

‘Time, like an ever-rolling stream,

Bears all its sons away.’

‘Poor Prendy 'ollored fit to kill

For nearly 'alf an hour.’

(‘Decline and Fall.’ In E. Waugh, 2003,p.157)

The image of the modern clergyman, alone screaming to no-one whilst bleeding to death really sums up the unconsoling vision of modernist religion that defined Waugh’s waste land novels.

In the place of religion is the pseudo-Nietzschean wisdom of Otto Silenus,[588] the novel’s chic intellectual who advises Pennyfeather on the religion of force. ‘Instead of this absurd division into sexes they ought to class people as static and dynamic. There's a real distinction there, though I can't tell you how it comes. I think we're probably two quite different species spiritually.’(‘Decline and Fall.’ In E. Waugh, 2003, p. 179)[589] Silenus explains the new religion

[588] Silenus was the mentor to Dionysius and advised him to follow his instincts regardless of what chaos might ensue. (McCartney, 2004, p. 13) A perfect patron saint of the modernist era. Otto Silenus is also utterly indifferent to consequences.
‘I have changed my mind. I think, after all, I will marry Margot.’
‘I'm afraid it's too late…she's married someone else.’
‘I never thought of that. Oh, well, it doesn't matter really.’ (‘Decline and Fall.’ In E. Waugh, 2003a, p. 177)
Underpinning his indifference is a deep loathing of mankind. He tells a visiting journalist, ‘please tell your readers. Man is never beautiful; he is never happy except when he becomes the channel for the distribution of mechanical forces.’ (p. 102)

[589] In the novel *Scoop*, Mr. Baldwin is the dynamic man par excellence. Baldwin reverently expounds on the virtue of might, all the while tenaciously representing his own interests. Through William Boot, another innocent abroad like Pennyfeather, he sends a message to the British People. It is a manifesto rivalling those of the Fascists and Communists in the novel except in its practicality and brevity. ‘*Might must find a way*. Not “*Force*”, remember;

of the waste land to Paul Pennyfeather by using the ‘the big wheel at Luna Park’ as an extended analogy for life.

> You pay five francs and go into a room with tiers of seats all round, and in the centre the floor is made of a great disc of polished wood that revolves quickly. At first you sit down and watch the others. They are all trying to sit in the wheel, and they keep getting flung off, and that makes them laugh, and you laugh too. It's great fun... You see, the nearer you can get to the hub of the wheel the slower it is moving and the easier it is to stay on. There's generally someone in the centre who stands up and sometimes does a sort of dance. Often he's paid by the management, though, or, at any rate, he's allowed in free. Of course at the very centre there's a point completely at rest, if one could only find it. I'm not sure, I am not very near that point myself. Of course the professional men get in the way. Lots of people just enjoy scrambling on and being whisked off and scrambling on again. How they all shriek and giggle! Then there are others, like Margot, who sit as far out as they can and hold on for dear life and enjoy that. But the whole point about the wheel is that you needn't get on it at all, if you don't want to. (‘Decline and Fall.’ In E. Waugh, 2003a, p. 178)

Michael Gorra, who has also argued that ‘the scathing comic nihilism’ of Waugh’s earlier novels gives a clear indication of his personal movement towards conversion, saw this metaphor as ‘an ordering one.’ (1988, pp. 202, 204) It reveals the common desire of the interwar era – to reach the centre, to find that place of peace, that hard core from which all the world makes sense. (p. 206) It pre-empts the claim made by Fr Rothschild in *Vile Bodies* that the Bright Young things are searching for permanence, ‘I don't think people ever want to lose their faith either in religion or anything else. I know very few young people, but it seems to me that they are all possessed with an almost fatal hunger for permanence.’ (‘Vile Bodies.’ In E. Waugh, 2003a, pp. 294-295) And yet, as Flannery O’Connor put it, ‘a meaningless, absurd world impinges upon the sacred consciousness.’ (O’Connor, 1969, p.158) In other words, the scrambling towards the centre is frustrated by the chaos of the wheel. Thus, there is only shrieking and giggling or holding on for dear life; total escapism or grim survival. As Rothschild goes on to explain:

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other nations use "force"; we Britons alone use "Might.” Only one thing can set things right – sudden and extreme violence, or, better still, the effective threat of it.’ (‘Scoop.’ In E. Waugh, 2003b, pp. 353-354)

> I think all these divorces show that. People aren't content just to muddle along nowadays ... And this word "bogus" they all use ... They won't make the best of a bad job nowadays. My private schoolmaster used to say, "If a thing's worth doing at all, it's worth doing well." My Church has taught that in different words for several centuries. But these young people have got hold of another end of the stick, and for all we know it may be the right one. They say, "If a thing's not worth doing well, it's not worth doing at all." It makes everything very difficult for them. (‘Vile Bodies.’ In E. Waugh, 2003a, p. 295)

Father Rothschild represents the wisdom of Catholicism in Waugh’s *Vile Bodies.* Crucial to our understanding of the novel is the recollection that in the midst of writing the book Waugh received word that his wife left him for another man. ‘The public humiliation cut deeply.’ (Stannard, 1986, p. 186) Waugh spent several years moving between a staggering number of addresses, staying with friends and travelling the world but all the while, to quote his biographer, he was seeking a ‘remote and better world’ and would never trust the excitement of the bright young things. (‘Vile Bodies.’ In E. Waugh, 2003a, p. 193) Instead, with the wisdom of his adopted Church, he would seek to understand the ‘vile bodies’.

That wisdom seemed to reduce the giggles and shrieks of the bright young things to a despairing chaos. ‘Masked parties, Savage parties, Victorian parties, Greek parties, Wild West parties, Russian parties, Circus parties, parties where one had to dress as somebody else, almost naked parties in St John’s wood, parties in flats and studios and houses and ships and hotels and night clubs… - all that succession and repetition of massed humanity … Those vile bodies …(‘Vile Bodies.’ In E. Waugh, 2003a, p. 287) Waugh’s title comes from St. Paul’s letter to the Philipians, and was part of the Church of England’s Burial Service. ‘Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.’ (Philipians 3:17-21)[590]

Thus, in Waugh’s 1930 novel, ‘Vile Bodies’ really refers to the unredeemed; those poor souls who cannot find the centre, the hard core. The vile bodies include Lord Bailcarin who commits suicide because he is disgraced and his gossip column is taken from him; they include Angela Runcible who languishes in an asylum following an accident in a race car; they include Lord

[590] King James Version

Metroland who is being so publically cuckolded and even Prime Minister Outrage who enjoys the delights of an exotic lover and a prestigious title is among the unredeemed, vile bodies.

> '…[A]lways just on the verge of revelation, of some sublime and transfiguring experience; always frustrated...Was Mr. Outrage an immortal soul, thought Mr Outrage; had he wings, was he free and unconfined, was he born for eternity? He sipped his champagne, fingered the ribbon of his order of merit, and resigned himself to the dust.' ('Vile Bodies.' In E. Waugh, 2003a, pp. 293-294)

The final party held by the vile bodies takes place in a literal waste land, 'in the biggest battlefield in the history of the world.' Adam Fenwick-Symes, the drunk major, now a general, and a prostitute named Chastity, who cannot remember her real name, all three sit in a car and drink champagne with the blinds pulled down. This final party ends, as the others do, with a return to the waste land: 'and presently, like a circling typhoon, the sounds of battle began to return.'('Vile Bodies.' In E. Waugh, 2003a, p. 373) Rather than find the centre, the last of the bright young things give themselves over to defeat. Their inability to escape the shrieks and giggles is powerfully summed up in a conversation between Adam Fenwick-Symes and his lover Nina Blount.

> 'I'd give anything in the world for something different…only I've got nothing…what's the good of talking?'
> 'Oh, Adam, my dearest…'
> 'Yes?'
> 'Nothing.'
> ('Vile Bodies.' In E. Waugh, 2003a, p. 345)

Despite the frequent suggestion that he was slavishly enamored with the upper classes, Waugh represented their genteel lifestyle as being equally incapable of dealing with the chaos of the big wheel. In *A Handful of Dust*[591] he represented the impotence of Tony Last's secular religion of

[591] The title comes from Eliot's *Waste Land* and reflects Waugh's sense of despair for the completely secular man amidst the interwar chaos. As in the title *Vile Bodies* Waugh wants to alert us to the fact that this is a portrait of the unredeemed. Waugh includes the whole quote as an epigraph: '...I will show you something different from either / Your shadow at morning striding behind you / Or your shadow at evening rising to meet you; / I will show you fear in a handful of dust.' The handful of Dust refers, of course, to the unresurrected body; 'remember man that you are

familial pride and the traditions of a rural gentleman. When his only son is killed, Tony does not possess the wisdom to understand the loss. The chapter is entitled, 'Hard Cheese on Tony' which reflects the depth of understanding gained from his secular religion. He says to Mrs. Rattery, 'the shameless blonde', a rootless, aimless and utterly transient nomad in search of pleasure, 'it's almost incredible, isn't it, everything becoming absolutely different, suddenly like that.' (E. Waugh, 2011a, p. 151). Mrs. Rattery reassures him, 'it's always that way' and encourages him to 'try and stop thinking about things.'(p. 152, p. 154)[592] She offers comfort when Tony complains that the vicar tried to talk about religion which is 'after all, the last thing one wants to talk about in a time like this.'(p. 160) In the end there is only escape left for him. He goes to the jungles of South America and is there imprisoned in another man's madness; a metaphor for modernity.

The rich might shriek and giggle but there were also those who would control the big wheel. Waugh was keenly aware of the lure of political conversion amidst the madness of non-belief. In *Black Mischief* Waugh represented the religions of progress that sought to control the wheel with the most modern and rational planning. In *Black Mischief* the desire for progress is captured in the figure of Seth, the Emperor of Azania, seen in the twilight 'battering at the granite archway' of the Anglican cathedral. ('Black Mischief.' In E. Waugh, 2003b, p. 153) Seth's attack on the church is in preparation for his rational city, an achievement heralded by the great pageant in which the self-defeating wisdom of interwar progress is captured in the banners borne through the city, 'WOMEN OF TOMORROW DEMAND AN EMPTY CRADLE' and 'THROUGH STERILITY TO CULTURE.'('Black Mischief.' In E. Waugh, 2003b, p. 157)[593] In the satirical

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dust and unto dust you shall return.' In the morning and evening man is supremely confident but in the thought that all the complexity of life can be reduced to a heap of dust lies his dreaded fear. For Last, as for many in the interwar period, the solution to this quandary had been lost. (E. Waugh, 2011a, p. vii) The profound influence of Eliot's poetry is further reflected in Antony Blanche (*Brideshead Revisited*) reading Tiresias's speech from *The Waste Land* to unthinking undergraduates below Sebastian's rooms. '*I, Tiresias, have foresuffered all,*' he sobbed to them from the Venetian arches; 'Enacted on this same d-divan or b-bed, / I who have sat by Thebes below the wall / And walked among the l-l-lowest of the dead...'' (E. Waugh, 2011b, p. 40) Ruth Breeze argues that Blanche's association with the poem and, with Tiresias in particular, place him among the emotionally exhausted 'who seem cut off from the possibility of specific meaning.' (Breeze, 'Places of the Mind: Locating Brideshead Revisited.' In C. Villar Flor, & R. Murray Davis (Eds.), 2005, pp. 133-134)

[592] McCartney describes Mrs. Rattery as 'the complete twentieth century woman' who embodies Otto Silenus's description of humanity, 'on one side the harmonious instincts and balanced responses of the animal, on the other the inflexible purpose of the engine and between them man, equally alien from the *being* of Nature and the *doing* of the machine....' (2004, pp. 84, 85)

[593] In *Helena*, Waugh creates a neat parallel between Constantine's desire for a new, rationalised capital for Christianised Empire with Seth's equally hubristic plans for Debra Dowa. Helena comments, 'I don't like Constantine's idea of a New Rome. It sounds so empty and clean, like the newly swept house in the Gospel that was

short story, Scott King's Modern Europe' (1947) Waugh reveals that in a fully established progressive utopia, the wheel still spins madly but there is no giggling. Here the same decay that had afflicted Paul Pennyfeather is writ-large, now fully systematised and enshrined in law. Every aspect of culture and order only serves to mask terror and repression. Scott King travels to Neutralia to mark the anniversary of Bellorius' death. He is to lay a wreath at the statue of the obscure seventeenth century Latin poet who wrote about utopias. The statue isn't ready and so the official party simply pay their respects at a 'national monument'. This ugly pyramid, daubed with the phrase, 'death to the Marshall' turns out to mark the spot of a political massacre. ('Scott King's Modern Europe' In E. Waugh, 2000, p. 385) Later 'they had lunched at the party Headquarters at the very tables where the ruffians of the party were wont to refresh themselves after their orgies of terrorization.' ('Scott King's Modern Europe' In E. Waugh, 2000, p. 386) The mild-mannered academic, Scott King, returns to the saftey of Granchester, his public shool, after escaping from this rationalised utopia of sorts, having fallen afoul of the government. Later, in conference with the Headmaster, he declares, 'I think it would be very wicked indeed to do anything to fit a boy for the modern world.'('Scott King's Modern Europe' In E. Waugh, 2000 p. 403)[594] Modernity and progress has triumphed and, like Tony Last and Paul Pennyfeather and the bright young things, Scott King has only escape left to him. Perhaps wisely, he chooses the deep past in the form of classical scholarship.

In his novels Waugh repeatedly positioned the sky as an escape from the chaos of the decaying civilisation. It was there that the noise of chaos was lost and the individual found peace and silence. *Scoop*'s William Boot longs to go up in a plane, 'high over the chimneys and the giant monkey puzzle, high among the clouds and rainbows and clear blue spaces...away from people

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filled with devils. ...You can't just send for peace and wisdom, can you?' Helena continued, 'and build houses for them and shut them in. Why, they don't exist at all except *in people*, do they? Give me real bones every time.'' (2005, pp. 180-181)

[594] Waugh typically includes English modernity among the targets of his satire. Scott King's movement through the airport is a highly detailed description of the total lack of dignity that marked modern life. 'He had left his hotel in London at seven o'clock that morning; it was now past noon and he was still on English soil. He had not been ignored. He had been shepherded in and out of charabancs and offices like an idiot child; he had been weighed and measured like a load of merchandise; he had been searched like a criminal; he had been cross-questioned about his past and his future, the state of his health and of his finances, as though he were applying for permanent employment of a confidential nature. Scott-King had not been nurtured in luxury and privilege, but this was not how he used to travel. And he had eaten nothing except a piece of flaccid toast and margarine in his bedroom. The ultimate asylum where he now sat proclaimed itself on the door as 'For the use of V.I.P.s only'" ('Scott-King's Modern Europe.' In E. Waugh, 2000, pp. 359-360)

and cities to a region of light and void and space and silence...' ('Scoop.' In E. Waugh, 2003b, p. 239) Even Gilbert Pinfold, whose 'strongest tastes were negative', was moved by the experience of parachuting during the war. ('The Ordeal of Gilbert Pinfold.' In E. Waugh, 2003b p. 503) He treasured 'as the most serene and exalted experience of his life the moment of liberation when he regained consciousness after the shock of the slipstream. ...he had come to himself in a silent, sunlit heaven, gently supported by what had seemed irksome bonds, absolutely isolated.'(p. 609) In the third volume of the *Sword of Honour Trilogy* (1961) Guy Crouchback also finds solace in the skies in an episode that is almost identical to Pinfold's. Having forfeited 'an immeasurable piece of his manhood' in his escape from Crete, Crouchback is living in spiritual exile. ('Unconditional Surrender.' In E. Waugh, 1994, p. 450) Yet when he goes on a training course and parachutes from a plane for the first time, he is rewarded with a rare experience of bliss in the midst of his black depression.

> He experienced rapture, something as near as his earthbound soul could reach to a foretaste of paradise, *locum refrigerii, lucis et pacis* ['a place of refreshment, light and peace' this phrase comes from the prayer for the dead in the Mass.] The aeroplane seemed as far distant as will, at the moment of death, the spinning earth. As though he had cast the constraining bonds of flesh and muscle and nerve, he found himself floating free; the harness that had so irked him in the narrow, dusky resounding carriage now almost imperceptibly supported him. He was a free spirit in an element as fresh as on the day of its creation. ('Unconditional Surrender.' In E. Waugh, 1994, p. 575)

It is abundantly clear that for Boot, Pinfold and Crouchback the experience of flight provides them with the perspective or aspect of eternity. This, however, can be directly contrasted with the nausea and inanity of the 'vile bodies' who fly over England in Waugh's earlier novel and are capable only of looking down to see 'inclined at an odd angle a horizon of straggling red suburb.' ('Vile Bodies.' In E. Waugh, 2003a, p. 351) In the novels of chaos there is only this one, very temporary, escape from the waste land.

In the second category of his work, Waugh suggests that the chaos of secular modernity is only fully escaped through conversion of a kind. The change is a movement towards peace and order. In *Put Out More Flags* the Bright Young Things who had 'lived in the full blaze of fashionable

notoriety' in *Decline and Fall, Vile Bodies* and *Black Mischief* are moved to reject their 'pretty easy life' and find themselves 'being rather brave' during the first months of World War Two. Even Basil Seal gets caught up in this 'new spirit' and takes on a dangerous role, advising his long-suffering lover, Angela Lyne, that if she wants to be a widow again she'd better marry him quickly. ('Put Out More Flags.' In E. Waugh, 2003a, pp. 404, 468, 563, 572) The note of conversion is sounded by Sir Joseph Mainwaring, the long-suffering and bumbling friend of Basil Seal's mother. ''There's a new spirit abroad… I see it on every side.' And, poor booby, he was bang right.' ('Put Out More Flags.' In E. Waugh, 2003a, p. 573) It was a spirit that led the Bright Young Things to put away the toys of their adolescence and take up weapons to defend order against the Nazis.

Basil Seal's brother in law, Freddie Sothill had his stately home, Malfrey turned upside down in search for his pistol and, rather pointedly, it was found at the back of the toy-cupboard by the nurserymaid. ('Put Out More Flags.' In E. Waugh, 2003a, p. 382) The new toys replace the old and soon Sir Alastair Digby-Vaine-Trumpington is in uniform, ready to abandon his old life in the defence of order. Despite being over-age, he volunteers and refuses to put in for a commission. He later refuses even the chance to become an officer. While he prevaricates when asked why he stays in the ranks, he tells his wife Sonia the truth: 'We've had a pretty easy life up to now. It's probably quite good for one to have a change sometimes.' ('Put Out More Flags.' In E. Waugh, 2003a, p. 468) Sonia is more equipped to explain this nebulous humility and later tells Basil that it was really a guilt offering for the excesses of their youth.

> 'You see he'd never done anything for the country and though we were always broke we had lots of money really and lots of fun. I believe he thought that perhaps if we hadn't had so much fun perhaps there wouldn't have been any war. Though how he could blame himself for Hitler I never quite saw….At least I do now[595] in a way,' she added. 'He went into the ranks as a kind of penance or whatever it's called that religious people are always supposed to do.' ('Put Out More Flags.' In E. Waugh, 2003a, pp. 468-469)

[595] The *now* is the time after the death Alastair. She speaks of him in the past tense, 'he was a much odder character than anyone knew.' ('Put Out More Flags.' In E. Waugh, 2003a, p. 468)

Sonia and Alistair had ‘formed a forgotten cove, where the wreckage of the roaring twenties, long tossed on the high seas, lay beached, dry and battered, barely worth the attention of the most assiduous beachcomber.’ (‘Put Out More Flags.’ In E. Waugh, 2003a, p. 405) But even in this decline there is an instinctive understanding that the mighty must be pulled from their thrones. (Luke 1:46-55) They have no formal religiosity; neither can explicitly express the impulse yet both understand that their decadence demanded some kind of propitiation and that the heights of hedonism must be matched by the depths of humility. Angela Lyne attempts to explain to Basil Seal, her lover and Waugh’s arch-rake, the impulse that leads him to abandon his self-serving war-work, bilking people on the home-front, and join Peter Pastmaster’s[596] ‘gang of desperadoes’. ‘But you see one can’t expect anything to be perfect now. In the old days if there was one thing wrong it spoiled everything; from now on for all our lives, if there’s one thing right the day is made.’ (‘Put Out More Flags.’ In E. Waugh, 2003a, p. 570) War and the general tide of history forced the Bright Young things to adopt a position of thoughtful humility and service.

Put Out More Flags clearly repudiates the frothy immoderation of the earlier satires. Even reviewers who were dismissive of Waugh’s more serious work saw the shift. The American poet, Louis Sissman, put it neatly when he wrote that, ‘at the very height of his powers, Waugh somehow fuses the savage, deadly comedy of his earlier books with the ominous seriousness of his later ones.’ (Sissman, 1972) Ambrose Silk, one of Waugh’s homosexual aesthetes, a descendent of Wilde and Beardsley is a particularly noteworthy character in this respect. Like Alistair and Basil, like Angela Lyne and her cuckolded husband, Cedric, Ambrose is moved towards a conversion experience of sorts. He is instinctively moved to become coenobitic, part of an enclosed and contemplative community of artists. ‘European culture has become conventual; we must make it coenobitic’(‘Put Out More Flags.’ In E. Waugh, 2003a, p. 532) In other words culture must cease to try and dwell among the people, it must retreat into itself becoming an island of repose. It could be argued that Waugh’s tale of ‘The Great Bore War’ is about the necessity of some change in response to the ‘new spirit.’ But Ambrose, more avant-garde than

[596] Pastmaster was, of course, Margot Metroland’s son who, when last spotted in *Black Mischief*, had turned a rural Conservative Ball into a five day bender with Alastair Digby-Vaine-Trumpington and Basil Seal in the constituency that Seal was attempting to represent on behalf of the party. They left a lot of bad cheques, had a motor accident and one of them got arrested. (‘Black Mischief.’ In E. Waugh, 2003b, p. 59)

the rest, was aware of the new spirit much earlier and had seen its disparate conversion destinations. 'It was the year of the American slump, a season of heroic decisions, when Paul had tried to enter a monastery and David had succeeded in throwing himself under a train.' ('Put Out More Flags.' In E. Waugh, 2003a, p. 412) Ambrose, like Isherwood and Auden, had gone to Berlin and lived in a workman's quarter and there 'begun a book, a grim, abstruse, interminable book, a penance for past frivolity'. ('Put Out More Flags.' In E. Waugh, 2003a, p. 412) Now in the midst of War, having already humbled himself he rejects the chaos and, instead chooses the life of the mind; 'Ars Longa… a short life but a grey one.'('Put Out More Flags.' In E. Waugh, 2003a, p. 412)[597]

An important detail comes in that same passage when it is revealed that while at Oxford Ambrose recited *In Memoriam* through a megaphone. Allan Johnson saw the single work of Art that Ambrose produces in the novel, *Homage to a Spartan*, 'as a fascinating response to [that] earlier detail… His recitation of Tennyson's elegy to Arthur Henry Hallam anticipates his later elegy to Hans.'[598] (Johnson, 2009, p. 3) Johnson's connection suggests an interesting contrast. Tennyson's *Way of the Soul,* as it was originally entitled, centres on the poet's grief-inspired philosophical speculation, in the midst of Darwinian doubt and the 19th century's accelerated distancing of the divine. And yet those speculations culminate in the poet's Christian vision of hope. 'The world, which once seemed to [the soul] a mere echo of its sorrow, has become the abode of that immortal Love, at once divine and human, which includes the living and the dead.' (Bradley, 1907, p. 27) The poet ends the poem on a note of faith in the midst of chaos. At the beginning of the poem Tennyson's mystical vision of man's purpose is summed neatly in the line, 'our wills are ours, to make them thine.' (Tennyson, 1851, p. vi) By the end of the poem, that unity of human and Divine wills is able to sustain the speaker 'when all that seems shall suffer shock' and enables humanity to 'lift from out of dust / A voice as unto him that hears…' (Tennyson, 1851, p. 202)

[597] Ambrose is not based on any one figure however there are similarities with Christopher Isherwood who also had a German working class lover, Heinz Neddermeyer, who ended up arrested by the Gestapo and sentenced to three and a half years forced labour and military service.
[598] Hans being his proletarian lover from Germany who, lost to him, ended up in a German Concentration Camp before being co-opted into the Wehrmacht.

As Johnson points out, Ambrose, though describing his magnum opus as 'all pure art', does not end on a note of hope. ('Put Out More Flags.' In E. Waugh, 2003a, p. 541) Rather, on Basil's advice, he concludes the story of Hans 'with Hans still full of his illusions marching into Poland….' (p. 545) This distinction is important because Ambrose himself ends the novel, still full of his aesthete illusions,[599] marching into a forgotten, paleolithic valley in Ireland. 'Here he intended to write a book, to take up again the broken fragments of his artistic life.' But the uneven landscape has the final say and the pen rolls down the table and under the sideboard. Ambrose, having escaped the fight for unity, disappears into oblivion, 'wander[ing] out into the mist and the twilight, stepping soundlessly on the soft green turf.'(p. 557) Forfeiting the chance to convert and defend order, Ambrose disappears into irrelevancy, unable to make a mark on the landscape despite having been on the cusp of mystical discernment.

In the novel's dedicatory letter to Randolph Churchill, Waugh explained that 'these characters are no longer contemporary in sympathy; they were forgotten even before the war; but they lived on delightfully in holes and corners and, like everyone else, they have been disturbed in their habits by the rough intrusion of current history.' ('Put Out More Flags.' In E. Waugh, 2003a, p. 377) The characters are seized by the impermanence of their lives and are moved by the conversion impulse but are unable clearly to articulate that impulse. In the end they are the vile bodies who disappear in the chaos of war or, perhaps worse, they disappear into irrelevance, as was the case with Ambrose and, before him, Parsnip and Pimpernell.[600] In his post-World War Two *Brideshead Revisited* and the *Sword of Honour Trilogy* Waugh, much like Tennyson, would reveal that in the midst of chaos, when life is a 'fury slinging flame', permanence is found in the 'strong Son of God, immortal love / whom we, that have not seen thy face, / by faith, and faith alone, embrace'. (Tennyson, 1851, pp. 72, v)

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[599] His description of the aesthetes actually reveals his belief that they were essentially deluding themselves. 'Fortunate islanders, thought Ambrose, happy drab escapists, who have seen the gold lace and the candlelight and left the banquet before dawn revealed stained table linen and a tipsy buffoon!' ('Put Out More Flags.' In E. Waugh, 2003a, p. 570)

[600] These have long been considered fairly undisguised caricatures of Isherwood and Auden who, having shed any vestigial political radicalism, had seemingly fled to America. It was not an entirely fair caricature because Auden soon volunteered for service in America and was rejected on Medical grounds. Isherwood was never called up for military service. He worked with German Refugees in Pennsylvania but, when the refugee hostel closed down, he returned to California and spent the rest of the war discerning his vocation in a Hindu Monastery. (See: Isherwood, 1998, pp.xv-xviii) Isherwood's wartime novel, *Prater Violet*, deals with the guilt he felt over being safe during the war. (p.xix)

As with the empyrean silence of the sky in his earlier novels, *Brideshead Revisited* posits silence and peace in opposition to the discordant chaos of the 'the big wheel at Luna Park'. Waugh uses the image of retreating sound and peaceful silence to describe Charles Ryder's moment of conversion, his moment of escape from the shrieks and giggles and roaring chaos of the previous novels and his discovery of the point of complete rest. 'The avalanche was down, the hillside swept bare behind it; the last echoes died on the white slopes; the new mound glittered and lay still in the silent valley.' (E. Waugh, 2011b, p. 442) When Ryder returns to Brideshead as a disillusioned Catholic, the mere mention of the home in which he was converted was enough to restore silence once more,

> [O]n the instant, it was as though someone had switched off the wireless, and a voice that had been bawling in my ears, incessantly, fatuously, for days beyond number, had been suddenly cut short; an immense silence followed, empty at first, but gradually, as my outraged sense regained authority, full of a multitude of sweet and natural and long-forgotten sounds... (E. Waugh, 2011b pp. 18-19)

And yet it was not the home that communicated the sense of peace; the home was the scene of 'fierce little human tragedy' in which Charles Ryder has played his part. (E. Waugh, 2011b p. 451) Rather, Charles sees the value of Brideshead because of an apprehension vouchsafed him as a convert. 'I have come to accept claims which then, in 1923, I never troubled to examine, and to accept the supernatural as the real.' (p. 108) Charles is one of the few Catholic Converts in Waugh's fiction and the novel is really his meditation on his own conversion. His memories, 'that winged host that soared about me one grey morning of war-time' are able to revivify his faith by reminding him of the powerful permanence of which he is a part. (p. 291)

Ryder's cynicism about military life was also Waugh's. He had joined up with all the romantic enthusiasm of defending Christendom but he soon received numerous wounds to his self-esteem. (Stannard, 1994, pp. 2, 8) Waugh had joined the Commandos and after a brief promotion to captain settled down to work as the intelligence officer. He very nearly saw action in Africa but concluded: 'it seems clear to me that we are never going to be employed in a way that I can be proud of.' He later saw action in Bardia on the Libyan coast and in Crete. Bardia was a farce and an officer was killed by his own men before they realized the place was deserted. Crete was an

evacuation of the most undisciplined kind. For Waugh the major casualty of both actions was the romantic vision he had for defending Christendom. In 1944, having injured himself training for the Allied invasions of Sicily, Waugh took three months leave in order to work on a novel. Sorely disappointed by life in the army and by the war itself, he returned to his vocation and re-discovered for himself the hard core that could order the desolation and chaos that surrounded him.

The result of that leave of absence was *Brideshead Revisited*, a novel that'seemed to confirm his new sense of writerly vocation.' In this novel the conversion destination is no longer merely selflessness but, more specifically, Catholicism. (Patey, 2001, p. 296) One of the most powerful statements that he makes about the power of Catholic conversion comes in the portraits he crafts of the non-converts. These are the half-men; the undeveloped and limited men. Faulstick calls them the Hollow Men of Eliot's poem. (2011, p. 187) They might also be called the ape-men of Macaulay's novel, *The Towers of Trebizond*. They are described as limited human beings and yet are also described as being completely in-tune with modernity. There is Hooper who, for Ryder, became a symbol of 'young England' but 'looked scarcely human' and peacefully observes the universe 'from a general enveloping fog.' (E. Waugh, 2011b, pp. 10-12) There is Anthony Blanche whose life reflects all the curiosities and fads of the age. '[H]e dined with Proust and Gide and was on closer terms with Cocteau and Diaghilev... he had aroused three irreconcilable feuds in Capri; he had practised black art in Cefalu; he had been cured of drug-taking in California and of an Oedipus complex in Vienna.' (E. Waugh, 2011b p. 57) And yet he is described in terms of retarded development, a malevolent Peter Pan figure. He was cruel…in the wanton, insect-maiming manner of the very young and 'fearless, like a little boy, charging, head down, small fists whirling, at the school prefects.' (E. Waugh, 2011b p. 58) Where Anthony Blanche embodies culture and luxury, Julia's first husband, Rex Mottram embodies the rawer phenomena of power and success. He possessed the 'flavour of 'Max and 'F. E.' and the Prince of Wales, of the big table in the Sporting Club, the second magnum and the fourth cigar. Of the chauffeur kept waiting hour after hour without compunction.' (E. Waugh, 2011b p. 239)[601]

[601] Max was Lord Beaverbrook while F.E. was F.E. Smith, the 1st Earl of Birkenhead. Given that both of these powerful men were friends of Churchill's and given that 'Only war could put Rex's fortune's right and carry him into power' John Howard Wilson argues that it is plausible to see Mottram as an unflattering and somewhat oblique

Mottram is later heard on the radio being ‘very nasty…about Hitler’ and yet for all his success, he is described by Julia as an incomplete human. (E. Waugh, 2011b p. 448)

> You know Father Mowbray hit on the truth about Rex at once, that it took me a year of marriage to see. He simply wasn't all there. He wasn't a complete human being at all. He was a tiny bit of one, unnaturally developed; something in a bottle, an organ kept alive in a laboratory. I thought he was a sort of primitive savage, but he was something absolutely modern and up-to-date that only this ghastly age could produce. A tiny, bit of a man pretending he was the whole. (E. Waugh, 2011b p. 260)

It is when he is at the peak of his success as an artist that Charles includes himself in this group. He ‘published three splendid folios... which each sold its thousand copies at five guineas apiece’ and ‘seldom failed to please’. (E. Waugh, 2011b p. 292) But in this same period Charles is ‘unchanged, still a small part of myself pretending to be whole’ covered in the ‘dust and grit of ten dry years’. (E. Waugh, 2011b p. 295, 327) Success leads the individual to harden and stagnate. Only conversion can provoke genuine change.

With her mother dead, with Sebastian a hopeless drunk in North Africa, Lord Marchmain abroad with his mistress, Julia unhappily married to Rex and their London home being sold off, Cordelia explains to Charles that, while the Marchmain family seems broken, ‘God won’t let them go for long.’ She explains her point by quoting from Chesterton’s Fr Brown who said of a repentant thief whom he allows to escape, ‘I caught him with an unseen hook and an invisible line which is long enough to let him wander to the ends of the world and still to bring him back with a twitch upon the thread.’ (E. Waugh, 2011b p. 286) Waugh describes the conversion of Lord Marchmain and Charles in Book Three, entitled ‘A Twitch Upon a Thread’ and this becomes a powerful analogy for their conversions, Charles’ in particular. He is free to do as he wills and yet, imperceptibly, he is being led towards the Divine.

In his friendship with Sebastian, Charles was initially seeking the ‘low door in the wall’ that would open ‘on an enclosed and enchanted garden’. (E. Waugh, 2011b pp. 37-38) In discovering this garden of repose, Charles concludes from his friendship ‘that to know and love

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portrait of Winston Churchill. (Wilson, ‘'Not a Man For Whom I Ever had Esteem': Evelyn Waugh on Churchill.’ In C. Villar Flor, & R. Murray Davis (Eds.), 2005, p. 249)

one other human being is the root of all wisdom.'(p. 56) He retrospectively sees himself being made 'fit for the table' in this relationship. The sacramental overtones of this statement are unmistakable. Charles' lonely selfishness is being replaced by a generous love of others and of beauty and it is this that leads him to seek their perfect form in God. The full quote contains a belief, recently learned by the narrator, that out of evil can be brought much goodness and that even in the hedonism of his youth, in 'all the wickedness of that time' he was being prepared for his conversion.

Even before his conversion Charles' believes that he is being prepared for something. Initially he considers it to be his love for Julia. He describes Sebastian, her brother, as 'the forerunner' and when Julia suggests that perhaps she is only a forerunner too, Charles begins to meditate on the possibility of seeking something beyond Julia; beyond earthly loves.

> '[P]erhaps all our loves are merely hints and symbols; vagabond-language scrawled on gate-posts and paving-stones along the weary road that others have tramped before us; perhaps you and I are only types and this sadness which sometimes falls between us springs from disappointment in our search, each straining through and beyond the other, snatching a glimpse now and then of the shadow which turns the corner always a pace or two ahead of us.' (E. Waugh, 2011b p. 393)

In the end it is Julia explicitly telling him that she is choosing the greater love that, somewhat ironically, convinces Charles that he too should pursue God. In their final conversation Julia assumes that Charles cannot understand her desire not 'to set up a rival good to God's.' She asks, 'How can you know?' before declaring, 'I shall have no way of making you understand.' But the dark spirit that has been fermenting in Charles from his adolescence allows him to reply, 'I hope your heart may break; but I do understand.' (E. Waugh, 2011b pp. 441-442)

Julia had said that her decision was made earlier that day. It was then 'there was a wall of fire' between her and Charles. When later he witnesses Lord Marchmain's conversion Charles is struck by a realization of the magnitude of conversion. Having suddenly hoped that Lord Marchmain would make a sign acknowledging his desire for the Sacraments, Charles reflects: 'Then I knew that the sign I had asked for was not a little thing, not a passing nod of recognition, and a phrase came back to me from my childhood of the veil of the temple being rent from top to

bottom.' (E. Waugh, 2011b pp. 438, 440) It is clear that the wall of fire, like the veil of the temple, was also destroyed in this moment, thereby allowing Julia and Charles to understand one another. Waugh, conveys the paradox of their farewell when he declares them as being 'like young lovers' and the nature of their choice seems neatly expressed in their meeting in the shadow of the stairs, a clear metaphor for their life in the shadows; their sins that, like the sins of Charles' adolescence, were somehow also preparing them for their necessary ascension to perfection. (p. 451)

On the dust-jacket of the 1945 edition of *Brideshead Revisited* Waugh warned that the novel was not one of his comedies. Rather, it was a novel about hope.

> Whom then can I hope to please? Perhaps those who have the leisure to read a book word by word for the interest of the writer's use of language, perhaps those who look to the future with black forebodings and need more solid comfort than rosy memories. For the latter I have given my hero, and them, if they will allow me, a hope, not, indeed, that anything but disaster lies ahead, but that the human spirit, redeemed, can survive all disasters. (Cited in Patey, 2001, p. 224)

Waugh understood that for the convert, the redeemed spirit is totally at odds with the spirit of the world that animates the lives of those hollow men. Catholic conversion constitutes a powerful rejection of the world. It is this that that makes Charles' pledge, 'No, I'm with you, "Sebastian contra Mundum"', something of a prophecy. (E. Waugh, 2011b, p. 178) And thus where others see despair, the convert is able to see hope.

Brideshead Revisited recounts that at the height of his success Charles Ryder runs away, 'in the augustan manner' and travels for two years through Mexico and Central America. (E. Waugh, 2011b p. 293) On this journey he documents the ruins of civilisations and the return of the jungle into decaying churches and palaces. On this journey he attends Tenebrae on Maundy Thursday and hears Jeremiah's Lament, *Quomodo sedet sola civitas* sung by a half-caste choir in Guatemala. (p. 306) Earlier Charles had patronized Cordelia's description of the chant, with a glib question, 'Still trying to convert me, Cordelia?' (p. 286) But, returning from the jungle, to civilisation he discovers, in the words of the hymn, that the city really is deserted, that 'wealth is

no longer gorgeous and power has no dignity.' (p. 305) Spiritually half-caste, his disgust with worldliness is, as yet, unmatched by Cordelia's religious faith.

It is his discontent with the world that leads Charles to conversion to Catholicism. But it is the sacramental life that he discovers in conversion that brings real hope. In the full light of faith Charles sees Brideshead, partially destroyed and without an heir, as a metaphor for modernity. 'The age of Hooper; the place was desolate and the work all brought to nothing; Quomodo sedet sola civitas. Vanity of Vanities, all is vanity' but, importantly he balances such a view with the realization 'that that is not the last word'. (E. Waugh, 2011b p. 451) That word belongs to God.

Amidst the decaying Brideshead, Charles discovers the lamp re-lit in the chapel. The lamp signifies the Real Presence in the Tabernacle. Gripped by the chaos of modern war: the baroque fountain defaced, his own paintings, his first taste of 'the great succulent pie of creation' are destroyed,[602] and all the careful planning of centuries that ensured 'at about this date, [Brideshead] might be seen in its maturity', mutilated. And yet among the ruins God is once more made present. (E. Waugh, 2011b pp. 20, 288)

> Something quite remote from anything the builders intended has come out of their work, and out of the fierce little human tragedy in which I played; something none of us thought about at the time: a small red flame – a beaten copper lamp of deplorable design relit before the beaten-copper doors of a tabernacle; the flame which the old knights saw from their tombs, which they saw put out; that flame burns again for other soldiers, far from home, farther in heart than Acre or Jerusalem. It could not have been lit but for the builders and the tragedians, and there I found it burning anew among the old stones. (E. Waugh, 2011b pp. 451-452)

Charles, who earlier lamented that he was 'homeless and loveless' once more sees his life 'under the aspect of eternity.(E. Waugh, 2011b p. 450) In this meditation he recalls his Catholic belief in an eternal home, he recalls the Love of God that would move the very foundations of a

[602] Laura White has argued that Ryder's passion for Artistic beauty was another of those'rival good[s]' and that Waugh is implicitly arguing that Ryder's 'failure as an artist is fortunate, a *felix culpa*, because too great an adherence to beauty is the very thing keeping him from God.' (White, 2006, p. 188)

seemingly indestructible home for the sake of souls. He sees his small role in the 'countless threads' and concludes the novel 'unusually cheerful.'(p. 452)[603]

Waugh wrote another story that centred on this same notion that in the Mass and the Real Presence, God remained with the world, despite all its self-destructive impulses. Entitled 'Out of Depth' it tells the story of Margot Metroland hosting a party for a magician who does black magic. An American bright young thing called Rip, a lapsed Catholic, and Alastair Digby-Vaine-Trumpington drunkenly end up at the Magician's home. They crash on the way home and, through the Magician's spell, Rip ends up 500 years in the future where he experiences life after the collapse of modern civilisation. 'The entrance of the underground station was there, transformed into a Piranesi ruin'. ('Out of Depth.' In E. Waugh, 2000, p. 139) In the midst of the dystopic future Rip discovers a Dominican friar saying Mass. 'Rip knew that out of strangeness, there had come into being something familiar; a shape in chaos. Something was being done that Rip knew; something that twenty-five centuries had not altered; of his own childhood which survived the age of the world. In a log-built church at the coast town he was squatting among a native congregation; some of them in cast-off uniforms; the women had shapeless, convent-sewn frocks; all round him dishevelled white men were staring ahead with vague, uncomprehending eyes, to the end of the room where two candles burned. The priest turned towards them his bland, black face. 'Ite, missa est.'' ('Out of Depth.' In E. Waugh, 2000, p. 144) The changeless Mass inspires Rip to call the Priest when he regains consciousness. The priest tells Rip that Sir Alastair 'seems to have had some sort of dream while he was unconscious that made him want to see a priest.' ('Out of Depth.' In E. Waugh, 2000, p. 144) Rip then makes his confession, realizing that Sir Alastair, who had asked the Magician to be transported back to the days of Ethelred the Unready, had witnessed the same thing that he saw. Waugh shows that since the earliest days of the Church, the Mass has been the hard core upon which the lost and confused might rely, irrespective of the chaos.

The years after the war were not entirely kind to Evelyn Waugh. The success of *Brideshead Revisited* warded off financial worries but it was a temporary respite. His writing no longer came as easily, partly because he was afflicted with health problems and was soon self-

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medicating with a combination of alcohol and a range of sleeping drugs. Added to this was the rapid diminishment of his status in the fifties as he was transformed into a cantankerous blimp-figure by a younger generation of journalists. It was in this period that Waugh completed the final portion of his oeuvre, the vocational novels and biographies. Throughout these works there is a sense of Divine order permeating and even redeeming the chaos.

The repeated maxim in the final novel of Waugh's military trilogy is 'quantitative judgements do not apply.' It is the wisdom that Guy Crouchback's father has gleaned from his own life and its myriad of failures. It is a repudiation of worldly standards and an insistence on the perspective of eternity. In his biographies of Edmund Campion and Ronald Knox, Waugh presented the biography of two men who, by worldly standards had failed to live up to their inherent promise. Yet for Waugh, both heroically practised 'acts of self-sacrifice and submission.' (Patey, 2001, p. 125) At the centre of both biographies is the redemptive role of the Priestly vocation with its unworldly logic. In *Edmund Campion* Waugh contrasted the Jesuit Martyr with his contemporary, Tobie Matthew, 'a talkative little man, always eager to please,' who avoided Campion's downfall and became the popular Archbishop of York. 'Tobie Matthew died full of honours in 1628. There, but for the Grace of God, went Edmund Campion.' ('Edmund Campion.' In E. Waugh, 2001, pp. 15-16) These biographies were important works that presented questing alternatives to the 'overdrinking and underthinking' vile bodies of his earlier satires. (Stannard, 1987, p. 196)[604]

Waugh's *Sword of Honour Trilogy*, was, according to Cyril Connolly, the finest novel to come out of the [Second World] War.' (Patey, 2001, p. 304) Unlike *Brideshead Revisited* however, it is not concerned with the discovery of Catholicism, so much as living the Catholic life. 'It is not just that religion is a normal part of daily life, part indeed of the mundane routine, but that it provides a kind of eternal rhythm to the passing days and to their ephemeral events.' (Ker, 2003, p. 196) Guy's life is regular proof that for the Catholic the supernatural and the mundane are perpetually entwined. Guy's father lives the life of the church. He is no extraordinary ascetic;

[604] Of course Waugh's other work contains portraits of priests of this kind. For instance *Ninety-two Days* written in 1934 contains the nucleus of the novel, *A Handful of Dust*. However, it also contains a touching and edifying portrait of a Catholic Priest, Fr. Mather. Who lived with constant toothache but 'was one of the happiest men I met in the country.' ('*Ninety-two Days: The Account of a Tropical Journey Through British Guiana and Part of Brazil*' In E. Waugh, 2003c, p. 446)

rather, his fidelity to the sacramental life of the Church transforms him into a saintly figure. In Lent he simply gives up wine and tobacco, but at Easter the ritual of the morning finds an echo in his uninteresting routine: 'in a sheltered seat above the beaches, he lit the first pipe of Easter, thinking of that morning's new fire.' ('Officers and Gentlemen.' In E. Waugh, 1994, p. 361) Formerly Mr. Crouchback had lived at the family estate at Broome. But, having lost his wife, he soon lost his home[605] and then two of his sons and all the while he had preserved 'a mysterious and tranquil joy – throughout a life which to all outward observation had been overloaded with misfortune.'('Men at Arms.' In E. Waugh, 1994, p. 31) Subsequently settled in a boarding house, he is nearly tricked out of his accommodation by the duplicitous Cuthberts who seek to cash in on the housing shortage caused by the blitz. When he innocently foils their plans they admit 'he's a deep one and no mistake. I have never understood him, not properly. Somehow his mind seems to work different than yours and mine.'(Officers and Gentlemen.' In E. Waugh, 1994, p. 266) The Cuthberts are staggered by the fact that Mr. Crouchback doesn't seem to show any concern for himself; giving away his money 'right and left' and peremptorily giving away his sitting room because it seemed selfish to keep it. The answer lies in his sacramental life as expressed when Guy discovers his father at prayer. 'Dawn was breaking that Good Friday when Guy arrived at the little church, but inside it was as still as night... His father was alone, kneeling stiff and upright at a prie-dieu before the improvised altar, gazing straight before him into the golden lights of the altar.' ('Men at Arms.' In E. Waugh, 1994, p. 150) For Waugh, it was the Divine remaining in the midst of the darkness that conveyed the unworldly power of the sacramental life and this was the source of Charles Ryder's unusual cheer. Throughout the trilogy the Catholic characters live lives of repeated failure and diminishment but they are lives that are lived in conjunction with the Church's sacraments. The Catholic characters routinely go to confession and receive Communion at Mass. Waugh attempts to show the natural integration of the sacramental life into the life of these characters and their transformative perspective of the eternal.

[605] When Mr. Crouchback leaves Broome he doesn't sell it, he lets it to a convent 'and the sanctuary lamp still burned at Broome as of old.' ('Men at Arms.' In E. Waugh, 1994, p. 16) This detail acknowledges that Mr. Crouchback understands the lesson that Charles Ryder has learned by the end of Brideshead, that the value of the home comes from its role in the Divine Plan. Thus, even though the home has been 'held in uninterrupted succession since the reign of Henry I', its value does not emerge from that fact. Rather, it was in the sanctuary lamp, maintained through the recusant generations at the cost of family martyrs like the Blessed Gervase Grouchback.

As chaos unfolds during the blitz Waugh contrasts Mr Crouchback with those whose lives are lived in total ignorance of the eternal. Waugh satirises the Sword of Stalingrad that had been on display at Westminster Abbey and Sheffield, Manchester, Winchester and Coventry Cathedrals. In 'a mood of devotion' crowds queue before the Abbey. The living, Eucharistic religion of Mr. Crouchback is ironically contrasted with what Waugh sees as a pagan ritual. '...many were entering for the first time in their lives, all fell quite silent as though they were approaching a corpse lying in state.' ('Unconditional Surrender.' In E. Waugh, 1994, p. 496) Its 'apotheosis', a word that is commonly used to mean culmination but actually means Divinisation, comes when the sword is 'exposed for adoration hard by the shrine of St. Edward the Confessor and the sacring place of the Kings of England.' ('Unconditional Surrender.' In E. Waugh, 1994, p. 497) The sword was ultimately given to Stalin at the Tehran Conference, bearing the inscription '[t]o the steel- hearted citizens of Stalingrad, the gift of King George VI in token of the homage of the British people.' (*The Times* 1994, p. 21) For Waugh this 'homage' to Stalinist Russia was a desecration of England's Christian heritage. Such obeisance before a gift to a leader like Stalin is a blasphemous parody of the life-giving liturgy in the trilogy's Catholic churches. Pointedly the Sword's escutcheon is upside down. The Sword of Stalingrad is associated with liberation; a word which 'in a year of two of war...would acquire a nasty meaning.' ('Unconditional Surrender.' In E. Waugh, 1994, p. 419) The Sword of Stalingrad marks this new and dark secular religion of popular piety wherein the liberation of confession, regularly used by the Catholic characters in the novel, and its ultimate expression in eternal life are replaced by liberation and its associations with the vicious post-war reprisals of Eastern Europe.

Caught up in this popular religion of war-time patriotism are a number of hollow men who are the antithesis of Mr. Crouchback. There is the American lieutenant known as Loot, a sobriquet which helps to express his inescapable social-climbing progress through embattled England. Loot attends everything. He pays homage to the sword and he attends Mr. Crouchback's funeral[606] because, in both cases he assumes he is encountering something 'significant', a word

[606] Contrasted with this enchanted funeral are the entirely meaningless funerals organised by the military. Apthorpe's in the first volume was 'a means of showing the flag' to the locals but it failed because they were unimpressed ('Men at Arms.' In E. Waugh, 1994, p. 231) Added to this there is no stone over the grave to mark Apthorpe's resting place. The next funeral was held over a mass grave dug by the partisans for the allied troops killed in the plane crash. Similarly in book three, 'a firing-party and a bugler performed the last office.' ('Unconditional Surrender.' In E. Waugh, 1994, p. 694) In both cases the military ritual communicates nothing and

he employs repeatedly without any actual meaning. There is Corporal Major Ludovic who is wracked with the guilt of murdering two English officers in his escape from Crete and yet cannot find any words of absolution, as Guy does for his 'few infractions of law.'(Officers and Gentlemen.' In E. Waugh, 1994, p. 12) For Ludovic, whose whole self image has been 'finally defaced' there is only the meaningless ritual of random words.

> In his lonely condition he found more than solace, positive excitement, in the art of writing. The further he removed from human society and the less he attended to human speech, the more did words, printed and written occupy his mind. The books he read were books about words. As he lay unshriven, his sleep was never troubled by the monstrous memories which might have been supposed to lie in wait for him in the dark. He dreamed of words and woke repeating them as though memorizing a foreign vocabulary.' ('Unconditional Surrender.' In E. Waugh, 1994, p. 512)[607]

There is a need for some kind of order amidst the chaos and without the sacred there is only the profane; without the supernatural there is only the absurd. This is represented through the countless figures of worldly wisdom throughout the novel who see things contrary to Waugh. A Colonel pronounces Guy Crouchback as being unfit for foreign service because of some tenuous and utterly meaningless circumstantial associations but pronounces Frank de Souza as being innocent. 'Communist party member of good standing... quite sound at the moment.'

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the dead are forgotten in unmarked graves. Much like the soldier whose identity disks Guy tries to the family, only to have Julia Stitch throw them in a bin in an effort to protect her friend, Ivor. Outside of the sacramental life of the church there are only empty counterfeits of ritual like the Halberdier dinners that so entrance Guy when he first joins the corps. It is for this reason that he soon distances himself from the army 'in matters of real concern.' ('Officers and Gentlemen.' In E. Waugh, 1994 p. 350)

[607] Of his offence Waugh is never explicit, merely writing that 'things had been done by him, which, the ancients believed, provoked a doom. Not only the ancients; most of mankind, independently, cut off from all communications with one another, had discovered and proclaimed this grim alliance between the powers of darkness and justice... He opened his dictionary and read: '*Doom*: irrovcable destiny (usually of adverse fate), final fate, destruction, ruin, death.' He turned to Roget and found *Nemesis:* Eumenides; keep the wound green; *lex talionis*; ruthless; unforgiving, inexorable; implacable, remorseless.' His sacred scriptures offered no comfort that morning.' ('Unconditional Surrender.' In E. Waugh, 1994, pp. 560-561) Later Ludovic is repeatedly discussed in terms of death, reflecting his status as one of the maudlin vile bodies. When Crouchback and the other volunteers are at Ludovic's training school but don't see the major, Frank de Souza speculates that he is insane and must be watched around the clock to prevent him committing suicide. (p. 571) When Ludovic does join the other men in the mess-hall enters 'like the angel of death' his figure 'suggested not so much the desk as the tomb' and he speaks 'from the depths of his invisible sarcophagus.' (pp. 577, 578) He sits at the head of the table 'commemorating the absence of Captain A. N. Other [Crouchback] and announces that since no one knew a prayer, 'well, we will eat graceless.'(p. 579) The damnation of Ludovic is reinforced when Guy sells him the villa Crouchback, the sight of his wilderness years, there Ludovic remains, in the company of Loot. (p. 709)

(Unconditional Surrender.' In E. Waugh, 1994, p. 599) There was good reason for Waugh's cynicism regarding blundering British secret service. Having met James Klugmann in Bari on his way to Yugoslavia, Waugh was cynical of British Communists who were liasing with Tito's partisans and ensuring that British support went to them rather than Mikhailovich and thereby helping to lay the foundations for Tito's viciously anti-Catholic government after the war. It might be argued that Klugmann was represented in the hard-working Communist Don, Major Joe Cattermole, who briefs Crouchback in Bari. Klugmann spoke Serbo-Croat and he briefed Allied officers about to be dropped into Yugoslavia as well as passing all the information onto the NKGB. He constantly advocated the interests of Tito's Communists over Mihailovich's Chetnicks. He served with Waugh for four months in 1945.

Anthony Blunt warned his controller, Boris Krotenschield, that MI5 listening devices in London's Communist Party Headquarters had recorded Klugmann boasting of having handed over classified information to the Yugoslav Communists. (Andrew & Mitrokhin, 1999, p. 127) It is not unreasonable to suggest that Waugh, like so many, was suspicious of the number of Communists who were suddenly brought into top secret conversations and places of influence during the war. Waugh's experiences in Yugoslavia undoubtedly convinced him that British Communists involved in the mission were either dishonest or entirely delusional in their loyalty to Tito. Moreover their success and influence convinced him of the unpalatable reality of worldly influence.

Anthony Powell, then working in Military Intelligence in London, bore out Waugh's suspicions when he wrote, 'I have read reports circulated on the situation applauding the Yugoslav Communist irregulars in a tone more suitable to an adventure story in the *Boy's Own Paper* than a sober appreciation of what was happening'. (Cited in Patey, 2001, p. 410, ft.65) Kluggman/Cattermole's devotion to the Partisan cause is certainly in this vein, largely because he is a convert to their political religion. Before the war Joe Cattermole was famous for a sceptical work of philosophy, *An Examination of Certain Redundances in Empirical Concepts*. Now he fought with the Communist Partisans in Yugoslavia and described it as 'a transforming experience.' ('Unconditional Surrender.' In E. Waugh, 1994, p. 637) He clearly found a political religion, describing the Partisans themselves as 'a revelation – literally' ('Unconditional Surrender.' In E. Waugh, 1994, p. 636) When he talked about the Communist partisans 'it was

with something keener than loyalty, equally impersonal, a counterfeit almost of mystical love portrayed by the sensual artists of the high baroque.'('Unconditional Surrender.' In E. Waugh, 1994 p. 637) His faith is so strong that he credulously passes on absurd stories of the Partisan miracles, female soldiers no longer menstruating, going without anaesthetic during operations 'to prove their manhood'. ('Unconditional Surrender.' In E. Waugh, 1994 p. 637) He even claims that the partisans are entirely chaste, 'patriotic passion [having] entirely extruded sex.'('Unconditional Surrender.' In E. Waugh, 1994 p. 637)

For Guy Crouchback the sacramental life does not seem to change him as it has clearly changed his father. When he first goes to confession 'there was no risk of going deeper than the denunciation of his few infractions of law... Into that waste land where his soul languished he need not, could not, enter. He had no words to describe it. There were no words in any language. There was nothing to describe, merely a void.' ('Men at Arms.' In E. Waugh, 1994, p. 12) As his father had lost his wife and his home and two of his sons, so Guy is walking a similar path of loss. His wife, Virginia, an archetypal Waugh-wife, feckless and faithless, left him for another man. 'She wrote regularly and affectionately until one day, still affectionately, she informed him that she had fallen deeply in love with an acquaintance... that Guy was not to be cross about it; that she wanted a divorce.'(p. 16) For Guy, his vocation was at an end; there remained only a void. Corporal Major Ludovic records the observation in his *Pensées*:[608] 'Captain Crouchback has gravity. He is the ball of lead which in a vacuum falls no faster than a feather.' ('Officers and Gentlemen.' In E. Waugh, 1994, p. 390) This paradoxical image of weighted suspension adumbrates Guy's paradoxical position of living the Sacramental life but not seeming to have a role. He was Philoctetes set apart from his fellows by an old festering wound; Philoctetes without his bow.'('Officers and Gentlemen.' In E. Waugh, 1994, p. 438)

The novel is littered with men who, like Guy, seemed to have failed and been denied heroism in the manner of Philoctetes. There was Guy's brother, Gervase, 'picked off by a sniper his first day in France, instantly, fresh and clean and unwearied, as he followed the duckboard across the mud.' ('Men at Arms.'in E. Waugh, 1994. p. 15) There is 'poor, mad Ivo', Guy's brother who was 'found barricaded alone in a lodging in Cricklewood where he was starving himself to

[608] Note that where Blaise Pascal wrote about man in relation to God, Ludovic's *Pensées* are entirely concerned with man in relation to man.

death.' He died a few days later, 'stark mad.' ('Unconditional Surrender' & 'Men at Arms.' In E. Waugh, 1994, pp. 537, 15) There is Guy's nephew, Tony Boxbender who, in the full bloom of youth, is captured at the very beginning of war and remains languishing in a POW camp. There is Tommy Blackhouse who slips and breaks his leg before he can land in Crete with his force and stays behind somewhat delirious on morphia. And finally, perhaps most importantly, there is Roger de Weybroke, Guy's patron saint who, significantly, is a not an official, cannonised, saint. De Weybroke had sailed for the Second Crusade but, having enlisted under a Count from Santa Dulcina delle Rocce, died fighting for him in a local conflict. In Sir Roger, the perspective of eternity allows a life of such obvious failure to be transformed into a saintly life.

> [F]ar from Jerusalem, far from Weybroke, a man with a great journey still all before him and a great vow unfulfilled; but the people of Santa Dulcina delle Rocce, to whom the supernatural order in all its ramifications was ever present and ever more lively than the humdrum world about them, adopted Sir Roger and despite all clerical remonstrance canonized him, brought him their troubles and touched his sword for luck for luck so that its edge was always bright. ('Men at Arms.' In E. Waugh, 1994, p. 11)[609]

During his first experience of the blitz Guy, watching some progressive novelists attempting to extinguish a fire is briefly reminded of the Holy Saturday liturgy at Downside, of 'the glowing brazier and the priest with his hyssop, paradoxically blessing fire with water.' ('Officers and Gentlemen.' In E. Waugh, 1994, p. 237) This liturgical action really becomes an ongoing analogy to explain the transformation of these failures, not into success but into sanctity. It ably represents the paradoxical nature of Guy's failure and the way his failure becomes crucial to his sanctification in the rediscovery of his vocation, just as it had been for his father.

In an insightful essay, John Howard Wilson offers an analysis of the seemingly insignificant incident at the beginning of the novel, where Guy is given a cake by his servants Josefina and Bianca on the occasion of his departure for England. Wilson argues that this incident pointedly connects Guy with the Prophet Elijah who was given a cake while resting in the desert on his

[609] It is worth noting the idea of a sword being reverenced in a church as opposed to being worshipped. The sword of Sir Roger is attached to an actual person rather than being a symbol of gratitude being adored by the very people whose gratitude it purports to represent.

way to Mt. Horeb.[610] (Wilson, 2007, p. 419) Like the prophet Elijah, Guy has despaired of his vocation and also has the death-wish, like the prophet. He is in the wilderness or 'the void'. The sacramental overtones of food for the journey are, of course, poignant. Indeed they are summed up in the paradoxical line, 'Arise and eat; because the journey is too great for thee.' (Cited in Wilson, 2007, p. 419) Guy's journey is much bigger than he realises at this early stage of the novel and it is the frequant use of the sacraments that sustains him.

Moreover, as Wilson points out, another translation for Juniper, as given in the Revised Version of the King James Bible, is Broom; the name of Guy's ancestral home. (Wilson, 2007, p. 420) Guy's only visit to Broome in the novel comes at his father's death and there Guy attends Mass and meditates upon his vocation. There he seeks release from the 'deadly core of his apathy' by the discovery of his vocation, the 'small service, which only he could perform, for which he had been created. ...his function in the divine plan.' ('Unconditional Surrender.' In E. Waugh, 1994, p. 540)

The journey takes him to London and to Bari in Italy, to Begoy in northern Croatia and back home to Broome. But in many ways it was a journey that began when he left the Castello Crouchback in Italy, at the beginning of the novel. After the Nazi Soviet pact, Guy Crouchback rejoiced, as Waugh had rejoiced, '[t]he enemy at last all was plain in view, huge and hateful, all disguise cast off. It was the Modern Age in arms. Whatever the outcome there was a place for him in that battle.'('Men at Arms.' In E. Waugh, 1994, p. 10) The problem was that he couldn't find a place in the battle. 'Half an hour's scramble on the beach near Dakar; an ignominious rout in Crete. That had been his war.'[611] ('Unconditional Surrender.' In E. Waugh, 1994, p. 640)

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[610] '[Elijah] went a day's journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a juniper tree: and he requested for himself that he might die; and said, It is enough; now, O Lord, take away my life; for I am not better than my fathers. And as he lay and slept under a juniper tree, behold, then an angel touched him, and said unto him, Arise and eat. And he looked, and, behold, there was a cake baked on the coals, and a cruse of water at his head. And he did eat and drink, and laid him down again. And the angel of the Lord came again the second time, and touched him, and said, Arise and eat; because the journey is too great for thee. And he arose, and did eat and drink, and went in the strength of that meat forty days and forty nights unto Horeb the mount of God. (1 Kings 19:4-8 Cited in Wilson J. H., 2007, p. 419) In the simple gift of cake that Crouchback accepts from 'Josefina ("God will increase") and Bianca ("white")' (p.419), we see the superantuarl constantly enjoined with the mundane; as well as seeing the deeper destiny that animates even the simplist daily events.

[611] There are only two present-tense descriptions of fighting in the novel, both complete counterfeits of military heroism. The only other descriptions of fighting were the pointless exercise on the beach at Dakar and the countless practice manoeuvres. The witness common to both battles that are described is the journalist and cynical opportunist, Ian Kilbannock who concludes that 'both have afforded classic stories of heroism. ('Unconditional

Despite his intentions to sacrifice himself in the struggle with the huge and hateful enemy, Guy finds failure; an echo of the 'few sad little love affairs' he prosecuted in the wake of his divorce. ('Men at Arms.' In E. Waugh, 1994, p. 14) Rather than it being a case of failures, he seemed genuinely unlucky. In Dakar he had followed his orders, kept his head and successfully completed his mission. 'By all justice' he was deserving of an M.C. ('Officers and Gentlemen.' In E. Waugh, 1994, p. 216) Instead, he is left with a 'black mark' against his name. ('Officers and Gentlemen.' In E. Waugh, 1994, p. 217) Again in Crete he was deserted by his superior officer, left without any orders and unable to do any actual fighting against the enemy. Following his 'wholly creditable' escape from the island, Guy is about to be given a company back with his old company, the Halberdiers, but once more he is unfairly sent back to London. ('Officers and Gentlemen.' In E. Waugh, 1994, p. 477) Like Virginia contemplating 'the passing uniforms and gasmasks', Guy is left wondering, 'what's it all for?'('Unconditional Surrender.' In E. Waugh, 1994, p. 549)

Guy finds that in military life justice seems elusive. When he considers his nephew about to fight in France in the first months of the war, while he himself cannot get accepted into any regiment, he is perplexed. 'What crazy economy was it that squandered Tony and saved himself? …Tony was rich in love and promise. He himself destitute, possessed of nothing, save a few dry grains of

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Surrender.' In E. Waugh, 1994, p. 692) In the first battle Trimmer and his party of commandos land on an island that is supposed to be deserted. They encounter a French woman and they run. She shoots at them thinking they were Nazis. ('Officers and Gentlemen.' In E. Waugh, 1994, pp. 374-375) Trimmer is aghast that some of his party went inland in the direction of the shooting. He asks Ian, 'you don't think we can go back to the ship and leave them to follow?' (p. 376) Later Trimmer becomes a propaganda hero, as false as any produced by the Soviet Union. The second battle also confuses the allies with the enemy. This time they are attacking a Christian castle that was built against the advance of the Turks. Now the allies are the new hordes attacking the castle containing a Croat version of the home guard. The falsity of the situation is caught by Ian who says, 'it's like driving to a meet...when the horses have gone on ahead.' ('Unconditional Surrender.' In E. Waugh, 1994, p. 689) The raid is put on by the partisans who immediately shoot amongst themselves. (pp. 690-691) British bombers arrive and Guy connects them with the German dive bombers, though less efficient; again equating the two armies as equally amoral in battle. When a German column are heard arriving to defend the castle, the partisans run away, 'before a German column we disperse, that is the secret of our great and many victories.' (p. 691) Like in the waste land novels of Waugh's early careers the only people who flourish in this chaos are the charlatans and sham-heroes created by a cynical press. Ritchie Hook, not knowing of the Partisan's cowardice charges the castle, utterly fearless and beckoning for them to follow. He is ignominiously shot down with Sneiffel the photographer, 'like a terrier, like a pet dwarf privileged to tumble about the heel of a prince of the Renaissance, was gambolling round him with his camera, crouching and skipping, so small and agile as to elude the snipers on the walls.' (p. 692) This is a moment of great betrayal, saved only by the fact that it allowed Richie Hook to die rather than face more modern, propagandised and overly politicised warfare. Dawkins, his loyal batman, hears the news and speaks 'with awe at the benevolent operation of Providence'. (pp. 693-694) Ironically Dawkins assumed the Nazis will give Richie Hook a marked grave, a dignity that the Partisans deny to the allied soldiers killed in the plane crash. (p. 694)

faith.' ('Men at Arms.'in E. Waugh, 1994. p. 30) Guy discovers, very slowly, that it is the economy of salvation; God's grace working in the world. It is the anagogical drama. Tony is captured in France and spends the rest of the war in a prison. In his initial postcard initial post-card home he requested a variety of foodstuffs for himself. ('Officers and Gentlemen.' In E. Waugh, 1994, p. 254) However, these requests change and he is soon asking for the classics of Catholic spiritual writing. ('Officers and Gentlemen.' In E. Waugh, 1994, pp. 474-475) By the end of the trilogy it is revealed that Tony, upon release, had entered a monastery. (Unconditional Surrender, In E.Waugh, 1994, p. 710) This is the Economy that leads Guy so unjustly from failure to failure despite his consistent bravery, and willingness to confront the enemy.

The final novel in the trilogy is called *Unconditional Surrender* (1961), which seems out of place in a novel about an Allied officer in the final year of the Second World War. It is Guy who surrenders unconditionally to God's summons and takes his place in 'the divine plan.' ('Unconditional Surrender.' In E.Waugh, 1994, p. 540) Guy finds that 'in a world of hate and waste' he is offered two chances to do something that will, in an infinitesimally small way help to 'redeem the times.'('Unconditional Surrender.' In E.Waugh, 1994, p. 663) It is not clear if Waugh was consciously borrowing from Eliot's 'Ash Wednesday' but it is in his unconditional surrender that Crouchback once more takes his place in 'the higher dream'. (Eliot, 1991, p. 90) Central to Guy's decision is the letter his father wrote to him before he died. Carrying it with him always he frequently re-reads the sage advice, 'The Mystical Body doesn't strike attitudes or stand on its dignity. It accepts suffering and injustice... Quantitative judgements don't apply.' ('Unconditional Surrender.' In E.Waugh, 1994, p. 600) In that letter his father had defended Lateran Treaty on the grounds that by it, souls were saved. 'If only one soul was saved that is full compensation for any amount of lost face.'('Unconditional Surrender.' In E.Waugh, 1994 p. 491, 624) This letter spells out the logic of the 'crazy economy' at work in the novel.

Virginia, destitute and pregnant with Trimmer's son, comes to Guy for help. She is able to do so only because of his series of failures. Indeed, when she comes to wheedle her way back into his life, he is lying in bed after a parachuting accident; yet another failure.[612] Guy chooses to take

[612] Guy's sore knee creates a lovely parallelism with an earlier encounter with Virginia from the first volume. Then, he had been in perfect health, a military moustache and an eye-glass; 'he was every inch a junker'. ('Men at Arms.' In E. Waugh, 1994, p. 99) Then he had selfishly attempted to seduce Virginia on the technicality that, according to

Virginia back as his wife and raise Trimmer's child as his own, fully understanding the humiliation that such a move will engender. As he explains to Virginia's friend, Kirstie, 'I don't think I've ever in my life done a single, positively unselfish action. I certainly haven't gone out of my way to find opportunities. Here was something most unwelcome put into my hands….' ('Unconditional Surrender.' In E.Waugh, 1994, p. 623) Kirstie, angered by Guy's seemingly mysterious reasoning, points out that 'the world is full of unwanted children' and so asks ~~what does~~ why one more should matter, to which he replies,, 'I can't do anything about all those others. This is just one case where I can help. And only I, really.' ('Unconditional Surrender.' In E.Waugh, 1994, pp. 623-624) As Guy Marlowe realizes in Macaulay's novel, it is individuals that matter; quantitative judgments do not apply, they are only for the secular religions.

Guy has found his single, definite service; he has found his vocation. It is in the marriage to Virginia that Guy finds his purpose. Earlier he was described as Philoctetes without his bow. Exile comes for both men when they were seeking romantic martial heroism. For Guy it is on Crete, for Philoctetes it was on Lemnos. Philoctetes' ultimate goal was Troy while Virginia's surname for most of the trilogy is Troy, 'like Helen of Troy.' ('Unconditional Surrender.' In E. Waugh, 1994, p. 605) This association reinforces the idea that in finding Virginia, Guy Crouchback was finding his purpose. The effect of that vocational purpose was Virginia's decision to convert to Catholicism.

As Guy is making his confession in Croatia, Virgina confesses 'half a lifetime's mischief' and, unlike the black mark that Guy earns in the army, these sins are immediately forgiven.[613] 'She was shriven. The same words were said to her as were said to Guy.' ('Unconditional Surrender.' In E.Waugh, 1994, pp. 642-643) Only a few months later Virginia is killed by a V2 rocket. In discussing Ludovic's absurd novel, Waugh hints at the primacy of Virginia's conversion amidst the failures of Crouchback's army career. 'As Ludovic read the pages he realized that the whole book had been a preparation for Lady Marmaduke's death…' (p. 659) Everard Spruce

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Catholic teaching they were still man and wife. 'I thought you'd chosen me specially, and by God you had. Because I was the only woman in the whole world your priests would let you go to bed with. That was my attraction. You wet, smug, obscene, pompous, sexless, lunatic pig.' (p. 125) Now, in a deep melancholy, lamed by an accident and with no obvious purpose he is able to perform that single definite service; before he was only able to strike poses and attempt to stand on his dignity.

[613] Just like Guy's 'black mark'earned on Crete. Ivor Clair's desertion of his post in Crete is only 'almost forgotten' in light of his heroics in Burma with the Chindits. In the trilogy complete forgiveness is impossible to find outside of the confessional.

inadvertently hits upon the truth of Virginia's death and Guy's role when he quotes Aldous Huxley's description of Mrs Viveash from *Antic Hay*, 'She crossed the dirty street, placing her feet with a meticulous precision one after the other in the same straight line as though she were treading a knife edge between goodness only knew what invisible gulf. Floating she seemed to go, with a little spring in every step…' (p. 671) This straight line can be read as Virginia's brief but equally efficacious sacramental life.

Guy helps Virginia at her lowest. Before she goes to him we see her sitting in the darkness of a cab as 'the full weight of her failure bowed her...' ('Unconditional Surrender.' In E.Waugh, 1994, p. 553) In the same way Guy is able to help the Jews of Begoy who are equally crushed by suffering and dream only of escaping Yugoslavia. Once again it is failure and injustice that bring Guy to Begoy. He had hoped to find combat, even offering to come down in rank, but was told, 'be your age, Uncle, no can do.' (p. 488) He was unfairly prevented from going to Italy to work with the partisans, the role for which he trained, by the abstruse intriguing of Colonel Grace Groundling Marchpole. (p. 599) But once in Begoy he is able to be of service to the Jews by helping them escape to Italy. Guy comes to understand that the string of failures and injustices that have taken him on the journey to Begoy were justified in light of this definite service. 'All the stamping on the barrack square and the biffing of imaginary strongholds were finding their consummation in one frustrated act of mercy.' (p. 702) As with Guy's decision to help Virginia and her child, the same rationalistic arguments were made. What do they matter? The Communist interpreter, who, in the spirit of Cecil Day Lewis, is concerned only with the relations between masses, asks why the Jews should be given the supplies sent to them by an American Jewish organisation. 'How are we to explain that these old people who are doing nothing for our cause, should have such things?'(p. 700) When Guy tries to find out about Madame Kanyi and her husband he is asked by a British Officer, 'aren't you making rather heavy weather of it? What do two more or less matter?' (p. 704) It is only the Catholic Crouchback who can see that quantitative judgements do not apply, an attitude that ensures the protection of the most vulnerable individuals.

Initially Guy is buoyed by his role as the liberator: 'he was Moses leading a people out of captivity.' ('Unconditional Surrender.' In E.Waugh, 1994, p. 696) But the weather derails the exodus. Guy's entreaties to the higher authorities are crucial and bear fruit but he is denied the

feeling of heroism. Only when he is back in Italy does he discover that the Jews are safe. Their complex passage bears the divine imprint of old, 'it was indeed as though the Red sea had miraculously drawn asunder and left a dry passage between walls of water.' (p. 703) Guy hears that his efforts to help the Kanyis, like his efforts to help Apthorpe in the first volume, have resulted in their deaths. Gilpin, a British officer and Communist and a man for whom quantitative judgements certainly do apply, cynically concludes that 'justice was done.' Guy thinks about striking him but, where earlier he did strike Trimmer, this time he refuses to, 'the sense of futility intervened.' (p. 706)

In a letter to John Betjeman written in late 1950, Waugh explained his understanding of sanctity. 'We all have to become saints before we get to heaven… And each individual has his own peculiar form of sanctity which he must achieve or perish. It is no good my saying: "I wish I were like Joan of Arc or St John of the Cross". I can only be St Evelyn Waugh – after God knows what experiences in purgatory.' (Amory, 2009, p. 387)[614] *The Sword of Honour Trilogy* is essentially the story of Guy Crouchback discovering his 'own peculiar form' of sainthood. And, like that of Roger de Weybroke, known to the locals of Santa Dulcina as 'il Santo Inglese' Guy's sanctity is also based upon the frustrations of his own desires and an ignominious military failure. ('Men at Arms.' In E.Waugh, 1994, p. 11) Guy initially sought war for his own ends, namely a glorious death which would help him reassert his offended manhood and escape the waste land of his existence. He fights no heroic battles but his countless failures are like the fire blessed with water and they give rise to the peculiar divine summons that transforms his life and the lives of others. In a foreshadowing of his heavenly reward, he returns to Broome at war's end. Like Elijah under the juniper tree, Guy now rests secure.

With *Helena*, Waugh produced a romantic biography at the heart of which was 'the remorseless fact of the lump of wood to which Christ was nailed in agony.' (Stannard, 1994, p. 278) Waugh spent five years working on this 'semi-historic, semi-poetic fiction' and considered it his finest novel. (Patey, 2001, p. 289) In the midst of the confusion wrought by the Arian heresy and the vacillating politicking of Imperial Rome, Helena takes up her vocation, her 'function in the

[614] Also cited in Waugh, Helena, 2005, p.xiii-xiv

Divine Plan' and seeks out the True Cross. Waugh explained the clarity and sanctity of Helena's vocational role, in a letter to John Betjeman, contrasting it with the confusion of the period.

> I liked Helena's sanctity because it is in contrast to all that moderns think of as sanctity. She wasn't thrown to the lions, she wasn't a contemplative, she didn't look like an El Greco. She just discovered what it was God had chosen for her to do and did it. And she snubbed Aldous Huxley with his perennial fog, by going straight to the essential physical historical fact of the redemption. (Amory, 2009, p. 387)

In pursuing her vocation, Helena reinforces the solid foundations of Christianity in the years when the Church seemed to be in some danger of fragmenting into confusion and surrendering to the spirit of the world as represented by Waugh's portrait of her son Constantine. The lump of wood at the centre of the novel is the concrete reality that animated the 'small sign' made by Lord Marchmain before his death. Waugh summed up its significance when he concluded *Helena* by telling us that the wood has survived and has been welcomed all over the world in all ages, because 'it states a fact.' (E. Waugh, 2005, p. 230) For Waugh that 'fact' had become the fulcrum of his vocation and in telling the story of Helena, as with the stories of Guy Crouchback, Charles Ryder, Ronald Knox and Edmund Campion, he too believed himself to be playing his role in the Divine Plan. In a letter written to Greene in 1961, following the publication of *A Burnt-Out Case*, Waugh discussed Greene's perceived repudiation of the title 'a Catholic writer'. 'Taken in conjunction with your Christmas story,[615] the novel makes it plain that you are exasperated by the reputation which has come to you unsought of a 'Catholic writer.' (Amory, 2009, p. 629) He then apologized for the role that he had played in the construction of that reputation. 'Twelve years ago I gave a number of lectures here and in America presumptuously seeking to interpret what I genuinely believed was an apostolic mission in danger of being neglected by people who were shocked by the sexuality of some of your themes.'(Amory, 2009, p. 629) The phrase 'apostolic mission' gives a very clear insight into Waugh's attitude to his own writing and its role in the intellectual life of the Anglosphere.[616] Waugh was 'grieved' by

[615] 'A Visit to Morin'.

[616] In an essay he wrote for *Life* in 1949, Waugh downplayed the role of the writer in the life of the church but even in his self-deprecation there is the sense that his writing was still a mission, albeit a relatively unimportant one. 'The church does not exist in order to produce elegant preachers or imaginative writers or artists or philosophers. It exists to produce saints. God alone knows His own. ... Man is made for the knowledge of God and for no other purpose.

Greene's 'very sorrowful novel' because he seemed to have stopped fighting against the waste land. (Amory, 2009, p. 629 p. 627, 631)

> I don't think you can blame people who read the book as a recantation of faith. To my mind the expression 'settled and easy atheism' [Greene's description of the Atheist doctor in the novel] is meaningless, for an atheist denies his whole purpose as a man – to love & serve God. Only in the most superficial way can atheists appear 'settled and easy'. Their waste land is much more foreign to me than the 'suburbia of *The Universe*'. (Amory, 2009, p. 629 p.631)

Greene had felt the suburban Catholics of the *Catholic Herald* and *The Universe* cloying and uncouth in what he perceived as their simplistic piety. (Greene R. , 2007, pp. 251-252) Waugh found Greene's defence of his portrait of the contented atheist 'pretentious and flimsy'. (Greene R. , 2007, p. 252) For him the transformative sacramental life, however ignorant and prejudiced the believer, was infinitely preferable to the waste land and the 'perennial fog' that had ensnared so many of his fellow clerists. This rejection of the waste land and the embrace of the sacramental life was the thread that ran through the overwhelming majority of his writing. Ironically, given their difference of opinion, it was also present in Greene's writing.

Graham Greene and the Anagogical Drama

The irony of Graham Greene's position as a Catholic writer is that he rejected the term while producing novels that were, in some ways far more explicitly Catholic than those produced by Evelyn Waugh. (Allain, 1983, p. 159) Marie-Françoise Allain challenged Greene's rejection of the term, prompting him to admit that 'there does exist a pattern in my carpet constituted by Catholicism, but one has to stand back in order to make it out.' (Allain, 1983, p. 159) Greene wrote almost twice as many novels as Waugh and therefore what he produced is more difficult to critique sedulously. Not only is Greene's oeuvre more resistant to the kind of simplified figure that we discerned in Waugh's carpet but Greene's personal religious opinions were constantly

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Where that purpose is recognised there will always be found many people who seek Him in the cloisters, from which Grace spreads to an entire people. The Church and the world need monks and nuns more than they need writers. These merely decorate. The Church can get along very well without them. If they appear it is a natural growth.' (E. Waugh, 'The American Epoch in the Catholic Church' in E. Waugh, 1983, pp. 386-387) Waugh clearly understood his 'decorations' as playing a role in helping people recognise at least the need for 'knowledge of God'. While his writing was an indirect means of encouraging that recognition, it was for him still part of the Church's apostolic mission.

evolving and therefore notoriously difficult to pin down. Norman Sherry spent huge amounts of time with Greene while compiling his biography. Towards the end of the third volume of his exhaustive account he simply concluded, 'it is difficult to know Greene's real feelings towards Catholicism.' (2004, p. 682)

Sherry goes on to note that Greene himself provides a detailed insight into his changing beliefs in his short story, 'A Visit to Morin', Morin being a famous Catholic author who has lost belief. (2004, p. 688) Sherry, with his usual perspicacity, discusses the story's attitude to faith, as distinct from belief. However, there is something much simpler in the story that is so emblematic of Greene's Catholic writing and indeed, of the Catholic clerisy that emerged from the interwar period. The story contains a snapshot of the incongruity of Catholic belief and its treatment in Greene/Morin's work. 'It was as though some of his characters accepted a dogma so wholeheartedly that they drew out its implications to the verge of absurdity, while others examined a dogma as though they were constitutional lawyers determined on confining it to a kind of legal minimum.' ('A Visit to Morin.' In G. Greene, 2005, p. 251) Published in 1963, the narrator has a chance encounter with his hero, the troubled Catholic novelist, Pierre Morin, at Christmas Mass. In the Mass he recognizes the familiar dichotomy of waste land and peaceful unity. 'This was the birth of Christianity: outside in the dark was old savage Judea, but in here the world was only a few minutes old. It was the Year One again, and I felt the old sentimental longing to believe…' ('A Visit to Morin.' In G. Greene, 2005, p. 255) In his conversation with the reclusive and misunderstood Monin he discovers that his hero has lost his belief and yet he has retained his faith. Why? Because his disbelief has separated him from the sacraments and the results seemed to prove their power. 'For twenty years I have been without the sacraments and I can see the effect. The wafer must be more than a wafer.' ('A Visit to Morin.' In G. Greene, 2005, p. 262) The alternative to the sacramental life; the effect of its absence, is captured in the nihilistic chaos of 'The Destructors'. This was a much earlier story in which a group of boys destroy a house and, in doing so, destroy its owner, who had made a point of being kind to them. 'There's only things, Blackie,' says T, the leader, as he looks around the room 'crowded with the unfamiliar shadows of half things, broken things, former things.' ('The Destructors' In G. Greene, 2005, p. 11) Whatever his fluctuating beliefs, and Greene has been accused of Jansenism, Augustinian Catholicism, Pelagianism and, even described himself as a 'Catholic

atheist', he always took the sacraments seriously because without them there was 'only things'; the ultimate statement of nihilistic fragmentation. (Allain, 1983, p. 152), (Donaghy, 1992, p. 117)

The Anglican theologian, Graham Ward, has argued that 'literature can never be entirely secular.' (2010, p. 73) Ward's thesis is that the cultural imaginary has been shaped by Judeo-Christian traditions and institutions. He describes authors as merely making a 'cutting in the flow[617] of the cultural imaginary' rather than actually controlling that flow. (Ward, 2010, p. 78) A writer might choose a particular piece of imagery, for whatever reason, but will often find it saturated in religious ideas and associations. Consequently 'the secular [frequently] sheers off into the sacred, the phenomenal into the noumenal.' (Ward, 2010, p. 77) By virtue of his conversion Greene's 'imaginary' was enriched by a deepened understanding of theological ideas and symbols. For Greene, as for Waugh, the anagogical drama became a central concern in his writing, rather than a loose pattern of associations, rendered ironic by their presence.[618] It was this drama that shaped his most explicitly Catholic novels such as *Brighton Rock* (1938), *The Power and the Glory* (1940), *The Heart of the Matter* (1948) and *The End of the Affair* (1951) These were the novels of belief and their narrative action took place 'under the aspect of eternity'. This same perspective can be seen, often by its absence or painful diminution, in his novels of doubt. These would include *The Quiet American* (1955) *A Burnt-Out Case* (1960) *The Honorary Consul* (1973) and *Monsignor Quixote* (1982). Ward points out that 'both Camus' *The Fall* and *The Plague* have been read as religious allegories in which existential angst is viewed as an effect of a world that is alienated from both its creator and itself, and therefore godless.' (Ward, 2010, p. 80) In the same way, Greene's non-believing narrators like Thomas Fowler, Mr. Brown and Eduardo Plarr and the agnostics or atheists like Querry and even the Communist Mayor of El Toboso, often act as unhappy, even incomplete, alternatives to the grimly believing

[617] The verb cutting connects with Eliot's phrase 'shoring up these fragments' and, as we shall see, David Jones' phrase 'making a shape in words'. All three phrases imply a craft by which a unity is created in the midst of fragmentation. (see ft.694)

[618] Ward cites Jean Paul Satre's *La Nausée* which cannot hope to avoid religious ideas. In a novel where the word 'God' is only used as an expletive and a profound atheism pervades Roquentine's psychological observations and Sartre's picture of the flat monotony of human existence, a passage like this demonstrates how even a staunchly secular writer like Sartre must appeal to literary traditions and vocabularies too rich and suggestive for the ideology of his own position. If this passage has none of the apocalyptic quality of O'Conner's writing, nevertheless this pared down prose also teeters continually on the edge of the mythological, even allegorical.' (2010, pp. 80-81)

saints of Greene's more explicitly Catholic novels of belief.[619] In Greene's novels of belief and doubt 'the name of God appears constantly' and in the words of his good friend, Father Leopoldo Duran, these works 'hinge on the existence of that Being.' (1994, p. 94)

Greene's own life over this period of nearly forty five years (from *Brighton Rock* to *Monsignor Quixote*) was also a complex and uneven journey in belief. The major event that disrupted his belief was his affair with Catherine Walston between 1946 and 1957 and for whom he left his wife and two children in 1947. Walston became a Catholic in September 1946. Greene was her godfather. The priest who received her described her as: 'determined not to be chaste and yet…very religious.' (Sherry, 1994, p. 219) Greene later told Vivien that he had slept with thirty two women while they were married, including a regular mistress and a prostitute with whom he had repeated liaisons. (p. 224) His affair with Catherine overlapped with an affair with a Swedish actress, Anita Bjork, and Yvonne Cloetta the wife of a French diplomat. Greene's affairs continually caused him to doubt the Catholic faith. An example of his confusion comes in a letter he wrote to Catherine:

> I know that you are worried and unhappy at the conflict which you feel between your relation with me and Catholicism. That means that I *know* – and it's always a grim though – that *in that way* you'd be happier if I left you. And that for a lover is a horrid thought… *My* case, you see is different. I would still stay in the fringes of the church if you left me – perhaps not even in the fringes, for almost all my *Catholic* writing has been done since I knew you and I have certainly been to the sacraments far more often in our five years than in the previous eight. So with me – as far as you are concerned – there's no real conflict, and sometimes I hate the conflict I cause in you. (Sherry, 1994, p. 502)

It is important to remember that this letter was written to convince Walston to stay with him and therefore his confident declarations should not be taken literally. The fact was that despite a lifetime of extramarital affairs, Greene never felt confident enough to leave the Church. It is for this reason that his religious ideas were so torturously twisted. Towards the end of his life, while he was still engaged in an affair with Yvonne Cloetta, Greene 'was often nervous about his

[619] Thomas Fowler (*The Quiet American*), Mr. Brown (*The Comedians*), Eduardo Plarr (*The Honorary Consul*), Querry (*The Honorary Consul*) and the Communist Mayor of El Toboso (*Monsignor Quixote*). As we saw earlier, it was the portrait of the comfortable atheist that caused such division between Greene and his Catholic public.

conscience…' (Sherry, 2004, p. 704) Count Creixell, a companion to both Greene and his confessor, Father Duran, speculated that Greene repeatedly went to confession to the Spanish priest in his final years, but we can never know for sure. Sherry fills in the gaps for us: 'Old Graham Greene, unquestionably a Catholic, cannot live a pure Catholic life, and is deeply troubled. But he remains a Catholic, and though in his middle years [the sixties and early seventies] he almost completely lost his sense of belief (and faith)…his vacillations must have terrified him.' (Sherry, 2004, p. 705) The interior life that the convert reveals to the priest in confession is closed off to the historian but 'he prayed, he confessed, and he died with a priest at his side. He wanted to be saved; wanted his soul after death to be vouchsafed to heaven…' (Sherry, 2004, p. 705) It is in this context that we can best understand Greene's relatively constant preference for the supernatural over the mundane.

Greene's writing did not follow the logical progression of Waugh's but the alternatives to the supernatural were frequently nihilistic, even despairing. Whatever his personal beliefs, his novels reveal a perpetual preference for the supernatural over the secular and the totally rational. Like Waugh, Greene equated the secularized political religions of progress with an inability to value the individual. In *The Third Man* the arch-villain, Harry Lime, equates his ruthless selfishness with ultra-modern government programs. 'It's the fashion. In these days, old man, nobody thinks in terms of human beings. Governments don't, so why should we? They talk of the people and the proletariat, and I talk of mugs. It's the same thing. They have their five-year plans and so have I.' (G. Greene, 1950, p. 126)

As early as 1949 George Orwell was writing to T. F. Fyvel and opining that Greene could well become 'our first Catholic fellow-traveller'. (Cited in Schwartz, 2012)[620] Yet Greene always considered Communism to be a political religion, whatever its merits, and took pains to present the commitment to Communism as a parody of Christian devotion. Mr. Halliday in *The Human Factor* was imprisoned in Archangel during the Russian Civil war and, as 'a missionary hands out bibles' he was given Communist books to read 'when they couldn't give me food.' (G. Greene, 1978, p. 280) Each night, in a parody of night prayers, he reverently prays the line from

[620] Schwartz concluded that 'Greene's Catholicism...was the lodestar by which he steered his course between the Scylla of reactionary rejections of Communism's valid insights and the Charybdis of excusing its inaccuracies and the abuses committed in its name.' (Schwartz, 2012)

Chekov's *Three Sisters* 'to sell the house, to make an end of everything here, and off to Moscow.' (G. Greene, 1978, p. 281) When Castle meets his KGB superiors in Moscow the conversation through an interpreter is likened to a ritual between a priest, a congregant and an acolyte. (G. Greene, 1978, p. 319-320)

Maurice Castle, the novel's protagonist and unwitting dupe of Moscow's machinations, describes himself as 'a half-believer' and was just as drawn to Catholicism by a priest working in the slums as he was by Carson, the Communist who helped Castle's black wife escape South Africa. '[Castle] hoped that he might find a permanent home, in a city where he could be accepted as a citizen, as a citizen without any pledge of faith, not the City of God or Marx, but the city called Peace of Mind.' (G. Greene, 1978, p. 135) Yet the impersonal Communist religion leaves him in Moscow, totally alone with his 'mistaken vocation' and caught in 'a merciless, interminable, annihilating snow, a snow in which one could expect the world to end.' (G. Greene, 1978, pp. 322, 332) Finding himself in the Communist utopia of which Halliday had long dreamed, Castle found that he was suddenly devoid of hope; an old man 'who couldn't count with certainty on any spring to come.' (G. Greene, 1978, p. 339) Mark Bosco, a leading Catholic scholar of Greene's work, described the landscape in this novel as post-Christian, arguing that it contained only the inhuman systems of apartheid, MI5, the KGB and Communist Russia. Bosco cites a line from Greene's essay *The Lost Childhood,* to describe this world devoid of the sacramental life, 'perfect evil walking the world where perfect good can never walk again.' (Bosco, 2005, pp. 119, 121) In short, the perspective of eternity haunted most of Greene's fiction even if it was only in the ugliness of its absence.[621]

[621] The exception comes in novels like *Travels with my Aunt* and *The Captain and the Enemy* where a human love of some kind and an escape into a romantic landscape of some kind act as a powerful antidote to the cynical ennui of his non-believing middle-class characters. Henry Pulling escapes the dreary world of conventional suburbia to find romance and excitement with his Aunt; first in Turkey and then later in South America. The journey begins at Pulling's mother's funeral where he meets his Aunt Augusta and ends with Pulling moving to Paraguay to live a life of passion and adventure with his Aunt who turns out to be his real mother. At the beginning Pulling is so bored by life in Southwood that he is excited by the chance to go to a crematorium. '...there was that slight stirring of excited expectation which is never experienced at a graveside. Will the oven doors open? Will the coffin stick on the way to the flames?' (Greene G. , 1969, p. 10) The novel ends with a massive party in Paraguay as Aunt Augusta, is reunited with her true love, Mr. Visconti. It is implied that Pulling has become a Catholic in order to marry a local girl who was about to turn sixteen. She is described as 'a gentle obedient child' but the point is not so much her beauty but rather all that she represents. 'Somerset House, income tax... They were as distant as the Mare Crisium or the Mare Humorum on the pale globe in the sky.' (Greene G. , 1969, pp. 303, 319) In *The Captain and the Enemy* Victor Baxter is rescued from an equally dreary existence and plunged into a life of excitement and love and, like Pulling,

In *Brighton Rock* Pinkie, the sociopathic, teenage gang leader is ultimately brought to justice by Ida Arnold. The contrasting religious views of these two characters are central to the novel. Ida decides to find justice for a chance acquaintance named Fred Hale who has been murdered by Pinkie and his gang. She complacently tells Rose, Pinkie's eventual wife, 'I've done a thing or two in my time – that's *natural*… But I've always been on the side of right.' (G. Greene, 1970, p. 150) Ida constantly stresses the word natural. For her, the search for harmless fun was paramount. 'In the dark depths of her Guinness kindness winked up at her, a bit sly, a bit earthy, having a good time.' (p. 32) Greene consistently implies that Ida is somehow incomplete, cut off from the deeper truths by being 'barnacled with pieces of popular wisdom.' (p. 293) In contrast, Rose and Pinkie are both Catholic and are aware of much deeper and more frightening possibilities than Ida can ever imagine. Indeed it is because they were Catholics and in touch with the sacramental life that they were 'more capable of evil than anyone.'(p. 309) For all her thoughtless rectitude Ida 'was as far from them as she was from Hell – or Heaven.' While for Pinkie and Rosie, 'Good and evil lived in the same country, spoke the same language, [and] came together like old friends…' (p. 156)

Later Rose disconcerts Ida and her complacent worldly wisdom. ''There's things *you* don't know.' She brooded darkly by the bed, while the woman argued on: a God wept in a garden and

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he ends up in South America chasing adventure. The novel opens with Baxter running 'recklessly to escape [his] enemies between one class and the next.' (Greene G. , 1988, p. 9) The Captain won Baxter in a game of Backgammon in order to give him to Lisa, his mistress. Renamed Jim, the young boy is thrown into the middle of the tumultuous love affair of the Captain and Liza. The Captain rarely sees her because he is a criminalan an effort to escape boredom. However, after her death, we soon learn that she loved him unconditionally, regardless of his wandering. The novel ends with Jim in Panama, accidentally helping to have the Captain killed and then seeking out the romantic city of Valparaiso in Chile; a city that he has long dreamt about, but he too is killed. The central quest of the novel is to understand the nature of love. The captain, a man described by Jim as 'at his ease in Valparaiso', soon becomes his mentor, even his father. (p. 16) Early on Jim and the Captain see the film *King Kong* and Jim asks why the monkey doesn't drop the burdensome girl. 'He loves her, boy. Can't you understand that – he loves her?' (p. 44) By the end of the novel Colonel Martinez of the Panamanian National Guard is reading the manuscript written by Jim and wondering 'what or who is [the frequently mentioned] King Kong.'(p. 189) In these novels there is a superficial comic tone as the anagogical drama is missing and the desire for escape and passion predominate. In *Our Man in Havana* the passionate love affair between James Wormold and Beatrice Severn is destroyed when they return to London from Cuba, all the pretence of Wormold's fake reports now exposed. They agree to marry but Beatrice realises that 'the chief problem of their future – that he would never be quite mad enough.' (Greene G. , 2007, p. 228) In other words, passion cannot survive outside of Havana, outside of Greene's 'continent of exiles', to borrow a phrase from *The Honorary Consul*. (Greene G. , 1973, p. 10) It is interesting to note that these novels have received very little critical attention compared with the Greene's more Catholic novels, possibly because of their relative superficiality.

cried out upon a cross; Molly Carthew went to everlasting fire.'[622] (G. Greene, 1970, p. 248) Rose and Pinkie exist within the whole drama of salvation. For them heaven and hell are completely real while for someone like Ida Arnold, bursting with energy and passion, there is only an earthly existence. Rose describes Ida as somehow being completely outside the drama of salvation. 'Oh, she won't burn. She couldn't burn if she tried.' (p. 139) For Pinkie and Rose damnation and salvation, perdition and perfection are both possibilities in their lives. Later Pinkie drives to a deserted place with Rose before attempting to manipulate her into suicide.[623] He himself is planning to make a convenient confession, hoping to manipulate God in the sacraments as he was about to manipulate Rose. Suddenly he finds himself caught up in the drama.

> An enormous emotion beat on him; it was like something trying to get in; the pressure of gigantic wings against the glass. Dona nobis pacem… if the class broke, if the beast – whatever it was – got in, God knows what it would do. He had a huge sense of havoc – the confession, the penance and the Sacrament – and awful distraction, and he drove blindly into the rain. (G. Greene, 1970, p. 300)

By the end of the novel Pinkie is dead and Ida, having tricked him into suicide, has returned home to her complacent life with 'a multitude of popular sayings [passing] into her mind.' (G. Greene, 1970, p. 306) Rose, on the other hand, returns to confession and is astounded by the knowledge of the priest. Suddenly she is confronted with her own ignorance, 'You can't conceive, my child, nor can I or anyone the … appalling … strangeness of the mercy of God.' (p. 308) Rose agrees to pray and to return on the following day for absolution. Then she goes to retrieve a gramophone with Pinkie speaking on it, a recording in which he said 'God damn you, you little bitch, why can't you go back home for ever and let me be.' (p. 220) This 'black disc' invalidates the priest's claim that there must have been some good in Pinkie if he loved Rose. This was the 'worst horror of all', confirming, as it does, Rose's fear that Pinkie, as determinedly and as carefully as Molly Carthew, had damned himself. (pp. 220, 310) Greene hints that the

[622] A girl Rose knew who committed suicide. 'Molly Carthew burnt. She was lovely. She killed herself. Despair. That's mortal sin.' (Greene G. , 1970, p. 138)
[623] He mistakenly believes that she could provide evidence against him for the murder of Charles "Fred" Hale.

shattering of her love for Pinkie will send Rose 'back home for ever' in the form of absolution now that loyalty to Pinkie no longer prevents her seeking absolution.

In *The Quiet American* Greene again focuses on the distance between those who have access to the sacramental life and those who are outside its embrace. Fowler is the cynical journalist who rejects religion and political belief, telling one priest 'I am not a Roman Catholic. I don't think you could even call me a Christian' and later reassuring Mr. Heng, a Communist informant, 'don't worry…I have no politics.' (G. Greene, 1955b, pp. 57, 167) Soon it becomes obvious that he has even rejected the possibility of human love. He tells Pyle, who is after his mistress, Phuong, 'I don't care for her interests. You can have her interests. I only want her body. I want her in bed with me. I'd rather ruin her and sleep with her than, than…look after her damned interests. (G. Greene, 1955b pp. 70-71) Part of Fowler's unbelief was his hatred of Pyle's innocent and earnest political religion. When Pyle winds up dead, Fowler, though he himself is partly responsible, explodes with angry rage at the American idealism that had formed Pyle's convictions into a political religion.

> They killed him because he was too innocent to live. He was young and ignorant and silly and he got involved. He had no more of a notion than any of you what the whole affair's about, and you gave him money and York Harding's[624] books in the East and said, 'Go ahead. Win the East for democracy.' He never saw anything he hadn't heard in a lecture hall, and his writers and his lecturers made a fool of him. When he saw a dead body he couldn't even see the wounds. A Red menace, a soldier of democracy. (G. Greene, 1955b p. 32)

Passages like this have contributed to the novel's reputation as being definitively anti-American. And yet Greene's unsubtle criticisms of what he saw as American expansionism are only part of Fowler's characterization. The novel is primarily about belief, its dangers and its consolations. Pyle remonstrates with Fowler, 'there's something you must believe in. Nobody can go on living without some belief.' (G. Greene, 1955b p. 118) Fowler becomes this test case for this suggestion.

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[624] Harding is an American academic who writes on geopolitical strategy. He plays the role of Pyle's Marx and Pyle shyly admits to Fowler, 'You must think me a fool, but – well I almost thought him infallible.' (Greene G. , 1955b, p. 92)

Fowler claims never to have desired faith but he admits he sometimes envies his wife back in England and the security offered by her church, 'her cage with holes'. (G. Greene, 1955b p. 110) His envy of believers is increased throughout the novel. Vigot, the French detective investigating Pyle's death, reads Pascal and reminds Fowler of the need to take the gamble. ''Let us weigh the gain and loss,' he quoted, 'in wagering that God is, let us estimate these two chances. If you gain, you gain all; if you lose you lose nothing.'' (pp. 178-179) Heng the Communist offers an unlikely echo of these sentiments, telling Fowler 'sooner or later one has to take sides. If one is to remain human.' (p. 227) Ultimately Fowler chooses to help Heng and the Communists, even though he notices 'the unseen friends of Heng shift[ing] like rats behind the wall.' (p. 227) He helps to arrange Pyle's death in order to stop the violence that he has orchestrated in the name of creating 'a third force' to help in the preservation of democracy in South East Asia. By the end of the novel, Pyle is dead, Phuong has returned to Fowler and his first wife has agreed to grant him a divorce. 'Everything has gone right with me since he had died, but how I wished there existed someone to whom I could say that I was sorry.' (p. 247) Given that Pyle's family existed, given that Fowler could easily write an anonymous letter, the reader is left assuming that Fowler is yearning for God. Dissatisfied in his unbelieving, wholly temporal existence, he is left feeling an unfamiliar desire for the sacramental life. As we shall see, it is a desire that links Fowler to the Whiskey Priest and to Scobie.

Throughout the novel the Catholic Church is in the background providing the sacramental life for the Vietnamese Catholics. Fowler admires the priests but rejects the life they offer. 'If I believed in any God at all, I should still hate the idea of confession. Kneeling in one of your boxes. Exposing myself to another man. …to me it seems morbid – unmanly even.' (G. Greene, 1955b p. 57) The priest replies, ironically foreshadowing the ending, 'I expect you are a good man. I don't suppose you've ever had much to regret.' (p.157) More than the explicit discussion of confession, Fowler perceives glimmers of the eternal. He admires the courage of the priests and notes that 'from the bell tower of the Cathedral the battle was only picturesque, fixed like a panorama of the Boer War in an old *Illustrated London News*.' (p.52) Greene hints that the Church with its roots in the deep past, has seen battles come and go and has a perspective that is different to Fowler's embittered and very up-to-the-minute understanding of the conflict.

The procession of the Blessed Sacrament held in conjunction with a procession of a statue of Our Lady of Fatima had become an important event for everyone in Phat Diem. 'Even many of the Buddhists – who formed about half the population – could not bear to miss the fun, and those who had belief in neither God believed that somehow all these banners and incense-burners and the golden monstrance would keep war from their homes.' (G. Greene, 1955b, p. 54) Their instinctive appreciation of the sacramental life is contrasted with the Vietminh agents who cynically joined the parade and began a violent attack on Phat Diem. Even after they were driven back the 'whole population of Phat Diem' still believed that they would be safe in and around the Cathedral. (p. 56) Fowler is unable to explain their trust.

> 'I thought, 'It's a strange poor population God has in his kingdom, frightened, cold, starving ('I don't know how we are going to feed these people,' the priest told me): you'd think a great King would do better than that.' But then I thought, 'It's always the same wherever one goes – it's not the most powerful rulers who have the happiest populations.' (G. Greene, 1955b, p.56)

Greene's travels in Indochina in early 1954 had revealed the powerful attraction the church had for many of the Vietnamese. He witnessed the consecration of a church in a village in which everyone had converted even as the Communists pressed closer. 'As the Bishop moved around the wall scattering holy water, while the guns grumbled like an aching tooth, one was aware that the political or material motive here for becoming Catholic was very small.' (Thompson, 2006, p. 34) On the following day Greene attended Mass and again he was moved by the Sacramental life as witnessed in Vietnam. 'The conversions certainly go on. Before Mass this morning, in the Bishop's chapel, there were fifteen baptisms, thirteen of them in one family. It was the patronal feast, and a Mass more gay than any I have seen outside Vienna. The Bishop was robed to the music of violins, gay tinkly music like an eighteenth-century gavotte. The altar boys carried the vestments with a ballet grace: even the candles on the altar seemed to dance. One was worlds away from the dull bourgeois Masses of France and England, the best clothes and the beadle, and the joyless faces and the Gregorian chants. This was a Mass to be enjoyed, and why not? The Sacrament is too serious for us to compete in seriousness. Under the enormous shadow of the cross it is better to be gay.' (Thompson, 2006, pp. 34-35) It must be remembered that Greene

travelled to Vietnam at least partly hoping to die. (Sherry, 1994, p.385-386)[625] He was clearly intending to die as a Catholic because, while at Phat Diem, he went to confession. (Allain, 1983, p. 172)

The priest with his soutane speckled with blood became the common image throughout the novel. 'I've seen a priest, so poor he hasn't a change of trousers, working fifteen hours a day from hut to hut in a cholera epidemic, eating nothing but rice and salt fish, saying his Mass with an old cup - a wooden platter. I don't believe in God and yet I'm for that priest.' (G. Greene, 1955b, p. 120) When Pyle's bomb goes off in Saigon Fowler immediately links the carnage with the Church's sacramental life. '…what struck me most in the square was the silence. It was like a church I had once visited during Mass – the only sounds came from those who served….' (p. 212) As Fowler unravels Pyle's atrocity in the name of his political religion, the priests move around him in the name of a sacramental religion. 'A small fat priest scampered by, carrying something on a dish under a napkin.' (p. 213) As Fowler and Pyle walk away the people flock past them into the Cathedral, as if by instinct, immediately moving to the Church and praying for their dead. Fowler sees all this and refuses to convert. Fowler's intractability is physically manifested in his reaction to the explosion and its concomitant wreckage. 'Oddly enough I sat exactly where I had sat before, although my table had joined the wreckage around the Frenchwoman.' (p. 209) His entire position in the novel is that of a non-convert and it is this that shocks the reader. As his journalistic investigations continually move from the secular and into the sacred, one is surprised by his desire to remain in the secular world, cut off from the sacramental life and unable to satisfy his desire to say 'sorry.' (p. 247)

In *The Quiet American* Fowler looks at the sacramental life from the outside; it looms up every so often, as the pink Cathedral in Saigon suddenly rose up before him, blocking the street. (G. Greene, 1955b p. 214) In a short story written in 1948, 'The Hint of an Explanation', Greene wrote about the sacramental life from the inside and in that story we see the pattern that is present in his major Catholic novels. The story is based around an encounter on a train between an agnostic and a Catholic who, by story's end, turns out to be a priest. When the conversation turns to religion the priest tells a story from his childhood when a local 'free-thinker' attempted

[625] Libby Getz is quoted as saying Greene's deepest wish was to be 'crucified on an anthill in a third world country.' (Sherry, 1994, p.385)

to trick him into handing over the Host and, in doing so, revealed to the boy the reality of the Sacrament. As he says to his agnostic companion, ‘you know for me, it was an odd beginning that affair, when you come to think of it…’ (‘The Hint of an Explanation’ in G. Greene, 2005, p. 41) That beginning was the sacramental life that, from then on, was lived on a much deeper level, culminating in his ordination to the priesthood.

At the beginning of the story, set in the drab landscape of post-war England Greene contrasts the secular with the sublime. Both the agnostic and the priest chew the same dry buns in the dark and cold train carriage, ‘in this new version of peace...a dreary experience.’(‘The Hint of an Explanation’ in G. Greene, 2005, p. 30) The priest reveals that, as a child, he had learnt the Church’s teaching on the sacraments but ‘the Host had always been to me--well, the Host.’ (p. 39) Confronted by the enormity of the theft it becomes something else. When he first discusses the possibility of stealing the Host for Blacker, the free-thinker, the theology suddenly becomes more real. ‘‘No,' I said, 'the--accidents don't change,’ stumbling a little on the word ‘accidents’ which had suddenly conveyed to me the idea of death and wounds.’ (p. 36) When he does receive Communion with the intention of handing it over he perceives his own damnation in the act. I had the Host lodged under my tongue: it felt like a blister.’ (p. 38) And when he goes to bed, the Host in a screw of paper changes everything.

> I laid the packet on the chair by my bed and tried to go to sleep, but I was haunted by the shadows on the wall where the curtains blew, the squeak of furniture, the rustle in the chimney, haunted by the presence of God there on the chair. The Host had always been to me--well, the Host. I knew theoretically, as I have said, what I had to believe, but suddenly, as someone whistled in the road outside, whistled secretively, knowingly, to me, I knew that this which I had beside my bed was something of infinite value--something a man would pay for with his whole peace of mind, something that was so hated one could love it as one loves an outcast or a bullied child.... I went to the chair and picked it-Him--up. There was only one place where He was safe. I couldn't separate the Host from the paper, so I swallowed both. (‘The Hint of an Explanation’ in G. Greene, 2005, pp. 39-40)

In *The Power and the Glory* and *The Heart of the Matter* Greene describes the sacraments in equally explicit terms, using the simplest language to communicate their supernatural natre. In *The Power and the Glory* the unnamed priest finds an Indian woman desperate to have him pray for her dead child. He reflects on how much easier it would be to have the sacraments rather than rely on his imperfect prayers. 'The Host was different: to lay that between a dying man's lips was to lay God. That was a fact – something you could touch, but this was no more than a pious aspiration.' (Greene G., 1955a, p. 197) The priest talks with the lieutenant as they travel back to the capital for his execution and in that conversation we get a sense of the power of the sacraments. The lieutenant, [626] an upstanding and even ascetic Communist is everything the priest is not and yet the priest still seems to have more power.

> That's another difference between us. It's no good working for your end unless you're a good man yourself. And there won't always be good men in your party. Then you'll have all the old starvation, beating, get-rich-anyhow. But it doesn't matter so much my being a coward–and all the rest. I can put God into a man's mouth just the same–and I can give him God's pardon. It wouldn't make any difference to that if every priest in the Church was like me. (Greene G., 1955a, p. 252-253)[627]

The priests of Greeneland are often faithless, feckless and even foolish but they are very much Catholic priests; priests forever in the order of Melchizedek (Hebrews 7:17). Fr Rivas in *The Honorary Consul* abandons the priesthood and gets married. However the narrator repeatedly refers to him as Father Rivas, as if to confirm what Charlie Fortnam instinctively knew, 'once a priest always a priest, Father. I spotted you when you broke those eggs over the dish. I could see you at the altar, Father.' (G. Greene, 1973, pp. 139-140) As Bosco noted, even in the wake of new, more secular ideas about the priesthood after the Second Vatican Council, Greene's

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[626]The lieutenant paradoxically laments that he was forced to murder hostages because he 'wanted to give them the whole world.' (Greene G., 1955a, p. 257) Later the effect of the Lieutenant's crusade to give the children 'the whole world' is summed up in the iron swings that stood empty in the hot afternoon where the Cathedral used to stand and 'there was a sense of desolation everywhere, more of it than in the mountains because a lot of life had once existed here.' (pp. 261-262) The lieutenant, confronted with the image of the abandoned swings that he had gifted the children could only think, 'No pulse, no breath, no heart-beat, but it's still life – we've only got to find a name for it.' (p. 262)

[627] For the whiskey priest, his unshriven mortal sin is described as wound. 'He alone carried a wound, as though a whole world had died.' (Greene G. , 1955a, p. 85) The world that had died was the mystical world of grace from which he had been cut off even though he was able to communicate that grace to other people through the sacraments.

doubting priests in *The Honorary Consul* and *Monsignor Quixote* were still in 'an ontologically different category of human being... Greene's imagination remain[ed] gripped by the cultic function of the Catholic liturgy and its priests who serve the Church; together they embodied the essential legacy of Catholic difference.' (2005, p. 95)

In contrast to these Catholic priests, the portrait of the Anglican clergyman, Mr. Opie, in *Stamboul Train* is one that is almost Wodehousian in its lack of religiosity. On the train 'Mr. Opie [a muscular Christian] dreamed that in his surplice with cricket bat under his arm and batting-glove dangling from his wrist he mounted a great broad flight of marble steps towards the altar of God.' (G. Greene, 1981, p. 32) Later, Mr. Opie is confronted by Dr. Paul Czinner who is returning home to Belgrade, to a revolution and to certain death. Czinner was raised a Catholic but had lost his faith. As he approaches death, like so many of Greene's characters he found himself desperately seeking forgiveness. 'He found himself praying: 'God forgive me.' But he was shut off from any assurance of forgiveness, if there existed any power which forgave.' (p. 115) Wanting a clear conscience he became aware of the poverty of his new political religion. 'Shall I go and confess my sins to the treasurer of the Social-Democratic party, to the third class passengers. The priest's face turned away, the raised fingers, the whisper of a dead tongue, seemed to him suddenly as beautiful, as infinitely desirable and as hopelessly lost as youth and first love...'(p. 117) His lips 'dry with a literal thirst for righteousness' he seeks out Mr. Opie. As Czinner, in memory, kneels in the darkness and begins an act of contrition, Opie chattily explains that he is making a little anthology of spiritual writings to take the place of Roman books of contemplation, 'I intend to strike deeper. The Roman books are, what shall I say? Too exclusively religious. I want mine to meet all the circumstances of everyday life. Are you a cricketer?' (p. 118) When the topic of confession is finally broached Mr. Opie is capable only of discussing the question theoretically. He glibly explains that it is an alternative to modern psychoanalysis but that 'confession to the psychoanalyst seems to be more efficacious than confession to the priest.' (p. 119) After discussing confession from a literary perspective, Mr. Opie begins to discuss *Hamlet* and it is at this point that Czinner leaves the compartment. Once in the corridor, angry and unshriven, he hears a sleepy voice saying 'impossible, impossible' (p. 120) For Greene the poverty of non-Catholic religions consisted in what he saw as their inability

to communicate the sacramental life, and for him the only alternative to the sacramental life was despair.

In *The Power and the Glory* Padre José has abandoned his priesthood in compliance with the new regime and yet, cut off from the sacramental life, he is without a real vocation, 'a fat old impotent man mocked and taunted between the sheets.' (G. Greene, 1955a, p. 32) His response to the priestly vocation, far from saving others, now makes him 'worthy of damnation.'(G. Greene, 1955a, p. 32) In the novel his impotence becomes a recurring joke among the children of the village but it possess a deeper significance. When his wife calls him to their 'shameless bed' he reflects sadly, 'there was never anything to do at all – no daily Office, no Masses, no Confessions.' (G. Greene, 1955a, p. 32) Like Waugh's unredeemed characters, these treacherous priests are described in inhuman terms. Cut off from his priestly duties Padre José lives like a little pig 'conscious of the slaughterhouse.' (G. Greene, 1955a, p. 33)

In *The Honorary Consul* Father Rivas has also abandoned his vocation in favour of political violence and kidnapping, and he too is described as an animal. Charlie Fortnam thinks that he is 'like a dog hungry for bread.' (G. Greene, 1973, p. 142) Both priests are offered the chance to resume their vocations because of an emergency. Padre José's wife forces him to reject the opportunity, once more contrasting his sacramental role with a more carnal role. ''You aren't a priest any more,' the woman said, 'you're my husband.' She used a coarse word. 'That's your duty now.'' (G. Greene, 1955a, p. 265) Father Rivas's wife, Marta, plays the opposing role, begging her husband to say a Mass before the police arrive to storm their hideout. Recognizing the unique role of the priest she says, 'we need you to speak to God for us.' (G. Greene, 1973, p. 282) Once Father Rivas says the Mass we see the sacramental life seamlessly integrated into their earthly life which is rapidly coming to an end. '…who takes away the sins of the world, grant them eternal rest.' This snippet of prayer can be applied to Father Rivas who has just heard Pablo and Marta's confessions and is also about to die. Father Rivas says 'Ite Missa est.' and the loudspeaker outside answered 'like a liturgical response' telling them they have only fifty

minutes left. (G. Greene, 1973, pp. 305, 306) In Greeneland[628] the sacramental life is rarely far away despite all the confusion and doubt.

In Greene's earlier novels of belief the Mass is treated as a fact. Despite his reputation for doubt Greene believed that 'if one is to consider themselves Catholic, there is a certain number of facts which have to be accepted.' (Allain, 1983, p. 169)[629] When he writes about the sacraments, particularly the Mass, he writes about them as undisputed facts. In that sense he writes from within the Catholic Church. Waugh wrote about the sacraments in a way that emphasized their effects on the individual as proof of their reality. But his novels didn't repeatedly and explicitly insist on their literal reality. Greene is far more direct. In *The Power and the Glory* the whiskey priest says Mass in a village as the soldiers close in on him. 'Whoever moved outside on the forest path, there was no movement here – '*Hoc est enim Corpus Meum.*'[630] He could hear the sigh of breaths released: God was here in the body for the first time in six years. When he raised the Host he could imagine the faces lifted like famished dogs.' (G. Greene, 1955a, p. 88) In *The Heart of the Matter* Scobie damns himself by blasphemously receiving Communion while in a state of mortal sin. In doing so he is fully aware of the reality of the Sacrament. Even though it is now a hellish experience, the Sacrament is still very real. '*Hoc est enim Corpus*: the bell rang, and Father Rank raised God in his fingers – this God as light now as a wafer whose coming lay on Scobie's heart as heavily as lead.' (G. Greene, 1963, pp. 270-271) As the Mass moves towards his blasphemy the prayers become grimly ironic. 'He didn't need to open his Missal to

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[628] Greene hated the term. 'I'm always slightly irritated by that phrase, 'Greeneland', and I can't help wondering where these critics live, what sort of lives they live. I mean the Vietnam War is seedy, yes. The rule of Batista in Cuba belonged to that seedy world – dirt, torture, people half-starved. Where do these critics live? Do they live in Kensington and listen to the traffic going past the windows and then have a cocktail party with friends. That, I think, is a worse world than 'Greeneland', and less true.' (Burstall, 1968, p. 672)

[629] Greene was particularly critical of Edward Schillebeeckx. He described him as 'a very estimable theologian' but added that, 'as a barely practising Catholic, I find it very disagreeable when a historical event like the crucifixion is turned into some woolly sort of symbol. The twentieth chapter of St John's Gospel can stand with the best of eyewitness reports, and I don't see why Fr Schillebeeckx has to turn it into a symbolic sequence.' (Allain, 1983, p. 169) Paradoxically Greene found that the 'new heretics' of the seventies and eighties reignited his faith. 'I'm in favour of having these subjects aired, so long as one is not posing as a Catholic theologian but only as a Christian theologian. So long as differences between the churches exist, those differences ought to be upheld, otherwise one becomes as foggy as the Anglicans. Catholicism has to remain human. A man lived: Christ. He lived in history. Why turn him into a concept, fit only for a handful of visionaries? … I think that all in all, this controversy has enabled me to discover an amusing paradox, almost a Chestertonian one: while Fr Schillebeeckx's declarations were intended to make the unbelievable credible, they have the opposite effect on me – they have revived in me a deep faith in the inexplicable, in the mystery of Christ's resurrection. And I don't think I'm alone in having reacted this way.'(pp. 169-170)

[630] 'For this is my Body.'

know how this prayer ended, 'May the receiving of Thy Body, O Lord Jesus Christ, which I unworthy presume to take, turn not to my judgment and condemnation.' He shut his eyes and let the darkness in.' (G. Greene, 1963, p. 271) In his final explicitly-Catholic novel, *Monsignor Quixote* (1982), Greene maintains his unambiguous way of discussing the sacraments. The old Monsignor is challenged by the Communist Mayor, 'I *know* Marx and Lenin existed. You only believe.' To which Quixote replies, 'I tell you it's not a question of belief. I touch him.' (G. Greene, 2006, p. 153)[631]

Even the unbelieving Dr. Czinner remembered his boyhood religion in explicitly Eucharistic terms. 'There had been his duty to God. He corrected himself: to a god. A god who had swayed down crowded aisles under a bright moth-worn canopy, a god the size of a crown-piece enclosed in a gold framework. … He had blown that candle out with his own breath, telling himself that God was a fiction…' (G. Greene, 1981, p. 112) Czinner's freedom to reject God was the same freedom that allowed Scobie to blaspheme him. The Catholic authors wrote with intensity about their rediscovery of the proximity of God. For Waugh it was a source of transformation but for Greene it was often a concern. As Scobie put it, '…God was too accessible. There was no difficulty in approaching Him. Like a popular demagogue He was open to the least of His followers at any hour. Looking up at the Cross he thought, He even suffers in public.' (G. Greene, 1963, p. 181)

The closeness of God is also communicated in the way that he seems to pursue converts. Just as Greene sees the priestly ordination as leaving an indelible mark, so also with baptism. In *The End of the Affair*, Sarah's baptism plants a seed that, like the Communion received in 'The Hint of an Explanation', begins a life-long affair; an affair that ends her extra-marital affair. Her mother had her baptized a Catholic when she was two and 'always hoped it would "take" like a vaccination.' (G. Greene, 2004, p. 136) This seems to be confirmed by Sarah's claim that she felt herself to have 'caught belief like a disease'. Her former lover Maurice Bendrix is worried, believing that if the baptism created a thread, to borrow from *Brideshead*, then God was in control; the sacraments were real. (p. 121) 'You can't mark a two-year old child for life with a bit of water and a prayer. If I begin to believe that, I could believe in the body and the blood.' (p.

[631] Auberon Waugh's response to the novel was perhaps the most insightful, 'Graham Greene seems to become more and more Catholic, although he denies this hotly.' (Cited in Sherry, 2004, p. 681)

137) Later Bendrix is obsessed with the possibility of belief in God but is angry that Sarah, having found God, discontinued their affair. Rather pointedly his meditations take on a sacramental nature. 'If I begin to love God, I can't just die. I've got to do something about it. I had to touch you with my hands. I had to taste you with my tongue: one can't love and do nothing.' (p. 152) For Sarah, and begrudgingly for Maurice, there is the realization that God must be a physical reality. 'Dear God, I had said. I should have said, Dear Vapour. I said I hate you, but can one hate a vapour? I could hate that figure on the cross with its claim to my gratitude – 'I've suffered for you', but a vapour….' (p. 89)

Throughout the *End of the Affair* there are repeated references to things coming to an end. Bendrix sees the finitude of their love as an inherent quality. 'I became aware that our love was doomed: love had turned into a love affair with a beginning and an end.' (G. Greene, 2004, pp. 25) Sarah's diary reveals a recurring concern that they had 'come to an end of sex' and that they 'had begun to look beyond love'. Even her cuckolded husband admits to Maurice that he and Sarah had 'got to the end of love'. (pp. 53, 72, 119) As her affair ends she concludes, '…he gave me so much love, and I gave him so much love that soon there wasn't anything left, when we'd finished, but You.'(p. 99) At the 'end of the affair' is the love of God, a powerful, transformative love; a love capable of embracing 'a bitch and a fake'. (pp. 81, 97) The power of the sacrament of baptism is manifested in the way that Sarah was pursued by the transformative love of God. Although Bendrix refuses to give himself over to faith he recognizes this transformative love.

> I have no peace and I have no love except for you, you. I said to her, I'm a man of hate. But I didn't feel much hatred; I had called other people hysterical, but my own words were overcharged. I could detect their insincerity. What I chiefly felt was less hate than fear. For if this God exists, I thought, and if even you – with your lusts and your adulteries and the timid lies you used to tell – can change like this, we could all be saints by leaping as you leapt, by shutting the eyes and leaping once and for all: if you are a saint, it's not so difficult to be a saint. It's something He can demand of any of us, leap. But I won't leap. (G. Greene, 2004, p. 159)[632]

[632] In his old age, Greene read this passage to Norman Sherry and his biographer began to realise that it contained Greene's great hope. 'His reading was filled with fervent emotion. I was deeply moved. It was, in all my interviews,

Bendrix's fear is that he will be caught up in God's love. After Sarah's death he had a dream in which he was searching for a precious jewel but was constantly disappointed. 'Now and then I thought that I saw something beautiful and I would approach the glass, but when I saw the jewel close it would be as factitious as all the others…Time was short and I hurried from shop to shop.' (G. Greene, 2004, pp. 114-115) Then Sarah appears to him and tells him not to worry and 'like a whisper lodged in the ear' he kept hearing the reassurance. (p115) Upon waking it fades but when more of Sarah's acquaintances are visited by her, or seemingly cured by her, he begins to fear that her prayers for him will also be answered. Sarah's sanctity is confirmed by the miracles she works following her death, yet their roots were in that single sacramental experience as a two-year old. Greene's Sarah Miles is a far more mystical saint that Mr. Crouchback and even, in a sense, St. Helena but Greene's point was that such a transformation from 'a consummate liar' and 'a little tart' into a wonder-working saint was a predictable effect of the sacramental life. (p. 150, 151)

In Greene's oeuvre the alternative to this saintly life, this 'wide region of repentance', was the 'territory of despair.' (G. Greene, 1963, pp. 55, 267) In *The Power and the Glory* the local people are forced into this territory by the governmental persecution of the Church and the cowardice of Padre José, 'Suddenly and unexpectedly there was agony in the cemetery. They had been used to losing children, but they hadn't been used to what the rest of the world knows best of all – the hope which peters out.' (G. Greene, 1955a, p. 58) Luis's father tells his son 'everything seems over' and that they 'feel so – left' because the Church has disappeared. (G. Greene, 1955a, p. 61) 'I was a bad Catholic but [the Church] meant – well, music, lights, a place where you could sit out of this heat.' (G. Greene, 1955a, p.61) Following the death of the Whiskey Priest, Luis is moved and mourns the loss of a hero. 'There were no more priests and no more heroes. He listened resentfully to the sound of booted feet coming up the pavement. Ordinary life pressed round him.' (G. Greene, 1955a, p. 286)[633] Maurice Bendrix escapes from his depression by reading Scott's *Last Expedition* and it suddenly becomes analogous with his

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the most disturbing. I felt that he believed God has a special commitment to each of us, yet he was in some perplexity as to his own mission.' (Sherry, 2004, p. 685)

[633] This contrasts with the position of Pinkie after he has murdered a man. 'There was poison in his veins though he grinned and bore it. He had been insulted. He was going to show the world. They thought because he was only seventeen…he jerked his narrow shoulders back at the memory that he'd killed his man, and these bogies who thought they were clever weren't clever enough to discover that. He trailed the clouds of his own glory after him: hell lay about him in his infancy. He was ready for more deaths' (Greene G. , 1970, p. 81)

isolated life in a cold waste land. ‘It seemed curiously dated now, this heroism with only the ice for enemy, self-sacrifice that involved no deaths but one’s own.’ (G. Greene, 2004, p. 145) Scobie is also assaulted by the fear of being abandoned to ordinary life. He dreams that he is stuck outside his bedroom cut off from his now-silent wife with only the Father Clay able to open the door. ‘Then he woke again to the small stone room like a tomb.’ (G. Greene, 1963, p. 106) This dream acts as a foreshadowing of Scobie’s demise but it also captures the isolation that can only be assuaged through the priestly ministry, however perfunctory and unpleasant it might seem to be. Later, having refused to confess with a real purpose of amendment, he emerges from the confessional and what had been symbolic in the subconscious becomes reality.

> When he came out of the box, it seemed to Scobie that for the first time his footsteps had taken him out of sight of hope. There was no hope anywhere he turned his eyes: the dead figure of the God upon the cross, the plaster Virgin, the hideous stations representing a series of events that had happened a long time ago. It seemed to Scobie that he had only left for his exploration of the territory of despair. (G. Greene, 1963, p. 267)

The enchanted life is over for Scobie; God appears to have receded into the past and there is left only the territory of despair. This is the same territory that the Lieutenant wants to give his people in *The Power and the Glory* and Greene works hard to show its ugly absurdity. ‘They deserved nothing less than the truth – a vacant universe and a cooling world, the right to be happy in any way they chose. He was quite prepared to make a massacre for their sakes… He wanted to begin the world again with them, in a desert.’ (G. Greene, 1955a, pp. 70-71)

According to Stephen Spender, Edward Upward planned to write a novel ‘in which the virtuous and sympathetic characters would be capitalists and the unpleasant ones Communists, but which would show that nevertheless the Communists were “right” because they were “on the right side of history”...’ (Spender, 1977, p. 276) In many ways, Graham Greene took a similar approach to his characters. In an interview he did for a BBC-1 documentary in 1968 Greene said:

> There is a passage in Browning’s *Bishop Blougram's Apology* which I always felt could have acted as an epigraph to all my books:

Our interest's on the dangerous edge of things.
The honest thief, the tender murderer…
We watch while these in equilibrium keep
The giddy line midway….
(Burstall, 1968, p. 672)[634]

Many of the characters in Greene's novels, 'fell on the very edge of the dark' as Charley Fortnam fell when he escaped from the hut in *The Honorary Consul*. (G. Greene, 1973, p. 159) Greene's saints were frequently sinners but, to quote Pinkie's pet aphorism, 'between the stirrup and the ground he something sought and something found.' (G. Greene, 1970, p. 110) A number of Greene's characters seek mercy at the last minute after a lifetime of doubt and faithlessness. As Father Rivas explains to the cynical Dr. Plarr, they have Jehovah in their blood. 'After all these centuries Jehovah lives in our darkness like a worm in the intestines.' (G. Greene, 1973, p. 273) They may doubt but their belief is as natural as breathing. As Father Rivas continues, 'It may be better not to breathe but I cannot stop breathing.' (G. Greene, 1973, p. 283) For that reason they are never so damned on earth as to be beyond the reaches of God's mercy. When he himself was asked if he was still hounded by God, Greene answered, 'I hope so! I hope so! I'm not very conscious of His presence, but I hope that He is still dogging my footsteps.' (Allain, 1983, p. 164)

George Orwell found Greene's *The Heart of the Matter* unconvincing. His review for the *New Yorker* lambasted the book as making 'no attempt at psychological reality.' ('Review: The Heart

[634] (Also cited in Donaghy, 1992, p. 140) Greene also cited this poem when he was writing to Waugh to discuss his position with regards to the Church, following the publication of *A Burnt Out Case*. As mentioned above, Waugh had written to Greene apologising for being one of those who had argued that Greene was indeed a Catholic writer. 'Now you have made a plain repudiation .You will find not so much 'hostility' among your former fellowship as the regrets of Browning for his 'Lost Leader' – except, of course, that no one will impute mercenary motives.' (Amory, 2009, p. 631) Greene replied, 'I will match your quotations from Browning with Bishop Blougram:

All we have gained then by our unbelief
Is a life of doubt diversified by faith,
For one of faith diversified by doubt:
We called the chess board white – we call it black.'
(Greene R. , 2007, p. 254)

His biographer Norman Sherry considered that Waugh had been right to see Greene in the figure of Querry, arguing that 'Greene's truth lies in his fiction.' (2004, p. 260) Greene's defence of doubt would, in time, become legendary however, his defence of the doubters was not that they were right to doubt, rather that they too could enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Richard Greene noted that Waugh's letters 'made a deep impression on Greene, who wondered if he had gone too far in the expression of doubt.' (Greene R. , 2007, p. 254)

of the Matter' in Sonia Orwell, & Ian Angus (Eds.), 2000c, p. 439) Orwell summarized the plot as 'White all the way through, with a stiff upper lip, [Scobie] had gone to what he believe to be certain damnation out of pure gentlemanliness. I have not parodied the plot of the book. Even when dressed up in realistic details, it is just as ridiculous as I have indicated.' (Orwell, 2000c, p. 440)[635] The problem for Orwell is that he has ignored the caution of Father Rank, 'don't imagine you – or I – know a thing about God's mercy.' (Greene G., 1963, p. 333)

The point of the novel is not that Scobie damned himself but that, even in the darkest moments of his wrongheaded despair the Good Shepherd came for him. Scobie despaired because he didn't want to continue hurting Christ with his blasphemous Communions. '…there are limits to what I can do to you – them. … It will be no use then sweeping the floor to find me or searching for me over the mountains.' (Greene G., 1963, pp. 315-316) However, as he takes the pills and waits for death 'it seemed to him as though someone outside the room were seeking him, calling him, and he made a last effort to indicate that he was here… He dredged his consciousness up from an infinite distance in order to make some reply. He said aloud, 'Dear God, I love…''(Greene G., 1963, pp. 325-326) Greene wants to indicate that, as Scobie hits the floor, it is he who becomes 'the saint[636] whose name nobody could remember.'(Greene G., 1963, p. 326) Fr Martindale SJ, for a time Greene's confessor, read the climax of the novel in this way. 'The poison took a long time to act: during that time what was truly in his "heart," the real man fought its way through the clouds of his tortured mind…and he was sorry and he loved.' (Cited in Sherry, 1994, p. 298)

These snatches of prayer were common to many of Greene's invisible saints. The whiskey priest and Father Rivas both die speaking the words of the penitent in confession, seeking a return to the Sacramental life with their final breaths. (G. Greene, 1955a, p. 281) (G. Greene, 1973, p.

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[635] Orwell extended his charge of moral confusion to all of Greene's novels 'written from an explicitly Catholic standpoint.' (Orwell, 2000c, p. 441) Interestingly, in the same review, he recognises the less explicit nature of *Brideshead Revisited*. 'Evelyn Waugh's "Brideshead Revisited," in spite of improbabilities, which are traceable partly to the book's being written in the first person, succeeds because the situation is itself a normal one. The Catholic characters bump up against problems they would meet with in real life; they do not suddenly move onto a different intellectual plane as soon as their religious beliefs are involved.'(p. 442) I suspect that what Orwell is ham-fistedly getting at is the fact that Greene takes the reader into the interior life of a Catholic and their changing, but always Catholic, attitudes to the Sacramental life. Waugh on the other hand writes the majority of his novel from the perspective of a non-Catholic, a perspective that would have been more relatable to Orwell.

[636] This is how Greene describes the medal that falls from Scobie's body when he dies.

316) Sarah dies seeking to return to the Church in which she had been baptised. Monsignor Quixote dies with his faculties suspended, unable to say Mass. He calls this 'the sentence of death.' (G. Greene, 2006, p. 199) However, in his last moments he sleep-walks into the chapel of the old monastery at Osera and says Mass, miming the actions and saying the Latin phrases. Father Leopoldo and the Communist Mayor witness the event and agree that in the experience they were 'faced by an infinite mystery'. More than that, the Mayor, seeing his friend performing the actions of the Mass, kneels for the first time since childhood. (G. Greene, 2006, pp. 242, 246) Quixote dies saying 'by this hoping….' as though linking his desire for the sacraments with his desire for heaven. (G. Greene, 2006, p. 242)

Evelyn Waugh also reviewed *The Heart of the Matter*, for *Commonweal*, and like Orwell saw it as an explicitly Catholic book, describing it as 'a book only a Catholic could write and only a Catholic can understand.' ('Felix Culpa?' In E. Waugh, 1983, p. 361) Waugh understood that Greene's 'eyes are on the Four Last Things' and were therefore concerned with 'the souls Christ died to save.' ('Felix Culpa?' In E. Waugh, 1983, pp. 360, 361) As a Catholic, Waugh sees what Orwell cannot, that Scobie's 'moral and spiritual predicament is our own...' ('Felix Culpa?' In E. Waugh, 1983, p. 363) He describes Scobie's death as a 'mad blasphemy' but, heeding Father Rank's warning, sees that the whole point is that 'no one knows the secrets of the human heart or the nature of God's mercy.' ('Felix Culpa?' In E. Waugh, 1983, pp. 363, 365)

For Mark Bosco *A Burnt Out Case* stands apart from Greene's other novels because it is more suspicious of the effects of religious belief, both positive and negative. However, Querry still represents 'Greene's attempt to expose the difficult quest for authentic religious faith.' (Bosco, 2005, p. 75) It is possible to argue that the Querry belongs among Greene's saints, the only difference being that where the earlier novels see the sacraments, or the explicit declaration of an intention to seek the sacraments, as a pathway to God, in *A Burnt Out Case* there is merely the hint of a desire. The pathway is narrowed. When Querry dies he is pronounced as 'an ambiguous man' (G. Greene, 1961, p. 245) But there have been hints throughout that his 'burnt-out faith' is slowly being revived, the most obvious hint being his rescue of Deo Gratias, his servant. Paula Salván argued that the act of seeking out his servant went beyond the dictates of mere politeness or responsibility. It became a truly selfless act; 'a remote trace of something that used to be but is no longer there.' (2011, p. 318)

Querry's desperate search for the badly mutilated and somewhat inscrutable Deo Gratias (thanks be to God) can be seen as analogous to his search for his faith. The event soon becomes a pious legend among the local Catholics with many claiming Querry spent the night in prayer in the jungle. Greene makes sure we don't know what actually happened. However, a curious detail emerges when Querry returns to the leprosary. 'An unexpected sound made the doctor look up; Querry's face was twisted into the rictus of a laugh. The doctor realised with astonishment that Querry had perpetrated a joke.' (G. Greene, 1961, p. 68) Throughout the novel innocent laughter is the hallmark of the clergymen and their humble faith. Querry is initially annoyed by the sound of their laughter. (pp. 9-10) As a person of despair, he belonged 'to his own region where laughter was like the unknown syllables of an enemy tongue.' As the novel progresses so does Querry's attitude to laughter. He finds himself wondering, 'How was it that he could sit here now and smile with them? He even found himself resenting the strict face of Father Thomas who sat at the end of the table unamused.'(p. 219) When he dies at the hands of an enemy who has unfairly accused him of sleeping with his wife, it is because he is laughing. 'Querry made an odd awkward sound which the doctor by now had learned to interpret as a laugh, and Rycker fired twice. The lamp fell with Querry and smashed; the burning wick flared up once under the deluge of rain, lighting an open mouth and a pair of surprised eyes, and then went out.' (p. 243) The water and the fire are sacramental symbols and perhaps Greene is attempting to sanctify this moment of death, as the others were sanctified by the desire for the sacraments. Querry's laughter is the factor that gives life to the Father Superior's warning, itself an echo of Father Rank's, and even that made the old priest who talked to Rose after Pinkie's death: 'We all analyse motives too much. I said that once to Father Thomas. You remember what Pascal said, that a man who starts looking for God has already found him.'(p. 247) *A Burnt Out Case* was a controversial novel but it still fits Greene's original supposition that 'no one knows the secrets of the human heart or the nature of God's mercy.' (G. Greene, 1963, p. 365) The only change is that Greene has narrowed the pathways through which God's mercy might pass.

In a particularly curious short story, 'Under the Garden', Greene most clearly demonstrated his very Catholic preference for the supernatural and the mystical over the secular creeds so favoured among his generation. In the story he contrasted zealous secularism that sought to eliminate religion with the instinctive mysticism of a child. As the dying William Wilditch

returns home, having rejected treatment for his cancer, his thoughts turn to his mother. She was a Fabian with a completely materialistic outlook who 'had very decided views…about any mystery… She wanted everything to be very clear' and considered mystery to be 'a bit morbid.' ('Under the Garden' in G. Greene, 2005, p. 203) As he thinks about his own impending death and the earlier death of his mother, Wilditch concludes that 'a fairy-story in such an event would be a more valuable asset than a Fabian graph, but his mother had not approved of fairy-stories.' (p. 205) In his mother's room he discovers a copy of a school magazine in which he had published a story as a thirteen year old. It was the strongly sanitised recount of an experience from his early childhood. In middle age Wilditch cannot be sure that it wasn't a dream. Critically, it was a story that seemed to contain a 'trace of religious feeling' (p. 206) His mother had discerned within her son's juvenilia a longing for the mysteries of which she so disapproved. In the story he had discovered 'a treasure trove' underground in which there were a jewelled crucifix and a marble altar with goblets of precious metal. As he takes these liturgical treasures there rages a terrible storm. 'It was as though the wicked spirit of his old pirate ancestor raged against him.' (p. 208) The religious artefacts and the idea of a spirit had terrified the mother, who scrawled sarcastic comments over the page. Wilditch's mother has actually asked that her sons not be 'subjected' to any religious education, and the school dean reassures her, 'I cannot see any trace of religious feeling in this little fancy.'(p. 206) However, the point of the story is that ironically, Wilditch's mother is not being paranoid; she has correctly discerned her son's mystical yearning behind the story.

Curious as to why he had changed the story Wilditch sits down and writes a more accurate account of his experiences. He checks the facts, unconvinced it was actually a dream and wondering if his 'thirteen year old ancestor' had actually forgotten or had been 'afraid to remember'. ('Under the Garden' in G. Greene, 2005, pp. 208, 211) The new account he writes is far stranger but its religiosity is much clearer. He spent three days and nights deep underground in a timeless place without 'evenings and mornings'. (pp. 210, 218) In that place he found a deformed yet ageless couple living in tunnels under his garden. The man, Javett, had only one leg. He was 'something of a monarch'; he spoke 'like a prophet' and reminded the young Wilditch 'of a gigantic crucifix.' (pp. 219, 221, 237) The name Javitt is a colloquialism for an unspeakable act. While it is usually used to refer to sordid acts it seems to be used here in the

mystical sense, of an act that defies human description. The combination of the sordid with the transcendent, of the earthly with the divine, is a key part of this mysterious world. Recalling a golden chamber pot into which he relieved himself, Wilditch noted that 'it lent the everyday affair the importance of a ceremony, almost of a sacrament.' (p. 225) This liturgical language is reinforced by the declarations of Javitt who told the child, 'I give you a kingdom here with all the treasures of the earth.'(p. 234) And later, the deformed couple processed, 'the lamp swung to and fro like a censer', into the recesses of their tunnels to see the treasure. 'If this was a dream, these were real stones. Absolute reality belongs to dreams and not to life…there are no diamonds in dreams made of paste – what seems is.' (p. 239) Unsurprisingly, the child Wilditch fell on his knees and 'bathed [his] hands in the treasure.' (p.239) The encounter with 'absolute reality' is clearly a sacramental experience.

When he entered this underworld of nightmare and happy laughter, Javitt admonished him for wanting to leave. 'You think you can just take a peek and go away.' ('Under the Garden' inG. Greene, 2005 p. 218) Feeling imprisoned, yet 'with half of myself I would have been content to stay for always', Wilditch ties up Javitt and makes his escape, with Javitt gently chiding him, 'my prodigal, the strayed sheep, you're learning fast.'(p. 241) One commentator argued that, after a lifetime of lonely wandering and a series of jobs 'purged of all fantasy,' 'the revival of the child and his adventure is redemptive.' (Hollindale, 2011, pp. 90, 91)' Having relived the experiences in the story Wilditch returns to the place where he found the tunnel entrance and suddenly finds himself 'back in Javitt's time.' ('Under the Garden' in G. Greene, 2005, p. 248) In that place he reconsiders his decision to abandon treatment. 'He had a sense that there was a decision he had to make all over again. Curiosity was growing inside him like the cancer.' Tellingly, he concludes, 'Poor mother – she had reason to fear'. ('Under the Garden' in G. Greene, 2005, p. 248)

Wilditch's curiosity really refers to Javitt's daughter of incomparable and unearthly beauty, Miss Ramsgate. Out of Javitt and Maria, who is described as Javitt's 'sister, wife, mother, daughter,' was born Miss Ramsgate, for whom Wilditch spends the rest of his life searching. ('Under the Garden' in G. Greene, 2005, p. 220) Her beautiful body with its roots in the timeless world of mystery inspired Wilditch to pledge himself to finding her and at the end of the story he returns to the task of finding her. (pp. 235, 248) It could be argued that Miss Ramsgate represents the

Catholic Church, the Body of Christ on earth whose beauty had entranced so many of the interwar converts. What makes Wilditch's rediscovery so redemptive is the reignition of his desire to find the Church. The symbolic pattern in Greene's 'Under the Garden' is particularly ambiguous and the story stands out among his work, being closer to the mystical poetry of David Jones than the traditional fare of what critics have often termed, 'Greeneland'. Perhaps because it is so different, the story ought to attract the notice of Greene's critics. It certainly provides an insight into his own relationship with the Church. He felt unable simply to take a peek and then leave. While Greene seemed to wander the earth forever searching for the perfect Church, at least half of himself was content 'to stay for always' in the Church of his conversion, regardless of what he perceived to be sordid or outmoded in her makeup.

Conclusion: Finding God at the turn of a civilisation

In the poem 'A,a,a Domine Deus' David Jones warned that it was 'easy to miss Him / at the turn of a civilisation.' (Jones, 1995, p. 9) It was a line Jones wrote in 1938 when the feeling that civilisation was turning and irrevocably changing was inescapable. For his part Jones spent a lifetime trying to produce poetry that would identify God for his readers. On some level Jones was responding to the fragmentary nature of the period by creating art that created a unified whole out of those fragments. Jones' work was filled with a rich profusion of references to Welsh, English, French, Greek and Roman mythology, to the Bible and the Ordinary of the Mass. At the centre of these fragments from all ages was the figure of the Incarnate Word, giving unity and meaning and purpose to the modernist mélange of signs.

In his painting and in his poetry the focus was on unity; the pattern and the hard core. 'The ultimate problem…is to make a whole, a unity out of varying parts. That is all I try to do.' (Cited in Dilworth, 1988, p. 155) Jones wrote and published a number of major works but frequently included the word 'fragments' in the subtitle.[637] Jones saw all of his poems as fragments of 'a wide-ranging poem which he was never able to complete.' (Goldpaugh, 1994, p. 32) For Jones the unifying purpose of his poetry was so important that he hoped his work would be seen as 'an

[637] In the introduction to *In Parenthesis* he posits the desire to formulate a unity as being the focus of the book. 'I have only tried to make a shape in words, using as data the complex of sights, sounds, fears, hopes, apprehensions, smells, things exterior and interior, the landscape and paraphernalia of that singular time and of those particular men.' (Jones, 2003, p.x) In the preface to *The Anethmata* he wrote that 'Part of my task has been to allow myself to be directed by motifs gathered together from such sources as have by accident been available to me and to make a work out of those mixed data.' (Jones, 1972, p. 9)

aberration', which would mean that 'the cracks [he] perceived in the culture were illusory' in which case, he concluded, 'so much the better.' (Jones, 1959, p. 145)

Sir John Rothenstein, a British Art historian, argued that 'for David Jones it is the Eucharist that redeems the historical process…' (Cited in Blamires, 1978, p. 68) For that reason Eucharistic symbolism pervades all facets of his poetry and thereby unites them into that 'crazy economy' of salvation. In many ways it might be argued that Jones provided the artistic representation of the same historiography that united much of Christopher Dawson's work on the history of culture. Both Dawson and Jones presented man as being essentially religious; an anthropological vision that unites all the Catholic authors of this chapter. However they also present Judeo-Christian culture as something that both radically challenges and yet also enriches and develops other cultures.[638]

David Jones argued that '…the nature of man demands the sacramental. If he's denied the deep and the real, he'll fall for the trivial, even for the ersatz; but have it, he will.' (Jones, 1976, pp. 8-9) For Jones, then, the Sacramental nature of mankind was a constant theme of his poetry. More specifically, the Mass itself offered the structural frame which 'dominated all of his later poetry' after *In Parenthesis*. (Goldpaugh, 1994, p. 34) His most successful poem *The Anathemata* relies on the moment of consecration for its intellectual and cultural unity as well as for its climacteric.[639] Dilworth likened *The Anathemata* to Virgil's *Aeneid* and called the poem 'a search through the remote and distant past for the meaning and destiny of a people.' (Dilworth, 1988, p. 153) Like much of Dawson's work it is an examination and an expression 'of the mind of Europe.' (Dilworth, 1988, p. 156) The poem consists of eight fragments but begins with the consecration of the bread and ends with the consecration of the wine.

Here, in this high place
into both hands

[638] See for instance: Dawson, C. (1934). Prevision in Religion. *Sociological Review, 26* (1), 41-54. Later reproduced in *The Dynamics of World History*. Joseph Stuart summarised Dawson's historical perspective neatly when he wrote that for Dawson 'religion was central to the history of the world and to human development and that it had been the Christian religion that had played such a unique role in the development of European culture.' (Stuart, 2011, pp. 81-82)

[639] In a review he wrote over ten years after it was first published, Auden claimed that the only way the poem's complex sense of time and timelessness could be understood was if the reader 'will imagine, as he reads it, that he is sitting in a Roman Catholic church while Mass is being celebrated.' (Auden, 1963) This transforms the entire poem into an act of meditation at the moment of consecration.

he takes the stemmed dish
as in many places
by this poured and that held up
whatever their directing glosses read:
Here he takes the victim.
At the threshold-stone
lifts the agéd head?
can toothless beast from stable come
discern the Child
in the bread?
(Jones, 1972, pp. 242-243)

At the end Jones returns the whole discursive work, with its myriad if historical reflections, to the beginning by returning to the Mass. In doing so he revels in the logical and cultural coherence the Mass provides, the enchanted sense of the past as being in union with the present as well as of the closeness of God in the Sacrament. If we cast our minds back to the opening chapter we can see Jones' work as the most complete and detailed expression of what the interwar converts, particularly the Catholic converts, were seeking. The fragmentary effect of secularism finds a solution in the Mass. Evelyn Waugh and Graham Greene both embrace this same idea and its expression unites the overwhelming majority of their work.

At the end of his life Jones was still working on a poem entitled *The Kensington Mass*. He had begun it in 1940 and had re-written it in 1970 was still working on it when he died. The fact that he never abandoned the poem reveals his unchanging belief in the primacy of the Mass as the pinnacle of all cultural expression; it was Art par excellence and the key to the redemptive role of his own art. The poem, although unfinished reflects the same preoccupations that we find in *The Anathemata* and *The Sleeping Lord*. It is described as 'an affectionate recalling of J.O'C. Father James O'Connor was the priest who received him into the Church in 1921. The poem opens with the prayers at the foot of the altar. The priest ascends and begins the prayer of intercession on behalf of his people. For Jones the search for a ritual or a Sacrament capable of answering the prayer, 'take away from us our iniquities', was what transformed the ancient rites in his poetry into foreshadowings of the modern ones. It was that same prayer that linked

Greene's heroes or nameless saints. And it was the refusal to pray that prayer that linked the half-men in Waugh's fiction.

> clara voce dicit: OREMVS
>
> et ascendens ad altare
>
> dicit secreto: AVFER A NOBIS...
>
> and in lowly accents
>
> he says the rest
>
> should you be elbow-close him
>
> you may catch his
>
> soft-breathed-out
>
> PER CHRISTVM DOMINVM NOSTRVM[640]
>
> (Jones, 1975, p. 7)

The priest breathing out 'Through Christ our Lord' reflects his role in redeeming the times, a role in which the artist shared. For Jones all art was sacramental in the sense that it was a 're-presenting' of something outside of itself, a 'showing again under different forms'. An 'effective recalling' of something is, at the very least, intended in an artwork. (Jones, 1959, p. 155)[641] Citing Jones' essay, 'Art in Relation to War' Stephen McInerney explain that 'for Jones, a well-shaped artwork–whether a poem, painting, sculpture, or, most supremely, the Eucharist–whose 'parts...are united in one,' is a participation in the heavenly city. It is our sacramental, analogical access to that 'city'–'part of our redeemed destiny'...' (McInerney, 2011, p. 62) While Jones' poems and paintings were therefore sacramental of a kind, they were animated by the Church's sacraments.

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[640] The capitalised type are the beginning and end of the prayer: 'Let us Pray: Take away from us our iniquities, we entreat Thee, O Lord, that with pure minds we may worthily enter into the Holy of Holies. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.' (Prayers at the Foot of the Altar, 2010)

[641] In a profound example of Jones' mystical mind he used the birthday cake as an example of sacramental art. 'There is making, there is added making [generous outpouring of beauty and design' it is 'made over' with icing etc.] there is explicit sign. There is a showing forth, a re-presenting, a recalling and there is gratuitousness and there is full intention to make this making thus. Moreover this particular making signifies a birth. It recalls a past event and looks back at some anniversaries and looks forward to future anniversaries, it is essentially celebrative and festal: it would be gay... But this making, though joyful and celebrative of a birthday, recalls also, by implication, a day, or many days, of at least some degree of acute pain, perhaps of great anguish, and, perhaps, even death.' (Jones, 1959, p. 164)

As the 20th century wore on Jones was increasingly shocked by the poverty of vision that he encountered in society, a poverty whose genesis he located in the interwar period. He and his friends described this as 'the break' between dogma and sign. To cite the example he uses, water was now H_2O and it was difficult to use it to evoke founts (Jones, 1972, pp. 15-16)[642] For Jones the new symbols of modernity dealt in death or in violence as opposed to 'things that are lifted up, carried about, adored.'(Cited in McInerney, 2011) McInerney links Jones' focus on the Eucharist in his work and in his conception of himsel as an artist with Catherine Pickstock's seminal book, *After Writing: On the Liturgical Consummation of Philosophy*.[643] Where Jones united fragments into an harmonious and yet, crucially, mysterious whole, so, according to Pickstock and the Radical Orthodox movement, the Eucharist contains 'what the whole world cannot contain' in an Incarnational mystery and the reality of this unity empowers the unity that Jones himself sought to create in his work. (McInerney, 2011 p. 65) In essence, Jones can only shore up fragments against his ruin because the Eucharistic miracle has won a victory over precisely the same struggle. (McInerney, 2011, p. 77)[644]

Like Jones, Pickstock argues that the Eucharist is the solution to the waste land; an ideaas intensely celebrated in the post-modern era as it was mourned in the modernist era. '[W]hile conceding, with postmodernism, the indeterminacy of all our knowledge and experience of

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[642] Also cited by McInerney, 2011, p. 62.

[643] Catherine Pickstock was a student of John Milbank's and has been a key contributor to the Anglo-Catholic movement known as Radical Orthodoxy which critiques modernity from a theological perspective and demands that metaphysics, social theory, economics and politics can only be understood, be redeemed, by understanding them from a theological perspective. It might well be argued that the orthodoxy only gained its radical reputation in the post-modern era. Indeed, it could be said that Milbank, Pickstock, Graham Ward and the other contributors to *Radical Orthodoxy: A New Theology*, (London: Routledge, 1999) are really the latest generation of clerists to respond to the intellectual fragmentation created by a hyper-secularised world by calling for a return to orthodox Christianity. In that sense they are an intellectual echo of Catholic and Anglo-Catholic converts of the interwar period. Pickstock's book *After Writing: On the Liturgical Consummation of Philosophy* sees the absence of liturgy as the key element of secularism, a concrete manifestation of what Taylor called the distancing of God.

[644] McInerney sums up the relationship between Jones and Pickstock thus: ''Simon Brett has argued that "Jones' idea of art is related to a religion of brokenness...and yet while the artist must "beware the resolved," he must also be engaged in "the continuing struggle to achieve it,"" Pickstock has identified just such a struggle at the heart of the liturgy, specifically the medieval Roman Rite, which (in its Tridentine form) Jones took as his key model and source in *The Anathemata*. She refers to the "decentred ordering" of the rite, which "seems to mirror the decentred ordering of medieval society, for in that period there was no absolute centre of sovereignty on an immanent level," This "decentred ordering," difference-in-unity, is coupled with what she describes as the liturgical "stammer,"' the struggle of language to embody and make really present the divine, implicitly recognizing the paradoxical impossibility of what it achieves. And yet, although our task is "difficult," although it embodies a "crisis of articulation,"" "the aporia [the unsolvable contradiction] is resolved in the person of Christ, whose resurrection ensures that our difficult liturgy is not hopeless...'(2011, p. 77)

selfhood, [Radical Orthodoxy] construes this shifting flux as a sign of our dependency on a transcendent source which "gives" all reality as a mystery, rather than as adducing our suspension over the void.' (Pickstock, 1998, p. xii) The Eucharistic liturgy is the most perfect expression of that 'transcendent source'. In the Mass the distance between impoverished language and our 'shifting flux', expressed in the 'liturgucal stammer' and the transcendent "real" is revealed and understood and, paradoxically, 'genuine proximity with God' is enabled. (McInerney, 2011, p. 178) Pickstock expresses, admittedly in dense philosophical language, the ideas inherent within the literature produced by the interwar converts. Certainty is grounded in the Sacraments. That certainty emerges from the Eucharist and is what makes certain the sanctification of Mr. Crouchback and, in a sense, the brutally ravished landscape of Brideshead. This same certainty constantly attracts the frightened Vietnamese in Greene's *The Quiet American*. Greene uses the words of the consecration, '*Hoc est enim Corpus Meum*'[645] as markers of certainty. In *The Power and the Glory* they announce the presence of God and in *The Heart of the Matter* they announce, with equal certainty, the potential damnation of Scobie.

The Catholic writers wrote from the perspective of eternity and this perspective provided them with a perceptible coherence, a unity of thought, underpinned by a confidence in the certainty of the resurrection as an historical event and the sacraments as 'the reality' made present. This perspective posited the sacraments as the means of moving out of the Waste land and into the eternal 'region of light and void and space and silence...' ('Scoop.' In E. Waugh, 2003b, p. 239) Theirs was an enchanted view and yet, as A. J. P. Taylor cynically noted, that view seemed 'only...to increase their woe.' (1975, p. 180) The last portion of Jones' *Kensington Mass* seemed to suggest an explanation:

[645] In her analysis of these words entitled, 'Transubstantiation as the condition of possibility for all meaning', Pickstock writes, 'not only is language that which administers the Sacrament to us, but conversely, the Eucharist underlies all language, since in carrying the secrecy, uncertainty and discontinuity which characterise every sign to an extreme (no body appears in the bread), it also delivers a final disclosure, certainty, and continuity (the bread *is* the body) [my italics] which alone makes it possible now to trust every sign.' Theologically speaking, the language is also consecrated in the Mass, making it possible to confidently use all signs when making meaning because we are in the presence of the concrete sign the bread *is* the Body and Blood of Christ, it is the sign *par excellence* from which all signs gain their analogues power. She continues, 'In consequence we are no longer uncertainly distanced from 'the original event' by language, but rather, we are *concelebrants of that event* in every word we speak (the event as transcendental category, whose transcendentality is now revealed to be the giving of the Body and Blood of Christ). The words of Consecration "This is my Body" therefore, far from being problematic in their meaning, *are the words which certainly have meaning, and lend this meaning to all other words*.' (Pickstock, 1998, pp. 262-263)

> Down the meander and crooked labyrinth of time and maze of
> history, or historia intermeddled with potent and light giving,
> life-giving, cult-making mythos
> we hear as yet that third crow
> dawn crow of dolour
> as clear as we hear
> the echoing blast
> from Roncesvalles
> and with it, of necessity
> the straight, exact, rational and true
> 'Sirs, you are set for sorrow'.
> (Jones, 1975, p. 12)

In this poem the Mass is clearly linked with the deep past as well as with the specific sufferings of Christ, as suggested by the third crow, and the heroic death of Roland at Roncesvalles. For the converts, linked to the enchanted sense of time and the closeness of God, in Christ Jesus, is the perception that the battle against the waste land is never over. The fantasies of the Catholic writer J.R.R. Tolkein, begun in the interwar period, and those of the Anglo-Catholic convert, C. S. Lewis, begun in the wake of the Second World War, both represent that same struggle on an epic scale. The converts were aware of that struggle both on a personal and a cosmic level. In many ways the discovery of the pattern and the hard core made it impossible to pretend that the struggle did not exist. They believed, however, that through the sacraments victory was assured. Like the Horn of Roland the king was summoned, but in the sacraments as opposed to the Pyrenean heights, death itself was defeated. As we shall see in the conclusion, this sense of certain victory is clearly reflected in the relative longevity of the Catholic conversions.

Conclusion

They hatch Utopias from their dusty brains
Which are but Hells, where endless boredom reigns –
Middle-class Hells, built on a cheap, clean plan,
Edens of abnegation, dread to scan.
Founded upon a universal ban:
For banned from thence is all that fires or thrills…

Roy Campbell, *The Georgiad* (1931)

Out of the air a voice without a face
Proved by statistics that some cause was just
In tones as dry and level as the place:
No one was cheered and nothing was discussed;
Column by column in a cloud of dust
They marched away enduring a belief
Whose logic brought them, somewhere else, to grief.

W. H. Auden, 'The Shield of Achilles' (1953)

After the war, when I was being entertained by a group of Cambridge undergraduates, one of them, obviously speaking for them all, said, "Tell us about the Thirties." I asked him why he and his friends were so interested in this troublous period. "Because," he replied, "it seems to be the last time that anyone believed in anything."

C. Day Lewis, *The Buried Day* (1960)

Seeking a Good Death

Jacques Derrida, the father of Deconstruction, once wrote that 'the constancy of God in my life is called by other names…' (Cited in Caputo, 1997, p. 288) In that one phrase Derrida neatly captures the idea of a secular religion. He concluded by saying that because of those 'other names... I quite rightly pass for an atheist.' John D. Caputo, an American philosopher, has written a fascinating study of Derrida's complex and somewhat counterintuitive attitudes to religion. Caputo[646] argued that deconstruction might well pass for a religion in its own right. 'What if…giving religion a deconstructive bent turns itself around and deconstruction turns out to have a religious, a biblical, and prophetic bent, so that deconstruction is driven by a prophetic passion, having entered into an alliance with the impossible?' (1997, p. 114) In an interview Caputo conducted with Derrida before the latter was diagnosed with cancer, Derrida expounded on his own religious confusion. 'When I pray, if I say "God," if I address God, I don't know if I am using or mentioning the word "God."' For Derrida 'naming the nameless' was such an uncertain act that he felt the believer and atheist were connected. 'That's why being a believer, even a mystic believer, and being an atheist is not necessarily a different state of affairs. I know that the most authentic believers know that they are very close to pure atheism because they know that in using the word "God" they may be merely mentioning it.' (Caputo, Sherwood, & Hart, 2005, pp. 37-38)

There are three main reasons to discuss Derrida in this conclusion. The first is that Derrida shows the extent to which the clerists' religious questing might be said to have changed. In the interwar or modernist period the converts were far more likely to convert to an established religion, whether secular or traditional. In the post-modern era the fragmentation that drove many into the Catholic or Communist camps has become post-modern hyperpluralism, a state in which, many have simply constructed their own religion. These religions are often as nebulous as Derrida's religion without religion. 'Derrida has a religion, a certain religion, his religion, and he speaks of

[646] Caputo is an exponent of 'Weak Theology', a movement that is almost the complete opposite of Radical Orthodoxy. Where Radical Orthodoxy suggests that Sacramental Christianity provides a bedrock in which mystery and meaning combine and make sense of fragmented post-modernity, Weak Theology is essentially a Deist movement that positions God as an undeconstructible. However Caputo rejects Tillich whom we discussed in the first chapter. According to Caputo, even the identification of God as 'ultimate concern' would 'turn the gold of ultimacy into the lead of something proximate, thereby locking the event inside a name and confining the conditional to something conditioned.' (Caputo, 2006, ft.24, p. 240)

God all the time. The point of view of Derrida's work as an author is religious – but without religion and without religion's God – and no one understands a thing about this alliance.' (Caputo, 1997, p.xviii) Where the modernists escaped the fragmentation by finding the hard core, post-modernists seem content to embrace the fragmentation.

The second reason for including Derrida is that he reveals that the clerisy are often still intensely religious. The religous questing among intellectuals might have become increasingly subjective but it is still a primary concern. Thus, one of the most significant of continental philosophers finds himself forming a religion, even in his rejection of religion.

The third reason that I cite Derrida is that at the end of his life he gave an interview to the French daily, *Le Monde* in which he discussed his mortality and the inability of philosophy, of his religion, to prepare him for death.

> 'I never learned-to-live. Absolutely not! Learning to live ought to mean learning to die - to acknowledge, to accept, an absolute mortality - without positive outcome, or resurrection, or redemption, for oneself or for anyone else. That has been the old philosophical injunction since Plato: to be a philosopher is to learn how to die. I believe in this truth without giving myself over to it. Less and less in fact. I have not learned to accept death.' (Derrida, 2004)

While Caputo has argued convincingly that deconstruction might be considered a secular religion, it is telling that in contemplating his death, Derrida didn't mention it as a source of consolation so much as a difficulty.[647] Religion has always been a key consideration in any thanatological[648] discussion. What is interesting is the way that secular religions are often unable to offer consolation during the process of dying. At the end of his life Leonard Woolf, a Fabian and a member of the Labour party, with a long life of political activism to his credit, wrote of his sense of futility.

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[647] Derrida explained that deconstruction is always on the side of life, as opposed to death. 'Survival is life beyond life, life more than life, and the discourse I undertake is not death-oriented, just the opposite, it is the affirmation of someone living who prefers living, and therefore survival, to death; because survival is not simply what remains, it is the most intense life possible.' (Derrida, 2004) However, as the previous quote suggests, this doesn't make death easy.

[648] The multifaceted, scientific study of death.

> ‘Looking back at the age of eighty-eight over the fifty seven years of my political work in England, knowing what I aimed at and the results, meditating on the history of Britain and the world since 1914, I see clearly that I have achieved practically nothing. The world today and the history of the human anthill during the last fifty-seven years would be exactly the same as it is if I had played ping pong instead of sitting on committees and writing books and memoranda. I have therefore to make the rather ignominious confession…that I must have in a long life ground through between 150,000 and 200,000 hours of perfectly useless work…’ (1969, p. 158)

Woolf was, by no means, alone. Disillusion was a common feature in the lives of the converts that have comprised this study. In response to Aruthur Koestler’s loss of faith in Communism, Orwell identified the central problem as a type of acedia rather than anomie.[649] Orwell thought that Koestler still believed in an immanentist salvation but had lost his faith in Communism as a vehicle for that salvation. The result was ‘the quasi-mystical belief that for the present there is no remedy, all political action is useless, but that somewhere in space and time human life will cease to be the miserable brutish thing it now is.’ (‘Arthur Koestler.’ Sonia Orwell, & Ian Angus (Eds.), 2000a, p. 277) For Orwell, Koestler’s despair in political activity was misplaced but, at the same time, he was not sure of the alternative. ‘The real problem is how to restore the religious attitude while accepting death as final.’(Orwell 2000a, p. 278) This has been a problem that few political or secular religions have managed to solve. After the work, what is there? Those killed in action like Cornford and Fox or still working for the KGB like Philby seem to face death with some equanimity. But once the work stops disillusion sets in. This goes some way to explaining the movement away from Communism among many of the converts in later life and the relative stability of Catholic conversions from the same generation.

The Muddled Hearts

In an unpublished story, Christopher Caudwell once gave vent to his irritation with his comrades from the upper-classes. ‘The workers distrust your sort, deboshed intellectuals trying to save your souls! If you really want to do propaganda, go back to your Mayfair drawing room and carry on with your old life.’ (Cited in Hopkins, 1998, p. 44) In light of how many took his advice

[649] For a discussion of the two terms see chapter one.

and left the party over the next twenty years, this line can only be read with a mild sense of irony. Caudwell, like John Cornford[650] and Ralph Fox, was spared the need to ever assimilate into their his the Non-Aggression pact of 1939, the Soviet invasion of Hungary in 1956 or Prague in 1968. But for the survivors of Spain these events were catastrophic. As Wilf Page, a British farmer and a staunch Communist even while Communism fell, admitted 'When Russian tanks rolled into Prague the whole underlying [Soviet] system was seen to be full of contradictions.'[651] (Beckett, 1995, p. 5) These contradictions, which for other members emerged during earlier crises, devastated membership. By the end of 1956 'over seven thousand members – a fifth of the entire membership – had left the [British] Communist Party, including Geraldine [Swingler], Gabriel [Carritt], John Sommerfield, Edgell Rickword, James Gibb, Christian Darnton and Bernard Stevens.' (Croft, 2003, p. 231) And yet, even before these particular events 'misgivings were beginning to accumulate' among the membership. (Morgan, Cohen, & Flinn, 2007, p. 19) Randell Swingler was drinking heavily by the late 1940s, unable to 'recapture the comradeship and sense of mission of the anti-Fascist years.' (Morgan, Cohen, & Flinn, 2007, p. 20) It still took the 'trigger' of 1956 to force a resignation. Disillusion seemed inevitable for the overwhelming majority of intellectuals in the Party.

As mentioned in chapter eight, many returned from the war in Spain disillusioned by politics of any kind. Esmond Romilly, the schoolboy rebel returned from the war in Spain and was soon living in America with his wife, Jessica Mitford. After a string of jobs they eventually settled in Florida and ran a bar. Rather pointedly in the opening months of World War Two, Romilly put a sign above the bar 'Talk Neutral!' and told his friend, Philip Toynbee that 'he had only one object now, which was to please and sell drinks to his customers.' (Toynbee, 1954, p. 159) Romilly's intellectual transformation was such that when he was in the Royal Airforce in Canada and the chaplain had organised some debates on Communism and Christianity, 'Esmond found

[650] Even in the mid-seventies Cornford was still being described as embodiying 'the spirit of 'all advanced and progressive mankind.'' (Cornford, 1986, p. 11)

[651] Page was speaking in 1991 at the very last meeting of the Communist Party of Great Britain in November of that year before it was re-branded the Democratic Left. Page told Francis Beckett that he knew 'too many old Comrades clinging like hell to what they loved [it was hard] to give your life to something and find out you have been wrong.' (Beckett, 1995, p. 5) An example of such defiant adherence comes in the form of the old Etonian and Cantabridgian biologist, John Maynard Smith, who remained in the party 'for old times sake' but was entirely passive. (Morgan, Cohen, & Flinn, 2007, p. 20)

that he had quite forgotton the answers to this particular opponent, [namely Christianity].' (Toynbee, 1954, p. 167)

Giles Romilly also endured a rapidly changing attitude to the Church. By 1949 he was attending High Mass in the village of Morata de Tajuña, just outside of Madrid and wondering how 'Morata had ever been a powder-box of international emotions or had ever known clashes more brutal than those of a donkey-cart and a Van?' (Buchanan, 2007, p. 158) Confronted by the 'peaceful tranquility' of village life, Romilly began to doubt the claims of the war that had seemed so immediate, so pressing. Just over a decade later, the war seemed like a quickly forgotton flame and Romilly felt something close to admiration for Spain and its ability to outlast 'droughts and wars.' This was embodied in the local Priest who tended to his 'parishioners of proved blood thirstiness' and even in Franco, 'driving through the sullen Madrid crowds in an open-top car.' (Buchanan, 2007, pp. 158-159)[652]

The sense of disillusion with a secular religion like Communism has been discussed in a number of studies but what is often ignored is the number of interwar Communists who sought and even found traditional religion.[653] In his brief memoir Philip Toynbee admitted 'Meanwhile, and indeed for the whole of my adult life, I had been searching for some kind of religious faith and had slowly discovered that I was now in a position where, as I write in 1966, it would be a little less misleading to say that I believed in God than to say that I did not.' (Toynbee, 1976, p. 162) By the eighties he had published a number of books about his slowly evolving religious convictions, culminating in *Towards the Holy Spirit: A Tract for the Times* written in 1982. It was written for the spiritually backward who, like him, were still searching. Toynbee began as a political writer and ended as a spiritual writer for those who were unable to accept atheism.

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[652] Romilly was obviously traumatized by his experiences both in Spain and later as a prisoner in Colditz. He sought treatment and was prescribed barbiturates. According to Jessica Mitford he was soon 'hopelessly addicted.' (Brody, 2010, p. 203) He was found dead in a Californian hotel room from a drug overdose in 1967.

[653] The former editor of England's *Daily Worker* Douglas Hyde was a very famous convert to Catholicism from Communism. His counterpart in the United States Louis Budenz also joined the Catholic Church. Both men were accompanied into the Church their wives. Louis and Margaret Budenz converted in 1945 under the influence of Archbishop (then Monsignor) Fulton Sheen. Later that same year, under the influence of the same prelate, the American spy Elizabeth Bentley abandoned Communism for the Catholic Church. Margret and Louis Budenz were her sponsors. Douglas Hyde converted in 1949, although he was reported to have died an atheis. It is also worthwhile mentioning that the convicted British spy John Vassall converted to Catholicism in 1953 but his conversion preceded his actual spying.

Other conversion movements were much simpler. J. B. S. Haldane left the Party over the Lysenko affair and ended up teaching in India where he became fascinated by Hinduism. (Clark, 1968, p. 207) Later he lived in Bhubaneswar in the Indian state of *Orissa*.[654] Haldane was surrounded by numerous temples and shrines. 'In a curious yet purely fortuitous way, Bhubaneswar seems to have offered Haldane more of the things he wanted than any place he had ever known. (Clark, 1968, p. 245) Even more unpredicatble than Haldane's flirtation with Hinduism was the story of Anton Miles. He served with the 15th International Brigade Medical Services in Spain. After the war he left the Party and travelled to India to train as a Sandhu or holy man. He later entered a Buddhist monastery in Bhutan and later still, in 1959, was initiated into a coven of witches in Bricket Wood. (Baxell, 2012, p. 455)

Of the Auden Group all left the Party, with only Upward remaining faithful to his Communist faith. Christopher Isherwood abandoned his flirtation with Communism because of its attitude to homosexuality. He was soon ensconced in California and involved in the Vedantist movement. He found himself increasingly angered by traditional religion because he was 'afraid that he would be forced to accept it, at least after nearly fifteen years of Atheism.' (Isherwood, 2012, p. 316) Coming under the influence of Gerald Heard and, through him, Swami Prabhavananda, Isherwood was soon a disciple and a convert to Hinduism. Indeed, from February 1943 to August 1945 he lived in a Hindu monastery and contemplated taking vows as a monk. He even attempted to live a celibate life. (Isherwood, 1998, p. 983)[655] Despite not becoming a monk, he produced a number of books with the Swami, as well as a number of his own books on meditation, yoga and other Vedantist topics. As with Toynbee, Isherwood's career saw him eventually become well known as a religious writer. Isherwood's religious convictions were expressed in his diary. An entry from December 1952 gives an insight into his spiritual sincerity. 'What can I say to anybody about Vedanta that's the least impressive, as long as I am what I am.' (Isherwood, 1998, p. 452)[656] This was the commitment that he couldn't feel for Communism, a commitment found at last in religion.

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[654] More recently returned to its Indian name, Odisha.

[655] According to Katherine Bucknell, having fallen in love with Bill Harris, Isherwood decided that he could not become a monk and take vows of poverty and chastity. (Isherwood, 1998, p.xx)

[656] Day-Lewis initially left the party on a mystical prompting. He was speaking in the Queen's Hall, 'it was in a good cause, and I could approve every word' but as he sat down to loud applause, 'I distinctly heard above the

The most famous convert among the Auden group was Auden himself. In 1933 Auden had written a poem entitled 'A Happy New Year' which he dedicated to Gerald Heard. The first part of the poem details a range of conversion movements coming together in a chaotic meeting:

So much stammering over easy words
So much laughter spasmodic and queer
So much speech that resembled a bird's
So much drawling concealing a fear
So much effort to sound sincere
So much talk which was aimed at the floor
Was never heard in one place before.
(Roberts, 1933, p. 199)

This poem doesn't feature Auden's belief so much as his skepticism of all proselytizers like Mosley, Major Douglas and even, at one point, Fr D'Arcy whom he describes as 'building a sanctum for birds.' (Roberts, 1933, p. 201) In particular, Auden was clearly suspicious of popular movements as an expression of power over the deluded.

The Ranks got unruly and yelled "Let's be free!"
Some, pulling up saplings were thrashing their wives
"I can fly," cried one and fell off a tree.
"Comrades," another, "Draw your knives."
The secret police had the time of their lives

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applause a small voice saying three or four times inside my head, 'it won't do. It just won't do.'' (Day Lewis, 1960, p. 223) Soon after he distanced himself from the Party to pursue his poetry. While some of his poetry has been read as evidence of religious questing there was no evidence for such belief in his autobiographical writing. Interestingly, Stephen Spender's religious opinions following his rapid disillusion with the party were similar to those advocated by Caputo's Weak Theology. In an essay for the London Review of Books, published in October 1989 he wrote, 'When asked the question 'What do you believe?' I suppose it to mean, first and foremost, 'Do you believe in God?' My mind is a blank with regard to this, as to similar questions. 'Do you believe in life after death?' 'Do you believe that life has any meaning other than that which we put into it?' I am incapable of thinking that there is an eternal being whose existence has neither beginning nor end, because I cannot *think* a beginning which has no previous beginning, an end which has no subsequent end.' (Spender, 1989) He admitted that Marxism had provided a post-Christian religion but that it was dying. 'In the 20th century, it is Marxism which has come nearest to establishing pseudo-science as a religion. Now, at the end of this century – this millennium – we seem to be witnessing the collapse of the god who – given the wars and the breakdown of the empires of capitalism – seemed set to conquer the world.' (Spender, 1989) Spender declared his faith to be the faith of Proust, which was essentially a religion of intellectuals. 'All we can say is that everything is arranged in this life as though we entered it carrying a burden of obligations contracted in a former life...

Herding hundreds to a long black van
They drove them off to the Government San.
(Roberts, 1933, p. 203)

What makes the poem so remarkable is Auden's aloofness from the myriad of competing conversion destinations and yet, by the end of the decade, having quickly abandoned his flirtation with Communism, Auden wrote his long poem *New Year Letter*. This poem features a range of Christian writers, most notably Augustine as well as Athanasius, Dante, Pascal, Kierkegaard and Neibuhr and was composed as he was returning to Christianity. (Kirsch, 2008, p. 34) The new poem contains the same skepticism about the conversion movements but this time they are seen as parodies of Christianity.

Day breaks upon the world we know
Of war and wastefulness and woe;
Ashamed civillians come to grief
In brotherhoods without belief,
Whose good intentions cannot cure
The actual evils they endure,
Nor smooth their practical career,
Nor bring the far horizon near.
(Auden, 1991, p. 240)

However skepticism in the powerlessness of secular religion had been tempered by hope. At the beginning of the poem Auden wrote that the purpose of art was 'to set in order – that's the task' (Auden, 1991, p. 200) In the Christian vision, like so many of the Catholic converts, he had found that order, that pattern and hard core. Auden concludes the poem with a description of Christ, the source of an enchanted unity that had eluded him in his previous conversion attempts.

O sudden Wind that blows unbidden,
Parting the quiet reeds, O Voice
Within the labyrinth of choice
Only the passive listener hears,
O Clock and Keeper of the years,

O Source of equity and rest
Quando non fuerit, non est,[657]
It without image, paradigm
Of matter, motion, number, time,
The grinning gap of Hell, the hill
Of Venus and the stairs of Will,
Disturb our negligence and chill,
Convict our pride of its offence
In all things, even penitence,
Instruct us in the civil art
Of making from the muddled heart
A desert and a city where
The thoughts that have to labour there
May find locality and peace,
And pent-up feelings their release,
Send strength sufficient for our day,
And point our knowledge on its way,
O da quod jubes, Domine.[658]
(Auden, 1991, p. 242)

Auden's return to Christian belief is characterized by a mystical sense of the unity provided by the Trinitarian God, and the peace contained in the Christian life. What is particularly interesting is the harmonious integration of the desert and the city where the individual finds both locality and peace after the intellectual confusion that had been an obvious feature of the previous decade. Within even this single quote we find many of the tropes that we found in the novels of Greene and Waugh and the poetry of Jones. The pursuing God who parts the quiet reeds, the transcendent God who exists outside of time while also being the keeper of time and the direct connection between recognizing the transcendent God and the need to live the Christian life by pursuing personal perfection. Christopher Isherwood wrote in his diary, 'Marxism also said, "I'll

[657] There is not when he was not – Origen.
[658] Grant me to do what Thou commandest, O my Lord, and command what Thou wilt – St. Augustine.

kill the Ego" – but it didn't – even in the noblest of my revolutionary friends. So I despaired and started to pretend that the Ego didn't exist.' (Isherwood, 1998, p. 48) Auden uses the word pride but essentially he, like Isherwood, was seeking a religion that would transform him rather than transform the world; a religion of individuals where quantitative judgments did not apply.

Making One's Soul

As many of the intellectuals were left 'uncertain and afraid/ As the clever hopes expire / Of a low dishonest decade' the Catholic converts by contrast seemed to enjoy a sense of intellectual stability. ('September 1, 1939.' In Auden W. H., 1940, p. 112**)** Evelyn Waugh, denied Cornford's relatively easy and glorious exit, saw the alternative as much more difficult. As he wrote in early 1962, 'for few of us the hero's and martyr's privilege of a few clear days ending on a scaffold; instead an attenuated and bemused drifting into eternity.' ('Sloth.' In E. Waugh, 1983, p. 576) Following the Second World War many of Waugh's earlier crises reappeared; financial troubles, isolation and depression. Added to these were the manifold infirmities of old-age. Perhaps the bitterest experience was his growing sense of marginalisation. The rejection of *Helena* by the critics and public alike was probably his greatest disappointment; largely because he saw it as the most complete expression of his vocation. (Hastings, 1994, p. 541) In 1962 Waugh suffered two consecutive losses which completed his depression. Firstly his beloved daughter, Meg married and, not long after, the opening session of the Second Vatican Council came to an end replete with rumours of drastic liturgical change. Waugh never really got over the loss of 'the craftsman-priest' and the silent congregation, who 'cared more that God heard them than that they heard each other.' ('Contra Mundum.' In E. Waugh, 1983, p. 628)

Yet for all the misery of his final years, Waugh's conversion had made a difference. In youth he had been overwhelmed by a sense of failure and attempted suicide. In old age he was more like Gilbert Pinfold in his final novel, 'He knew, and the others did not know... that he had endured a great ordeal and, unaided, had emerged the victor.' ('The Ordeal of Gilbert Pinfold.' In E. Waugh, 2003b, p. 621) Waugh understood the trials of his old age to be a form of spiritual battle and the perseverance of the individual meant that 'there [was] a triumph to be celebrated' ('The Ordeal of Gilbert Pinfold.' In E. Waugh, 2003b, p. 620) Consequently Waugh writes of Pinfold as a hero. 'Mr. Pinfold was content to sit over the fire and, like a warrior returned from a hard fought victory, relive his trials, endurances and achievements.' ('The Ordeal of Gilbert Pinfold.'

In E. Waugh, 2003b, p.620) The sufferings of Waugh's youth had inspired despair but the sufferings of his old-age were prized as essentially salvific. 'It is in that last undesired decade, when passion is cold, appetites feeble, curiosity dulled and experience has begotten cynicism, that *accidia* lies in wait as the final temptation to destruction. This is the time which is given a man to 'make his soul'.' ('Sloth.' In E. Waugh, 1983, p. 576) For Waugh, and for the majority of the Catholic converts, disillusion, far from being a source of despair and lost faith, was often seen as a source of salvific hope.

However the life of the interwar converts to Catholicism still included a powerful sense of disillusion. Many had joined the Church because it was seen as both enchanted and unchanging. The Second Vatican Council seemed to attack the very things they had prized in their new religion. Of the Council's reforms, the most visible were the changes to the liturgy and it was these that caused the most heartache. Graham Greene thought that the changes had yielded 'a diminishment of the supreme power, aura and aesthetic beauty that the liturgy had traditionally played in the imagination of Catholics.' (Bosco, 2005, p. 93) His distaste for the vernacular liturgy remained with him until his death in 1991. His friend, Father Leopoldo Duran, would generally say Mass for him in Latin. For the last ten years of his life, according to Duran, Greene received all the sacraments with the normal frequency. But he was 'distinctly traditional' and was particularly distressed by the removal of the Gospel passage Jn 1:1-14, which was recited at the conclsuion of the Mass. (Duran, 1994, p. 100)

In a letter to Rene Hague, David Jones echoed Greene's fears regarding the liturgical changes. Indeed, Jones went even further linking them to the same sense of civilisational ruin from which many of the converts sought to escape when they first joined the Church.

> Our church leaders are have even more reason to guard that heritage – for it is saturated with the sacral. It's not a matter of knowledge but of love. It's a terrible thought that the language of the West, of the Western liturgy, and inevitably the Roman chant, might become virtually extinct.
>
> ...At root, I don't believe it's a 'religious' matter at all. I believe it's only part of the Decline of the West. Perhaps I'm talking balls, I don't know. (Hague, 2008, p. 209)

As mentioned earlier, Evelyn Waugh also struggled with the proposed changes. He wrote a letter to Cardinal Heenan[659] on behalf of a large group of concerned Catholics, about half of whom he conjectured were converts. On their behalf he asked, 'why were we led out of the church of our childhood to find the church of our adoption assuming the very forms we disliked?' (Reid, 2011, p. 60) When Waugh began to attend the new Mass he wrote to Heenan again, 'Apart from the distress at finding our spiritual habits disordered...my friends and I are totally at a loss to understand the new form of the Mass.' (Reid, 2011, p. 69) He concluded that same letter:

> 'Every attendance at Mass leaves me without comfort or edification. I shall never, pray God, apostatize but church-going is now a bitter trial. Presumably in Low Week you and your fellow bishops will discuss the effects of the "experiments". Please tell them how much distress they cause and please pray for my perseverance.' (Reid, 2011, p. 69)

Waugh's intense privacy precludes any detailed discussion of his spiritual life but the testimony of his loyalty in the face of obvious acedia speaks volumes about the lasting power of his conversion. In his final diary entry, written at Easter in 1965, over a year after his letter to Cardinal Heenan, he was clearly still struggling with disillusion, 'pray God I will never apostatize but I can only now go to church as an act of duty and obedience.' (Davie, 2009, p. 832) He died on Easter Sunday, the following year, after attending Mass with his family, 'radiating good humour.' (Stannard, 1994, p. 490)

Modern Converts

Charles Taylor predicted that a secularised society with a 'heavy concentration of the atmosphere of immanence will intensify a sense of living in a "waste land" for subsequent generations, and many young people will begin to explore the boundaries.' (2007, p. 770) This thesis is really an exploration of that phenomenon as it was experienced by a select portion of the interwar converts. These were the intellectuals who were able to transcend the experience of fragmentation and seek out a mystical religion, founded on a 'hard-core' that was capable of re-enchanting their everyday lives.

[659] Archbishop of Westminster, he received his red hat not long after his correspondence with Waugh.

The interwar converts among the clerisy were a group that has rarely been studied as a group and yet they are united by some very obvious and important commonalities. They were mostly male and middle class. Their early boyhood was spent in the gloom of World War One. They attended some of the most prestigious public schools in England and in that Christian environment most lost their faith in Christianity. Some, it is true, went through an intensification of their faith but all found that the religion of their childhood was challenged and few found the intellectual support needed to maintain belief. The instability that marked the interwar period was, in them, first manifested in an iconoclastic rebelliousness that particularly targeted school traditions in general and the OTC in particular. Emerging into the universities they encountered an environment of intellectual fermentation and were quickly introduced to a plethora of conversion destinations. Some converted immediately, under the intellectual influence of priests or political activists. Almost all were confronted with a hydra of personal and national crises. It was impossible to hide from these national crises that have long since defined the popular perception of the period. It was at university that the converts often first confronted the crises and it was also at university that the Communist party tended to attract the majority of its converts. The Catholic converts tended to respond to personal crises; an important distinction.

Whenever the converts wrote or discussed their conversions, or wrote about their new faith, there tended to be a clear contrast between a chaotic waste land (surely the image of the period) and a place of order, solidity, harmony and re-birth. Their conversions also provided them with a sense of mysticism, a re-enchanted landscape. Much of the literature created by both the Communist and the Catholic converts stressed some kind of mystical apprehension. Their conversions also provided them with a sense of vocation. No longer were they simply teachers or writers; they were Catholic writers and Communist activists. The Communists were frequently moved to fight for the cause or even spy for the cause, both choices revealing the depth of their commitment. The Catholics trended to produce literature that reflected their new beliefs. It was an enchanted literature that provided an alternative anthropological vision in an increasingly secularized milieu.

The openness of their quest for religious convictions of some kind and their preparedness to join Churches that were widely viewed as foreign and suspiciously dogmatic, and the ability of those conversions to shape their vocation was a phenomenon that seems to separate the modernist

period from the post modern period, particularly among the clerisy. Patrick Allitt wrote in his book *Catholic Converts: British and American Intellectuals Turn to Rome* that the conversion movement was, in a crucial sense, a failure.

> But the general trend bore the range of intellectually respectable ideas steadily away from religion in general and Catholicism in particular. This trend, often labeled "secularization," appeared for decades to be unstoppable, so that many convert intellectuals, far from reversing its momentum, found their own views gradually moving outside the realm of what other intellectuals considered plausible. The consequence was marginalization, and convert intellectuals in general lost influence with the passing decades, so that none in the twentieth century could have an effect on his or her non-Catholic contemporaries to match that of Newman and Brownson in the mid-nineteenth. Certain writers, such as Chesterton or Christopher Dawson, could still find admirers, but neither created a major school of thought, and non-Catholic admirers saw their religion as a colourful aberration rather than a central element in their work. In that sense this book is the history of a momentous and protracted failure. (1997, pp. 15-16)

Allitt is absolutely right, of course, the conversion movement among Catholic intellectuals did fail to arrest the progress of secularization. But in many ways, that is not what Catholic conversion is for. As Waugh insisted in his trilogy, quantitative judgments do not apply. Conversion is for the individual. Thus, it is perhaps more telling to see that the conversion movement might have slowed but it has certainly continued. Notable conversions among English intellectuals following the interwar period include the historians Donald Nicholl and Joseph Pearce, the philosophers Sir Michael Dummett and Alasdair MacIntyre, the economist E. F. Schumacher, a number of politicians such as Tony Blair and Anne Widdecombe and the Duchess of Kent. There have also been numerous writers. These include Berryl Bainbridge, Rumer Godden, Malcolm Muggeridge, Edith Sitwell, Muriel Spark, Alice Thomas Ellis, Meriol Trevor, Mary Wesley, Antonia White and, more recently, the poet Sally Read. Added to this have been

the remarkable number of conversions among Anglican bishops, these includeJohn Broadhurst, Andrew Burnham, Edwin Barnes, Graham Leonard, Paul Richardson and Keith Newton.[660]

It could also be argued that while Communism has disappeared as a serious political religion, the environmental movement has provided a comparable alternative. Indeed, when the British Communist Party reopened as the Democratic Left its new symbol included three figures holding hands, one red for socialism, one purple for women's rights and one green for the environment. (Beckett, 1995, p. 6) Even before then there had been a conscious and very fluid exchange of ideas between Marxists and environmentalists and this alignment later manifested itself in political coalitions, such as the red-green coalitions that formed government in a number of European countries from the 1990s onwards. Perhaps more telling than these coalitions has been the coalescence of Marxism and Environmentalism into a stand-alone political movement. As one writer summed it up, 'two incontestable, massive, irreversible facts which are shaping the history of our planet as this century comes to a close – the collapse of so-called Communist regimes and the explosion of environmental awareness.' These two movements are both 'the substantive links between the two great traditions of anti-capitalist critique: the old one and the new one, socialism and ecologism.' (Van Parijs, 1993, p. 233)

Moreover, the environmental movement has, for a long time, possessed a clear religious element. Mark Stoll argued in his essay 'The Quest for Green Religion' that the quest to resacralize nature as a means of countering the effects of disenchantment has grown rapidly since the sixties. (2012, p. 265) 'Indeed, the spiritualization of environmentalism, the rise of "deep ecology" in the 1980s with its preference for "ecocentrism" above "anthropocentrism," and the nearly religious veneration of the "gospels" of Thoreau, Muir, Leopold, and Carson have given some observers good cause to characterize environmentalism as either a quasi religion or, in essence, a true religion.' (Stoll, 2012, p. 271) Recent studies show that this movement has suffered through the same rhythms of activism and disillusion with growing numbers of young people becoming sceptical about the problem. (British Broadcasting Corporation, 2010) In the postmodern era

[660] The Catholic Church in England and Wales has continued to attract converts but it has never reached the heights of the interwar period where it averaged 12,000 per year. This figure peaked in 1959, rising to just shy of 15,000 for that year. In 1971 the figure dropped to below 6,000. Between 2001 and 2009 the church attracted around 4,500 converts per year. 2004 was the leanest year, with the number going below 4,000 for the first time. However in 2008 and 2009 the number rose to a shade under 6,000. (The Latin Mass Society, 2013)

secular and traditional religions still command the attention of young intellectuals just as they did in the interwar period. It seems abundantly clear that ultimately the conversion impulse is irrepressible among intellectuals in the secular era.

Appendix A

Author	Date first published	Title	First Publisher
Chesterton, G. K.	1908	*Orthodoxy*	London: Hodder & Stoughton
Chesterton, G. K	1925	*The Everlasting Man*	London: Hodder & Stoughton
Chesterton, G. K	1926	*The Catholic Church and Conversion*	London: Hodder & Stoughton
Chesterton, G. K	1936	*Autobiography*	London: Hodder & Stoughton

Greene, G.	1932	*Stamboul Train*	London: William Heinemann
Ed. Greene, G.	1934	*The Old School: Essays by Divers Hands*	London: Jonathan Cape
Greene, G.	1936	*Journey Without Maps*	London: William Heinemann
Greene, G.	1938	*Brighton Rock*	London: William Heinemann
Greene, G.	1939	*The Lawless Roads*	London: William Heinemann
Greene, G.	1940	*The Power and the Glory*	London: William Heinemann
Greene, G.	1948	*The Heart of the Matter*	London: William Heinemann

Greene, G.	1949	*The Third Man and the Fallen Idol*	London: William Heinemann
Greene, G.	1951	*The End of the Affair*	London: William Heinemann
Greene, G.	1955	*The Quiet American*	London: William Heinemann
Greene, G.	1958	*Our Man in Havana*	London: William Heinemann
Greene, G.	1960	*A Burnt Out Case*	London: William Heinemann
Greene, G.	1966	*The Comedians*	London: The Bodley Head
Greene, G.	1969	*Travels with my Aunt*	London: The Bodley Head
Greene, G.	1971	*A Sort of Life*	London: The Bodley Head
Greene, G.	1973	*The Honorary Consul*	London: The Bodley Head
Greene, G.	1978	*The Human Factor*	London: The Bodley Head
Greene, G.	1980	*Ways of Escape*	London: The Bodley Head
Greene, G.	1982	*Monsignor Quixote*	London: The Bodley Head

Greene, G.	1988	*The Captain and the Enemy*	London: Reinhardt Books.

Macaulay, R.	1940	*And No Man's Wit*	London: Collins
Macaulay, R.	1950	*The World My Wilderness*	London: Collins
Macaulay, R.	1956	*The Towers of Trebizond*	London: Collins

Waugh E.	1928	*Decline and Fall*	London: Chapman and Hall
Waugh E.	1930	*Vile Bodies*	London: Chapman and Hall
Waugh E.	1932	*Black Mischief*	London: Chapman and Hall
Waugh E.	1934	*A Handful of Dust*	London: Chapman and Hall
Waugh E.	1935	*Edmund Campion: Jesuit and Martyr*	London: Chapman and Hall
Waugh E.	1938	*Scoop*	London: Chapman and Hall
Waugh E.	1942	*Put Out More Flags*	London: Chapman and Hall
Waugh E.	1945 (Revised edition with new edition 1960)	*Brideshead Revisited: The Sacred and Profane Memories of Captain Charles Ryder*	London: Chapman and Hall
Waugh E.	1950	*Helena*	London: Chapman

			and Hall
Waugh E.	1952	*Men at Arms*	London: Chapman and Hall
Waugh E.	1955	*Officers and Gentlemen*	London: Chapman and Hall
Waugh E.	1957	*The Ordeal of Gilbert Pinfold*	London: Chapman and Hall
Waugh E.	1959	*The Life of the Right Reverend Ronald Knox*	London: Chapman and Hall
Waugh E.	1961	*Unconditional Surrender*	London: Chapman and Hall
Waugh E.	1964	*A Little Learning: the First Volume of an Autobiography*	London: Chapman and Hall
Waugh E.	1965	*Sword of Honour Trilogy*	London: Chapman and Hall

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